

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

ECS

Support person present: No

1. My name is ECS though everybody calls me ECS. My date of birth is 1942. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was born and brought up in Portsmouth, England before I joined the Royal Navy as a naval mechanic in 1957. I was in the navy for seven years until I was medically discharged. By that time I had married my wife and moved to Scotland. My wife and I have now been married for 61 years and have three children called born 1962, born 1974 and born 1964.
3. After leaving the Navy I worked in various factories for a short time before joining the fire service where I served for nine of years. I then joined the prison service in Scotland and worked for them for twenty years. I started in prison but then worked in other prisons including and prison. While working at we lived in which was
4. A while after I left the prison service I worked for Virgin Media for a period answering calls on the phone before taking full retirement when I was about seventy years old.

Becoming a Foster Carer

5. I'm not sure of the exact date when my wife and I started fostering children but I was working in Prison when my wife lost a baby. This was in 1976 and caused

her to be depressed and she suggested that we adopt a child after being told she couldn't have any more children. By this time I had been moved to [REDACTED]. I wasn't too keen on the idea of adopting a child but knew colleagues who fostered children and suggested to her that we try that.

6. We made enquiries with the local council, I'm not sure which council though possibly Wishaw, after speaking to other foster parents I knew and I think it was a woman called Grace Thompson who was the senior social worker who came to see us about it. She spoke to both me and my wife and also spoke to our children to see what they thought of us fostering.
7. The whole process took about a year and the first child we fostered was [REDACTED] in 1979 when he was three months old and we later adopted him on [REDACTED] 1984. After that we stopped fostering children as we thought it would be unfair on [REDACTED]
8. We didn't require to have any qualifications to be foster parents but we did have to answer numerous questions about what we thought it involved. If social workers carried out any checks on us then we weren't aware of it but I'm sure they would have.
9. I don't know if there were any ongoing checks on us during our time as foster parents and I think we simply assumed that they thought we were getting on well with the children. I know that these days they can do police checks and things like that but such things didn't exist back then.
10. It's difficult to say whether or not I think people should have qualifications to be foster parents because some people are just suited to doing it. I couldn't say what foster parents do or should do now as it's been so long since we fostered children.

Training

11. We weren't given any training nor were we given any continual training or written material about being foster parents. We simply got on with looking after the children who were put in our care. We weren't given any child protection training but where we

lived was quite close to the prison and a fairly secure area where any strangers would be quickly identified.

Foster Care Arrangements

12. We didn't see fostering as a job and didn't consider ourselves as working for anybody. For us it was just something we wanted to do. We didn't choose what children we fostered and simply looked after whoever we were asked to. On one occasion we actually went to a hospital to pick up a child. The most we ever fostered at one time was three who were three siblings that we looked after.
13. Quite often we weren't told why the children were in care but we knew from speaking to the children themselves that they had had difficult lives. Most of the children weren't with us very long and there were even times, like when I was on detached duty in ██████ Prison for a month, that I had no contact whatsoever with some of the children we fostered and looking after them was left to my wife ██████ I think she looked after about seven children during that time that I never saw.
14. Sometimes a child would only be with us for a day or so but we were always prepared for such a scenario. While each of the children we fostered had social workers dedicated to them there was no social worker allocated to my wife and I as foster parents but we knew who to contact if we had questions to ask.

Financial Support

15. We saw fostering as a vocation and did it because we wanted to, it was never about the money. Any financial aid we did receive came via social workers and often the grants were made out to certain shops which were the only ones where we could use them.
16. We were never given things like toys or clothes for the children. There was never any drama about having clothes for the children or us having to pay for things. Sometimes we might have been a bit out of pocket but it was never a problem.

17. We were given grants if children were with us a for more than a few days but a lot of times the grant didn't come when it should have and we would pay that money out of our own pocket to get things the children needed.
18. One meeting I do recall going to was held by Malcolm Day who was Head of Social Work in Wishaw. I stood up and told him that, while he thought things went along honky dory, there were times when things did go wrong and if we hadn't had the money to purchase the things a child needed a) it would put the child in an awkward position whereby they didn't have what they needed and b) it would have put us in an awkward position as we wouldn't have been able to afford what they needed.
19. I don't recall exactly when that meeting took place but it was with other foster parents in a community hall in Motherwell and was organised by the social work. I think it was a question and answer meeting and people were asked to raise things that they wished to speak about.

Foster Home Household

20. The home we stayed in when fostering children was a brand new [REDACTED] at [REDACTED]. It had three bedrooms, a living room, kitchen, a bathroom upstairs and a toilet downstairs and a dining room. However, the dining room was converted into a fourth bedroom when we started fostering children if and when we needed the extra room. That was the only house we were in when fostering.
21. Myself and [REDACTED] had one room, my son had left the home by then to stay with my mum in Portsmouth, my two daughters shared a bedroom and we used the other bedrooms for foster children. When my son [REDACTED] first arrived he was only three months old and slept in our room but later went on to have his own room. I don't recall any social workers checking our house as to whether or not it was suitable for fostering children.

Children Fostered

22. I couldn't even take a guess at how many children [REDACTED] and I fostered especially given many of them were with us for only a day or two and there were some that I never even met because I was working away. There were some who's names I do recall and who I'll mention shortly.

Placement Preparation

23. The notice we were given regarding us fostering a child could be as little as an hour or up to a day and I don't know how it was that social workers matched the children to us. I think it was just a case that we were a place where they could put the children and social workers would just call and ask if we could take a child.
24. All we would be told, and it was usually my wife [REDACTED] they spoke to, was that the children were a "place of safety". We very rarely got medical or educational backgrounds as the children were rarely with us long enough to attend school. We were never given any records in respect of the children and were never given anything in the way of a care plan.
25. It wasn't always troubled children we looked after as, on a rare occasion, we would be asked to look after a child whose parent or parents were in hospital and there was nobody else to look after them. I never met a child prior to us fostering them.
26. Sometimes it could be hard work but, in general, the children tended to settle in quite well. The older children knew what was happening and younger ones were usually happy once they got something to eat and drink and were comfortable. Our own children were a great help in helping the foster children settle in which was a great help to my wife and I.

Daily Routine and Sleeping Arrangements

27. The routine we had when we had foster children with us was exactly the same as when we didn't have them. The kids would get up, get washed, have their breakfast and then I'd be off to work and my kids would head for school. If it was the weekend then nine times out of ten we would all go to the stock car racing. When we got back from there the kids would help paint the cars while I got on with repairing them. The foster kids used to love doing that.

Washing and Bathing

28. We had a bathroom upstairs and a toilet downstairs so whoever was getting washed got priority and used the upstairs bathroom while whoever was needing the toilet would use the facility downstairs. Both places had locks on the doors and the children would have privacy when having a bath.

Bed wetting

29. Only one child we fostered had a problem with bed wetting and that was the oldest girl of the three siblings that we fostered. We explained to her that these things happened and we would just wash her sheets and pyjamas and try to control her intake of fluids at night. We never considered her bed wetting to be a problem.

Clothes and Shoes

30. Very few of the children arrived with clothes other than what they were wearing at the time. We always had a stock of clothes that we were able to use in emergencies including old clothes of our own children. I did most of the ironing as I had always done my own ironing, something I got from my days in the Navy. We always made sure the children got fresh underwear every day which some of them found quite surprising.

Mealtimes

31. Because I was on shifts and [REDACTED] also worked we tended to eat at different times and tea could be any time between 4:30 and 6:30 pm. The children tended to eat together and they usually had two choices and it would be things that children liked like burgers, sausages, pizza etc. [REDACTED] normally did the cooking but if I was at home I would help out.
32. Usually [REDACTED] would ask a child what they wanted so it was a rare occasion that a child wouldn't eat something. On an occasion a child might simply refuse to eat and they would go hungry but that was very unusual. Nine times out of ten everybody would eat the same thing but we had two freezers and they were always well stocked. I had a tendency to eat my dinner while watching the telly.

Leisure Time

33. There was plenty of room in the garden, which was fully fenced, and the surrounding area for the children to play and we also took them out when walking the dogs. We also always had books and toys in the house for the children. We had a TV in each of the bedrooms for the children to watch. [REDACTED] would sometimes take the children shopping but they were never with us long enough to get involved in clubs like the Scouts or Girl's Brigade or things like that.
34. Very few of them had personal possessions when they arrived. I recall that one boy had a watch that was his pride and joy. We would often give the children money to go to the ice cream van and we always had juice in the house for them to drink. In fact we would tell the children that they had a certain amount of juice to last the week and they soon learned to make it last them the week and that they didn't have to drink it all in one day.

Trips and Holidays

35. None of the children actually came on trips with us but I enjoyed stock-car racing and often took the children to the races. On an odd occasion we would take them to the beach at Burntisland and I recall taking some children to the steam engine museum which fascinated them. 99% of the weekends I would be at the stock-car racing and the kids would come along.

Schooling

36. Only one child we fostered went to school and that was a school in [REDACTED]. Quite often we were looking after children during the summer holidays and schooling didn't come in to the equation. We never had to go to any parent's meetings. I have no recollection of any of the children receiving any sort of training that prepared them for adult life.
37. Only one child, other than [REDACTED] was with us for more than a few months and that was [REDACTED] who was with us for 11 months. He was eleven or twelve. While [REDACTED] went to a local school [REDACTED] was excluded from school and other schools refused to take him. He was a bright kid but seemed to play the system.
38. [REDACTED] and I hadn't anticipated [REDACTED] being with us for as long as he was but our attitude was that he could stay as long as he needed. He eventually went off the rails and social work moved him on. This was after [REDACTED] found out we were adopting [REDACTED] [REDACTED] thought it was him we should have adopted. I heard years later that [REDACTED] had joined the army which was possibly the sort of discipline he needed in his life.

Healthcare

39. Dr Muqit was our regular doctor and was always available day or night if we had any concerns. The children were never there long enough to see a dentist and we never kept any records of medical issues or records of any type. We didn't keep paperwork of any type.

Christmas and Birthdays

40. We never had any children over Christmas except [REDACTED] who we later adopted and he was always treated like one of the family as far as Christmas was concerned. I often did shifts for other prison officers at Christmas so as they could spend the time with their families. I think if any of the foster children had a birthday while they were with us [REDACTED] would get them a present.

Discipline

41. [REDACTED] did most of the disciplining as it was generally when I wasn't there. It was usually something trivial between the children and [REDACTED] would deal with it verbally and maybe get them to apologise to each other. We were never given any rules as to how we should deal with discipline. Our own children were never smacked and there was never any reason for us to treat the foster children any differently.
42. Having said that, we rarely had problems with the children as they seemed to just like being there. None of the children, our own or the foster children, were ever physically punished though on the odd occasion a child might be sent to their room.

Relationship with Foster Children

43. The children tended to see me as the man of the house and the impression I got was that they respected that. I would say that I did show the children affection. If they were upset about something I would try to help them or suggest that they speak to [REDACTED]
44. There were never any squabbles between our own children and the foster children who were always treated the same way as our own. My son [REDACTED] was only there for a short time before he left home. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were that bit older than the kids we fostered and the foster kids tended to look up to them.

Contact with Family (other than siblings)

45. Children were only allowed to contact their parents via their social workers but I can only recall that happening with one child who could phone their parents but only on a specific number that the child themselves didn't get to see. We were never given any information about the children's parents that we could have passed to the children. ██████ never had any contact with his family.
46. Anything to do with the parents was dealt with by social workers. The way fostering was done in our day probably wouldn't work these days because of social media and children having access to mobile phones.
47. There was an occasion when social workers brought a set of parents to our door. Apparently these parents had been giving the social workers a hard time about the fact that their children had been taken away and they brought the parents to our door to show them that the children were safe. We weren't happy about that as we didn't want parents coming to the door and upsetting the children especially when they were under place of safety orders.
48. Sometimes we would take a child down to the social services office where they would be allowed to go with a parent for a few hours before returning them to the same office and to us. On those occasions the parents wouldn't be told where the children were staying.

Siblings

49. We did look after three siblings on one occasion who were ██████ ██████ and ██████ ██████ who we had for a couple of weeks. We had wanted to take these three children to the stock car racing with us but the social workers took them back off us a week beforehand and apparently told the children they were being taken back off us because we didn't want to take them on holiday with us which simply wasn't true. I think there was also an occasion when we looked after two siblings who were brothers.

Visitors

50. Social workers came roughly every fortnight to see the children, if the children were there long enough, and we would either let them see the children alone in their room or sometimes the social workers would sit with them in their car. Myself and [REDACTED] didn't get involved in these discussions and they took place out with our sight and hearing. Because of my shift work I was rarely at home when social workers came to visit the children. The only social worker we saw often was the one responsible for [REDACTED] prior to us adopting him.

Review of Care/placement

51. No review or inspections were ever carried out on us or our home over the years we fostered. When the children moved on from us we usually just got a phone call the day before to say social workers were coming to collect them. I never attended any child care review meetings or hearings and neither did any of the children as far as I was aware. Sometimes social workers would take the children away for a short while but we weren't part of those conversations and didn't know where they had been.
52. It's hard to say if any of the children were listened to as many of them didn't want to be where they were and tended to be against us when they arrived but when they settled they often didn't want to leave. Social workers simply told the children what was happening and that would be it so, in that sense, I don't think the children's views were taken into account.

Records

53. We were never asked to keep any records. Looking back such things would have been helpful especially if you're asked questions about such things many years later. It would also have been helpful as continual information on a child as they moved from place to place.

Moving Placement

54. When a child moved on from us we would get a call from social workers saying that they were coming to pick a child up. We would then get their things together in preparation. We would then tell the child that social workers were coming to pick them up. We were never given any information as to why the children were moving on from us or where they were going.

Leaving the Care System

55. The children might have got a couple of days' notice from the social workers that they were leaving us but that would be a conversation between them. [REDACTED] and I would not necessarily be involved. We never fostered any children who were of the age to be leaving the care system when they left us so I wouldn't know about the processes at that stage.

Complaints

56. There was no procedure in place as such to make any complaints myself and [REDACTED] might have had but I did get the impression that if we said something to a social worker when they visited the children that it would be followed up as they would have known the right people to speak to.

Convictions

57. I have no criminal previous convictions.

Allegations of Abuse

Awareness of Abuse

58. I am not aware of any children being the victim of abuse while under the care of my wife and I. Even with hindsight I can think of nothing that happened while we were fostering children that would have been considered abuse.

Reporting of Abuse

59. If the children we fostered ever had anything to say or complain about they could have spoken to their social worker as we were never present when they spoke with each other. I am not aware of any of the children raising any concerns about abuse while in our care. I don't recall many conversations with the children about their backgrounds but they would speak to us about things like what they had been doing that day.
60. If we needed advice we could have spoken to the [REDACTED] who were also foster parents and had a lot of experience. I never needed to report anything and am not aware of anybody else making any reports about us. We were never given any guidance about such things. Even with hindsight I can't think of anything that should have been reported.

Allegations of Abuse for which there has been no Criminal Conviction

61. I have never had an allegation of abuse made against me other than the one made by ECK [REDACTED] though when he was with us he was called ECK [REDACTED]

Reporting to Police/Criminal Proceedings

62. The only complaint made to the police about us was by ECK [REDACTED] who we knew as ECK [REDACTED] and that was only a few years ago. I was spoken to in Coatbridge Police Office but the matter didn't go any further. [REDACTED] wasn't questioned because the complaint was against me. I have heard nothing from the police since nor received

any information as to what happened to the complaint. I had no problems in the way the police handled the matter, probably because I knew I had nothing to be worried about as I had done nothing wrong.

Prior Statements

63. I have never given any other statements concerning those years when I was involved with the fostering of children.

Specific Allegations Against that have been made to the Inquiry

64. **ECK** has given a statement to the Inquiry and he has said *"I was found by the police but they didn't ask me why I had run away. Sometimes the police got social workers involved and other times they just dropped me back. Mr **ECS** hit me a couple of times and told me not to run away again. The last time I ran away the social workers asked me why I had run away. They didn't listen for four or five months so every chance I got I ran away. I ran away so often they knew I wasn't going to settle there so they had to make a decision one way or the other because I refused to stay"*.
65. **ECK** suggests that he was with us for about six months but he was only with us for a matter of weeks and he never ran away. The closest he came to doing that was when he told **ECK** he was going for a walk and wanted to see some relatives that lived in Airdrie. I was at work and wasn't there at the time.
66. He went the wrong way and went to Bonkle. My wife and a friend went looking for him in their cars, found him, and brought him back. He was an unhappy wee boy of about ten years and he didn't want to stay with us but he definitely didn't run away four or five times and he was never brought back by the police.
67. **ECK** also says *"Mr **ECS** hit me a couple of times a week on the arms, the back of my legs and my back with the wooden baton. I was bruised and I showed the bruises to the social workers and they asked what had happened. Mr **ECS** said I was in fights"*

at school and that was why I was bruised. I remember getting upset and asking the social workers why they didn't listen to me and why would I tell a lie about this".

68. If ECK had said to social workers or to the police that he was covered in bruises because of me hitting him then why was nothing ever done about it? He was never sanctioned by us and he even came to the stock car racing with us which he enjoyed.
69. ECK says that I had my stick and handcuffs in a cabinet in the house. My stick was never outside my work and in those days individual prison officers never had their own handcuffs.
70. ECK continues by saying "Mr ECS was used to dealing with prisoners and he brought that home with him. I was a difficult child and I must have annoyed him to a stage where he hit me. I was angry and confused that I had been separated from my family and was a bit of a rebel but Mr ECS should never have been a foster carer. The ECS-SPO were a disappointing start to my journey in foster care and it had a big impact on me".
71. When I read that ECK had said that it really hurt me. ECK was an awkward child and could be cantankerous but we never raised a hand to him. Another thing I would add is that earlier in his statement ECK suggested that I referred to prisoners I looked after as "scumbags". In the twenty years I worked as a prison officer I never once referred to a prisoner as a "scumbag".
72. The things that ECK is claiming never happened and another thing he talks about was when he wet the bed. ECK never wet the bed when he stayed with us. As I said earlier, the only child who wet the bed was the oldest of the three siblings we looked after.
73. My memory hasn't been affected by the passage of time when I think back to when ECK stayed with us. I agree that if such things as he describes had happened then it would have been abuse but none of these things happened. I can think of no reason as to why ECK would say such things.

Helping the Inquiry

- 74. Records must be kept including details of any awkward conversations with the children or details of any incidents that occurred.

Other information

- 75. 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..... *3/8 2022*