

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GDV [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My full name is ^{GDV} [REDACTED] This was my name at birth and as a child in care. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1991. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Early life at home

2. I was born in Edinburgh and lived in the Bingham area with my mum, [REDACTED] and my older brother, [REDACTED] who was three years older than me. My nana, [REDACTED] lived nearby with my two uncles. I never knew my dad.
3. My brother had spent some time in care before I was born. I also had an older sister, [REDACTED] who had been put in care as a baby but then passed back to my mum. She died from neglect and dehydration in my mum's care when she was three months old. This was about a year before I was born so social work had been involved with me from birth.
4. I know from my records that my mum handed me over to social services when I was a baby because she couldn't cope with looking after me and I had started to show signs of neglect like my sister had. I was given to a foster carer called [REDACTED] who lived in Penicuik when I was about three months old. I was there for a few months and the foster carer did well in feeding me and getting me better, then I was given back to my mum.

5. My mum only wanted me back because neighbours were asking where I was and she was worried about being judged for not having me with her. It says so in my records. My records also say that she wasn't taking me to medical appointments that I needed to go to. I was born premature so there were some issues around my health.
6. You would think my mum would be a bit more consistent with medical appointments after losing a child, but she wasn't. Social work did try to help but my mum was quite a hostile and angry woman.
7. I moved addresses and schools a lot when I was younger, so I am not sure about dates. I think I moved to [REDACTED] in 1995, when I was about four years old with my mum and brother. There are two squares and we were on the one that didn't have the play park. I started [REDACTED] Primary School while we were there and my records say that family life was going really well.
8. My mum then got involved with a man called [REDACTED] who lived with us. He had been in prison a few times and was known to the police. He was horrible and violent to my mum and us kids. He was a danger to our lives and the police were involved a couple of times. I remember them taking us away from the home and examining us. We would be covered in bruises but my mum and [REDACTED] would explain it away by saying we were being bullied at school or fell over when playing even though we were never allowed out to play or do anything.
9. From reading my records, it sounds like [REDACTED] didn't really like me and didn't want me to play with toys or express any feelings. It says in my records that we were spoken to by social workers and we said that we were scared of him. These entries make it sound like social workers were around but I don't have any memory of seeing them or speaking to them. Nothing ever happened to [REDACTED] I don't think he was ever charged and we would just be put back into the same situation. The police or social workers didn't do anything to protect us from him.
10. I have an image in my head of [REDACTED] sexually abusing me but I don't know if it is an actual memory. I have an image of being in a room, playing and him taking my

trousers down and lying me on a bed and then I don't remember anything else. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] was about the same age as my mum, who was born in 1968. He was maybe a couple of months younger than her.

11. I wasn't having a good experience at school and didn't do well because of everything that was going on at home. My mum and [REDACTED] didn't work and they were both abusive. My mum would get drunk and be violent towards me as well. My records say that some teachers raised concerns about what was happening with me at home, but I don't remember anybody ever speaking to me or doing anything about it.
12. There was an incident between [REDACTED] and my mum, which made her take us kids and move in with my nana to escape from him. I think social workers advised her not to be with him. My mum, my brother and me moved from Piershill back to Bingham to live with my gran for a while when I was about four or five years old. It was quite cramped there because there were the three of us, my gran and my two uncles living there.
13. We were doing better when we were staying with my nana even though it was cramped. We had moved to [REDACTED] Primary School and social work saw that me and my brother were doing better at school. I have read that in my records even though I don't remember seeing any social workers there.
14. My mum still carried on seeing [REDACTED] and moved the three of us to a flat in Niddrie to live with him. My mum and [REDACTED] had a baby while we lived there. I was about five years old when my little sister, [REDACTED] came along. The five of us lived together there for a while.
15. Something bad happened there with [REDACTED]. He battered [REDACTED] really badly when she was three months old. I think that caused her to have learning difficulties but he didn't even get charged for that. When I was about seven or eight years old, my mum took us three kids and moved to a three bedroom flat at [REDACTED] where I shared a room with my sister and started [REDACTED] Primary School. I didn't see [REDACTED] again after that.

16. My mum never worked and was an alcoholic. She would get drunk and abusive towards me and start attacking me. She was violent towards me nearly every day. My siblings sometimes got it, but I got it the most from her. She kept me off school a lot, and when I did go, I struggled to learn because of what was going on at home with her. We also didn't get fed in the mornings which impacted my learning as well. I would get school dinners at school, and would only sometimes get fed at home in the evenings. A neighbour called [REDACTED] used to sometimes feed me in the evenings. I was friends with her granddaughter, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is dead now.

17. I remember going to a few children's panels when I was primary school age. I remember adults I didn't know would ask me questions in front of my mum, which was awful. I couldn't speak up about my mum in front of her. Somebody would sometimes take me out of the room and ask me questions, but I never knew who the person was so I would be scared to speak up. I think we were on the "at risk" register with the social work due to my mum's neglect, but my mum didn't attend the meetings and nobody did anything about it. I don't remember seeing any social workers, so here were three children on a risk register who were just kind of left.

18. My brother had severe learning difficulties and went to a special school. He was also physically abusive towards me. It is noted in my records that I was also at risk from him because of this. One time, when I was about nine or ten years old, I walked in on my brother about to rape my little sister. They were both naked from the waist down and he was on top of her. [REDACTED] would have been very young, about four or five years old, and [REDACTED] would have been about twelve or thirteen years old. He stopped when I walked in the room. I told my mum about it at the time and she battered him.

19. I used to visit my nana at her house and was really close to her, but even there I would witness my uncles physically assault her, which was hard to see. My uncles were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was the worst for it because he was an alcoholic.

20. Things carried on the same way when I started Portobello High School in 2003, and I didn't do well there either. I would also have to walk my sister to her school in the mornings first, which was [REDACTED] Primary School and then [REDACTED] Primary School when she moved there. This meant that when I did go to school, I would always be late. Teachers at school were concerned about my lateness and attendance.
21. I think the school knew that things weren't right at home and I wasn't treated well by my mum. I think they tried to raise the alarm a few times but nothing was ever done about it. Mrs Chapman, my guidance teacher at Portobello High School, tried to speak to me and ask me what was going on, but I was a mess by the time I was a teenager and didn't open up to her.
22. I don't remember meeting or speaking to any social worker when I was in primary or in high school, until I was thirteen years old. They must have been around according to my records and what they were writing about me, even though they didn't do anything to help. My brother had his own social worker because he had learning difficulties.

Going into care

23. I remember social workers getting involved with me when I was thirteen years old but it was only because I ended up having underage unprotected sex. It was with a boy who was the same age as me, when we were in first year at school and it was consensual. I didn't really know what I was doing and probably just wanted attention because nothing else I was doing was getting that. It came to light when I went to the school nurse because I thought I was pregnant.
24. I remember I had to give a statement to the police and social work. I don't really know why the police were involved. It seems crazy to me that they got involved with that but hadn't been involved when all the other abuse over the years with my mum and [REDACTED] had been ignored and missed.

25. Social workers were around more and came out to see me after that, although nobody actually spoke to me about safe sex or contraception. They would come around and want to see and speak to my mum. I think they figured out at this point that my mum was an angry alcoholic and our relationship was hostile. My mum would be angry and shout and swear at me in front of them. My social worker was called Dana Degan and she was from the Craigentenny office.
26. My mum was assaulting me nearly every day. She would be violent and attack me, and sometimes even sit on me and strangle me. She would send me to go to the shop to get alcohol for her. She sent me to do that this one time when I was thirteen years old and the shopkeeper refused. My mum attacked me for it when I got home. The neighbours heard it all. I ran away out the back door and went to my neighbour, [REDACTED] house. I had a bruise on my face and felt sore from the attack.
27. [REDACTED] called the police and my mum was charged by the police for that. That was when I was able to get away from my mum and only because another witness had overheard the abuse, seen my injuries and called the police.

Foster care – [REDACTED] Edinburgh

28. I started living with my neighbour, [REDACTED] when I was thirteen years old. Her house was next door to my mum's. She was in her late thirties and had two daughters. I was about the same age as her older daughter. It was quite crowded in her house and I shared a room with her girls.
29. The social workers were aware I was living there and were ok with it. I don't know how formal the arrangement was but [REDACTED] got money to feed me and look after me. I don't remember getting pocket money.
30. A social worker called Claire Brogan got involved with me at this point, as well as Dana Degan. I think Claire was a student and she was amazing. She took me out, listened

to me and asked me questions. That was the first time a social worker did that. She also took me shopping and bought me new clothes.

31. My nana had cancer and went into hospital after I ran away. Social workers decided not to let me visit her. I think it was because it was late and visiting hours had passed that day. They did say to me that it was not like she would die that night, but she did. I was close to my nana so that was hard and I was angry with social work for not letting me visit her. Looking back now, I guess they were just working with the information and tools they had at the time. I was allowed to see her in the hospital after she died and it was nice to see her at peace.
32. After my nana died, my mum came to my school. She came inside, passed the reception on the first floor and found me there. She started shouting at me, calling me a murderer, and blamed my nana's death on me running away, then she slapped me. There were other people around, including my cousin and some teachers. Nothing happened about it. My mum didn't get charged or anything.
33. I went to my nana's funeral, and had no support from anyone. I remember seeing lots of random family members there who had come out the woodwork. I got really drunk and [REDACTED] had some concerns about my behaviour.
34. I was still going to school but found it challenging because I was being bullied. I used to go in smelly and unclean because I wasn't looked after when I was with my mum, and that had made me a target for bullying which had carried on. I would sometimes fight back, which got me into trouble. I was also self-harming around that time and was quite depressed, which gave [REDACTED] more concerns about me. It says in my records that I was self-harming for attention, which I probably was, but there was more to it than that.
35. I stayed with [REDACTED] for a few months. She fed me well and tried to look after me, but I think I was a bit of a challenge for her with everything that was going on with me. It was also really crowded in her flat. I was also too close to my mum, who was next door and would turn up and cause a scene. I spoke to Claire and asked to be moved.

36. A children's hearing was fixed, I was given a survey to fill out before I attended and I had indicated in it that I wanted to move. My mum was at the panel when it was called and was argumentative like she always was. I don't know how much of a say she had in what the panel did. The panel decided to put me in a proper foster care placement.

Foster Care – [REDACTED] The Inch

37. I was thirteen years old when I went into foster care properly. Dana drove me to a place near Cameron Toll in Edinburgh. I remember being quite scared because I didn't know what to expect.
38. I don't think I had met [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] before that day. I felt scared and strange when I first got there because they weren't my family. I also didn't know how long I would be there because nobody had told me.
39. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were older than parent age, maybe more like grandparent age. I just called them by their names. They lived in a two storey house and showed me my bedroom which was on the ground floor. I had a room to myself, which was nice. I didn't really get to make it my own but had my own clothes. I didn't really have much else.
40. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] grandson, who was really young, lived in the house with them. There was also another foster girl there who was older than me. Their bedrooms were all upstairs.
41. I didn't really have much to do with the other foster girl. She moved out a while after I lived there and another foster girl called [REDACTED] moved in, who was about a year younger than me. We became friends, but I don't think the foster parents liked us being friends. They thought I was a bad influence on her.

Routine in foster care

42. █████ would wake me up in the morning. I would get up, dressed, and have breakfast. I think █████ made the breakfast but I can't remember what I had.
43. I would catch the bus to Portobello High School and got free school dinners there. Some of my pals would go out and buy their lunch but there were a few of us who would get school dinners. I would just catch a bus home after school.
44. I could spend time in my room when I got home and I had my own television. █████ would make the dinner. I don't remember having to do many chores or help out much. I had to keep my room tidy and maybe had to do my own dishes sometimes but it wasn't a lot.
45. █████ and █████ would go to their friend's house at the weekend, and take me and █████ with them. They would sit and have a drink and socialise with their friends, and me and █████ would be made to sit in a separate room. I didn't think that was fair to single us out. They should have included us and let us interact with everyone if they were taking us there.
46. We were never taken to the cinema or anywhere fun at weekends. I don't remember any activities.

Mealtimes / Food

47. █████ would make dinner and we ate what was given to us. It was generally ok. If I didn't like something, I could just leave it. I didn't have to eat it but I don't think I would get anything else.
48. I didn't get snacks or anything. I don't know if that was because I wasn't allowed or because I didn't feel comfortable helping myself to snacks in someone else's house. I hadn't really done that in my own house with my mum either, so I was just carrying on that behaviour.

Washing / bathing

49. I was able to have a shower when I wanted and had privacy to do that. I think they must have bought the toiletries and stuff that I needed but I don't really remember.

Clothing / uniform

50. Claire had taken to buy me clothes before I moved there. [REDACTED] took me shopping a couple of times for clothes as well.

School

51. I was still going to Portobello High School, and was going there by bus. I was skiving school a lot though.
52. I liked English and History. I liked learning but it was more the case that I didn't want to stay in school because I was getting bullied.
53. I went to a support base to get extra learning support, which was a bit helpful and they were trying to help me but it was a little bit too late.

Birthdays and Christmas

54. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] bought me a mobile phone for my fourteenth birthday. I don't remember getting a cake or anything but maybe I did.
55. I don't remember Christmas there.

Leisure time

56. I got pocket money but I can't remember how much. I had started smoking when I was thirteen years old so spent it on cigarettes. [REDACTED] knew I smoked and was ok about it.

57. I had a television in my room, which I could watch. I could also use their telephone and I would have friends phoning me to talk until I eventually got a mobile phone on my fourteenth birthday.
58. I spent a lot of my time out of the house. I would be meeting friends from school and drinking a lot. I had a curfew for 9.30 pm which I didn't really stick to. I felt free for the first time, like a normal child, but then I was a teenager in this strange situation, and had all these hormones flying about so I wasn't really well behaved.
59. My mum was ok with me being with older men, and even set it up for me. I had seen a guy working in Asda at the Jewel and said to my mum that I thought he was good looking. My mum went in and got his number and set us up. His name was [REDACTED] and he was in his late twenties or thirties when I was about thirteen or fourteen years old. I didn't have sex with him but I did go out with him and thought it was ok because my mum arranged it. When I told [REDACTED] my real age, he finished with me and didn't want anything to do with me.
60. My behaviour was really toxic when I got to fourteen years old and I was going with older men. I was doing it to make myself feel better because a bad relationship was still a relationship. Nobody had ever spoken to me about safe sex or consent or anything, even though social work and school knew I had sex when I was thirteen and that was the whole reason they had gotten involved with me.

Discipline

61. If I broke curfew and came home late, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] would ground me.
62. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were alright. They weren't bad people but I was probably a bit difficult to handle because of the toxic environment I had grown up in.

Abuse while in foster care

63. I met a guy called GDX in Portobello when I was fifteen years old. I had asked him for a light for a cigarette when I was out one day. We had got talking and ended up getting involved with each other. He was 22 years old at the time. I initially didn't tell him how old I was. He would call me all the time and I was seeing him quite a bit. My pal who was my age was going out with his pal who was his age.
64. Me and GDX had been going out for a wee while and then I met up with him one day and told him that I was fifteen years old. It didn't make a difference to him. He got me really drunk that same day and took me to a hotel in Cameron Toll. We both drank alcohol that he had bought for us. I was really drunk that night and we had sex. That was when I lost my virginity properly.
65. I was out until 2 or 3 am that night, which was late even for me. I phoned the police after I left GDX at the hotel. I don't know why but I did. I must have felt that something wasn't right. The police spoke to me and I told them I had sex with GDX. When they started asking me questions, I told the police that I had lied about my age and GDX hadn't known I was fifteen years old. I just did that to protect him. The truth is that he did know because I had told him before we had sex. I was protecting him so he wouldn't get into trouble. I think the police spoke to him that night but I don't think he was charged or anything. I never heard anything else about it.
66. I was taken to Sick Kids to get examined and checked out. My mum was there too. I was given the morning after pill while I was there.
67. The relationship ended with GDX after that. My mum scared him away.

Visits / Inspections

68. Claire Logan was my social worker from the age of thirteen until fifteen or sixteen. I saw her once a week and she would sometimes take me out. I grew to trust her.

69. I also used to have meetings with Dana and Claire. Sometimes it would be in [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] house and they would be there too. They would all sit and talk about how I was the problem and I was misbehaving. I would be asked questions but nobody really paid attention to what I was saying. They had made up their mind that I was the problem.
70. I told my social workers I wanted to go home to my mum because I was afraid that my little sister, who had learning difficulties, would be getting abused by my mum. I think Dana was also [REDACTED] social worker so she should have been checking on her anyway. My concerns were ignored. I wasn't sent back to my mum and they didn't do anything to make sure my sister was safe. My little sister was just left with my mum even though everyone knew my mum was abusive to me. I found out from my sister years later that I was right and my mum had started being abusive to her when I was out of the house.
71. I went to see my mum a few times for contact at her house. I wasn't allowed to stay overnight but was there for day visits. I would see my sister there as well. My mum would still be abusive to me when I visited. She didn't really change much.
72. Dana was aware that I was going with older guys. She knew that GDX [REDACTED] was messaging and phoning me and that I was seeing him, before the night that we had sex, but she hadn't done anything to stop it.
73. There were never any inspections that took place at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and nobody other than my two social workers ever asked how I was getting on.

Healthcare

74. I was still self-harming while I was there. I can't remember how [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] dealt with it, but the social workers knew. I wasn't given any kind of medical or psychiatric help for it. I have since read in my records that I was attention seeking by doing the things I was doing. The social workers knew what I had been through so I would have thought they would be a bit more understanding.

75. I was taken to the clinic to be tested for sexually transmitted diseases and pregnancy a couple of times. My records said that I was very sexually active but I wasn't. Still, nobody talked to me about safe sex, contraception, periods or anything. I didn't have a lot of knowledge about sex or consent.
76. I remember feeling unwell after the whole thing with ^{GDX} [REDACTED]. That was the only time I went to the doctors while I was at [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I made the appointment myself. That was when I found out that I was about two months pregnant. It was a real shock because I had taken the morning after pill in the Sick Kids Hospital after it had all happened. I was fifteen years old at the time and found out on my lunch break at school so I was pretty scared. It went round the school pretty quickly.
77. Social work, foster carers and my mum became aware of my pregnancy. My mum told me if I didn't keep the baby, she would abandon me. Even though my mum was abusive, I still loved her and didn't want to disappoint her so I felt like I had to continue with the pregnancy.
78. I had a meeting with my social workers and they asked me what I wanted to do about the pregnancy. I told them I was going to have the baby.

Leaving foster care

79. I ended up walking out of foster care and going back to live with my mum. It was my decision but I can't think why I chose to do that.
80. I didn't stay in touch with my foster carers after that. I was quite close to [REDACTED] and kept in touch with her.
81. Life back at my mum's was still a bit bad. She was still an alcoholic and still violent towards me even though I was pregnant. I thought she would have stopped being like that but she didn't.

82. I wasn't at my mum's for long. Social workers didn't want me having the baby while I was there, which was understandable.

Ferniehill Young Peoples Centre, Edinburgh

83. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Drylaw Young Peoples Centre, Edinburgh

88. Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Reporting of abuse as a child

124. There were times when I was living at home with my mum when I would run away and go to the police. The first time was when I was eight years old. I would always beg them not to take me home because my mum would batter me but they always did. One time I ran away when I was thirteen years old and went to the police station in Portobello. I begged them not to take me back home because my mum would beat me up but they did and I was beaten by my mum. There was one time when she was so drunk she fell asleep and so I was able to go to my nana's house. Every other time she would batter me for running away.
125. I tried to run away to London when I was about thirteen years old and the police caught me at Waverley Train Station. I was threatening to jump off the bridge, but I didn't. I told them not to take me home because my mum would batter me, but they took me back home to my mum anyway, and she did batter me.

126. The social workers saw with their own eyes the way my mum treated me and reacted to me, but they didn't do anything to help me.
127. When I was younger and lived with [REDACTED] I had told the police when questioned, that I was scared of him. It is noted in my social work records that my brother and I both said that, but nothing was done about it. I later told a friend about [REDACTED] being abusive when I was fourteen years old, and she had told my mum. My mum told social workers at the time but nothing was ever done about it.

Life after being in care

128. I was in my own flat in Gorgie aged seventeen after leaving Drylaw and that was really hard. I only saw Dana a couple of times after that. Social work contact formally stops when you turn 25 years old but I didn't have much to do with them after leaving care. Through Care took over. My Through Care worker was a woman called Carol who I saw once a week. I also had a tenancy worker who I saw once a week. Carol would take me shopping and help me with what to buy. I didn't know how to budget, and I still don't really. There wasn't much support for me as a young person alone, or as a young mum as I was still seeing [REDACTED]
129. It was horrible living in Gorgie alone. I was far too young and my mental health was not good. My mind was even younger than that of a seventeen year old because of all the abuse I suffered as a child. I was drinking a lot and would invite anybody back to my flat for a party because I was lonely and so isolated. I would tell my problems to anybody who would listen. My flat was the place people came to just to drink. I had some kids from care round for a party once and I was charged for kidnapping or something like that, even though the people there were the same age as me. It was Dana who reported me to the police. The charges were dropped but it still went against me when I was trying to get [REDACTED] back.
130. I started college after a while and was studying music. I got into a relationship with a guy at college but we split up so I stopped going. There was an education thing through

Through Care and I used it and did hospitality and tourism. I got a job at the Marriot Hotel in Edinburgh when I was about seventeen or eighteen years old.

131. I fought in court for fourteen days to have [REDACTED] back in my care. Nobody was on my side. Staff from Drylaw and social workers all spoke against me. What was used against me in court was my childhood. Social workers used my childhood to keep my son away from me. My childhood which they did nothing about at the time.
132. It was a long and hard process so I just eventually gave up. I signed papers to free [REDACTED] for adoption. I last saw him on his second birthday. I was allowed written contact with him after that but there are a lot of rules around that too, which is hard so I haven't written to him in a while.
133. I stayed in the flat in Gorgie for about two years. I got into a relationship with a guy called [REDACTED]. He was quite toxic and so was I a bit. I had another son with [REDACTED] called [REDACTED].
134. [REDACTED] and I split up and [REDACTED] has lived with his dad since he was about five or six months old. I fought to keep him a little bit but not a lot because I was scared that the same thing would happen with him as what happened with [REDACTED]. I have unsupervised contact and see him every weekend. He is about to start high school this year.
135. I got involved with the Debate Project in Glasgow when I was about nineteen or twenty years old, which changed my life. It was a project with young people and older people who had experienced the care system and were trying to make positive change. I volunteered with them. I interviewed a few people who were in charge of the care system, I did some talks and tried to raise awareness of the care system. I have not been involved recently but am keen to get involved with them again.
136. I worked with Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations for two years as a [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] It was really good but I was going through an abusive relationship at the time so it was hard to manage. They were great with me though and very supportive.

I have also worked as a care worker for the elderly, both in their own homes and in care homes. I am not working just now because I am focusing on my mental health and getting better before I start working again.

137. I am in a relationship now that is loving and feels like a family environment.
138. Through Care still sometimes speak to me, which is nice of them because they don't need to do that. I still see Carol occasionally.

Impact

139. Nobody ever spoke to me about safe sex, consent or contraception even though social workers got involved with me when I had underage sex at thirteen years old. They thought I was sexually active and also took me to clinics to get tested but I never got any sex education or talk from them or anyone at school.
140. I only learned about consent and things by myself, and only a couple of years ago. That was when I realised that the sex with older men was wrong and shouldn't have happened. Looking back, I would have benefitted from learning about that and it may have stopped me being sexually active so young and getting pregnant at fifteen.
141. I spent years thinking I was the problem. That I was a bad child and disgusting. I thought that because I was always punished for acting out as a child, instead of being listened to and helped by the adults around me. The police and social workers knew what was going on and nobody helped me.
142. My sister recently told me that my mum had been abusive towards her when I had been taken into care at fourteen years old. She said that she saw a scary side of our mum then and was terrified. My mum had obviously turned her abuse towards my sister after I left. Social workers had moved me from my mum's care, but left my sister there, which I don't understand.

143. My relationship suffered with my sister because she was left with my mum when I was removed. She is now in her twenties and still in care. I have tried to have a relationship with her but social workers don't want her coming to my house in case there are other people there who may be a danger to her. This makes no sense as my son comes to my house with no issues who is much younger than [REDACTED] Social workers seem to want me to be a mother figure to [REDACTED] which is unfair because I am her sister, not her mother.
144. My son, [REDACTED] was taken away from me and put into care. I was told it was because I couldn't look after him but it is really because I didn't get the help that I needed when he was born when I was still in care myself. It was probably the right decision for him but it was a really hard thing for me to deal with. My childhood was used against me in court when I fought to keep him. Social workers even brought up what happened with [REDACTED] which was not my fault. Social workers failed to help me when I was a child when I needed it and then used that same childhood against me in court to take my son away from me. I am really angry about that and angry at the system.
145. My second son, [REDACTED] lives with his dad. I have contact with him at the weekends but I am too scared to fight for more contact in case I lose what little contact I do have. I don't have any support from social workers and I don't trust them or the system. I am scared they will do what they did with [REDACTED] This has affected my relationship with [REDACTED] Our bond has been broken and that is difficult.
146. I had a Who Cares? worker called Lorraine when I was in Drylaw and I spoke to her recently. She acknowledged that the way [REDACTED] was taken away from me and the way I was treated when I was in Drylaw wasn't right.
147. There was such a huge impact on my education because I was never in a stable environment. I think I was smart enough but I struggled to learn because so much else was going on. There was mention in my records about me having possible learning difficulties but nothing was done to find out what or to help me.

148. My self-esteem was so low after leaving care. I had no respect for myself and just really wanted to die, but I wasn't suicidal. My mental health has always been bad and I think that is because of the things that were projected on to me as a child. Nobody ever spoke to me and told me that what I experienced as a child was abusive. I never got that acknowledgment from anyone.
149. It took longer for me to grow up mentally because of the abuse I suffered so living alone was difficult as a seventeen year old. It made me drink a lot and invite anyone to my house to drink just out of loneliness. I wasn't a confident person and I found I was more chatty when I was drinking. I was drinking too much for a while, and using alcohol to block things out.
150. I have ended up being in abusive relationships because that was the vibe I was used to growing up so seemed to attract that. I never bothered reporting anything to the police because I don't see the point. I don't think I would be believed because that has always been my experience.
151. I sometimes have flashbacks and just randomly cry. I have tried to turn my mental health around and am trying to be in a better place now for myself and so I can be a better support for [REDACTED] who is about to start high school.

Current support

152. I had counselling before but it wasn't the right time or the right worker. I have started again recently and I have a good counsellor right now, which is helping. I have also researched about childhood abuse and trauma and am learning how to cope. I know now that what happened to me wasn't my fault.
153. I haven't had any diagnosis other than depression. I was put on anti-depressants but I have taken myself off them because I think they just cover emotions and don't actually help. I have been on several different types of medication which haven't helped.

154. It is hard to get help if you don't have a physical problem. I found that I got more support when I was drinking too much than I do now that I am trying to better myself.

Reporting of Abuse

155. I reported [REDACTED] to the police when I was about nineteen years old. I remember a female police officer coming to my flat in Gorgie to take a statement. I reported him for physical and sexual abuse. The police questioned him but he denied everything so nothing ever happened to him. Even if the sexual abuse was wrong, he still assaulted three children so he still should have been charged with that. There is so much about him being violent in my records so I don't understand how he wasn't charged. I was really angry about that.
156. I have thought about taking legal action against the council but I don't really know how to go about it.

Records

157. I got my records when I was nineteen years old and went through them with my Through Care Worker, Carol. She was getting upset reading them. I got them again recently. I think I have received three different versions. It made me mad reading them because so much is blacked out, yet there are other things I can see that should be confidential. They are not even in the correct order. It is just really disrespectful.
158. In my records, I am called manipulative because I was saying one thing to [REDACTED] and another thing to my mum, and that I was attention seeking because of the things I was doing, including self-harming. That was weird for me to read because I would think that attention seeking was normal for a teenager. It seems from my records that a lot of the blame was put on me even though it was clear how much abuse was going on, yet they were blaming the child. It made me angry reading them.

Lessons to be Learned

159. Every child should have at least someone outside the family who they know, trust and can speak to. There should be one consistent person. There needs to be more support offered by schools. There should be someone available at school who young people can trust and talk to. There should also be some sort of safe place offered during school holidays, like community centres that young people can go to.
160. There should also be one place that any social worker or care worker can go to and read about a child's situation instead of the child having to repeat themselves to lots of different adults. It shouldn't be the young person's responsibility to keep repeating their own trauma to new and strange adults.
161. I think every kid should learn about safe sex, consent and contraception when they are thirteen years old, especially when they are in strange environments in the care system, often from troubled family situations, vulnerable and also have all these hormones flying about.
162. When a child grows up in a toxic environment, they don't develop in the same way as other children so they will struggle when they are put into care, even if they have foster carers who are ok. People who work with kids, including carers and social workers, need to be sympathetic to that and offer support to help them heal. They should be trained to read between the lines and look into the reasons behind why a child might be acting out. They need to listen and know what to look out for. They need to be more human and maybe share something about themselves so that a child can open up to them. That is how relationships work. It doesn't always have to be so professional with so many boundaries.
163. When a child in care who is abused has a baby themselves, it feels like everyone is against them. It feels like carers, social workers and everyone official thinks that you will be abusive with your baby too. It seems to be a common thing that when children who have been in the care system themselves have kids, their kids seem to get

removed from them. That shouldn't happen. It is like we are being punished as children and again as parents.

164. There needs to be more support and encouragement for young people when they are pregnant and have babies, instead of being judged and having their children taken away. When you are in the care system yourself, you don't have a good example of what parenting should look like, so when you then have children yourself, you don't have the tools to be able to be a good parent. Young parents who have been in the care system should get more support and be taught how to parent, run a home and budget, without judgment. There needs to be a proper mother and baby unit available for young parents in the care system.
165. 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.. GDV

Dated.. 31st January 2022