

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

LAE [REDACTED]

Support person present: No

1. My name is LAE [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1982. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. My father was [REDACTED] and my mother was [REDACTED] I have three sisters, my older sister [REDACTED] and two younger sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]
3. My father has another son to a different woman, along with bringing up her own children. I don't know anything about them. He was living two lives, one with my mother in Scotland and a separate life with a woman in Oxford. He was saying he was travelling to Oxford for work and back to Scotland for football. I think the reason for him finally moving was when the other woman had my step brother.
4. When I was born I was given LAE [REDACTED] as my surname, which is my father's name and is on my birth certificate. I found out recently from my records that my mum assumed, unofficially, my name as being LAE [REDACTED] who was the father of my youngest sister. When I first went into care I was admitted under the name LAE [REDACTED]. At one point I was also known as LAE [REDACTED] the surname being my mother's maiden name. When I went into one of the foster care families, with a view to being adopted, my name was changed, by the social work, to LAE [REDACTED] This was done prior to the adoption process being completed which in the end failed. There was never under any official legal process or through deed poll.

5. My mother was no longer with my dad and was having issues with him and the way he was abusing her. She moved away from him and into Galashiels. She met a random guy at a bus stop and moved in with him.
6. I don't have many memories of our time in Galashiels, except for the negative things. I can't remember what we did on a day to day basis.
7. Both my younger sisters had very serious health issues. This resulted in both of them having to have many operations to try and right what was going wrong. As a result of all those trips for the studies and operations in London, it meant that mum was with them and she left us in the care of different babysitters. Those babysitters would just stay in our house and supposedly look after us. Most of those people were total strangers to my older sister, [REDACTED] and I.
8. One of the babysitters who was supposed to be looking after us could not keep his hands to themselves and there was a lot of sexual abuse of both myself and [REDACTED]. This was carried out on a regular basis and he was very methodical. He would have me sitting on the settee beside him and masturbate him until he ejaculated. He would have a towel over his lap as I had to do this and use that to clean up afterwards. I don't know who those people were who were looking after us, just that they were known to my mother. It was not just one guy, but many different people and it was the same for my sister.
9. This abuse led me to being a problem to my mother whenever she had appointments to attend with my sisters. Whenever the appointments were due I would play up as much as possible trying to stop her going. She would have thought at that time that it was to do with my sisters, when in fact it was because of the abuse I sustained while she was out. My playing up I believe would have been some of the cause for my mother to go to social services.
10. When I was in that house I don't remember anything about any school life or having friends. All I do remember about my life then was I was turning feral. The turning feral

I would say is probably a result of the sexual abuse I was suffering and the attention seeking would be more linked to needing my parents.

11. When I was about sixteen I tracked my mother down. After a couple of visits she told me she wanted nothing to do with me and after that I did not have anything to do with her. Around 2009 I told her about the abuse and she rejected it and called me a liar. She did the same when my sister disclosed to her. We never discussed it with anyone else at the time.
12. I think the social work got involved because my sister and I were getting into trouble with the police for many different things. On some of those occasions my big sister would tell me to do something and whatever it was she wanted me to do, I did it. There was one time [REDACTED] to scare my mother [REDACTED].
13. I was also hanging about the forests and rivers, just wandering around and getting into some dangerous situations. On one occasion I had to be rescued from the river when I was caught in an eddy. The more my mum was away the more I was getting into bother. On one occasion I was being taken away by the police and I fought with them so much it took six of them to get me under control.
14. There was an Anna O'Reilly, a social worker, who was involved with some of my care decisions relating to myself and the family. Later, I think during some of my time in care one of the social workers was called Gordon and nearer the end of my time in my care there was also a man, David Bell. I think they were from the local social work office in Galashiels.

[REDACTED] Family, Peebles

15. It was decided that I would be placed into care for respite from all that was happening with my family. I was then placed into foster care with the [REDACTED] family. I think it was in Peebles but it was certainly in the Borders. I was probably still six when this

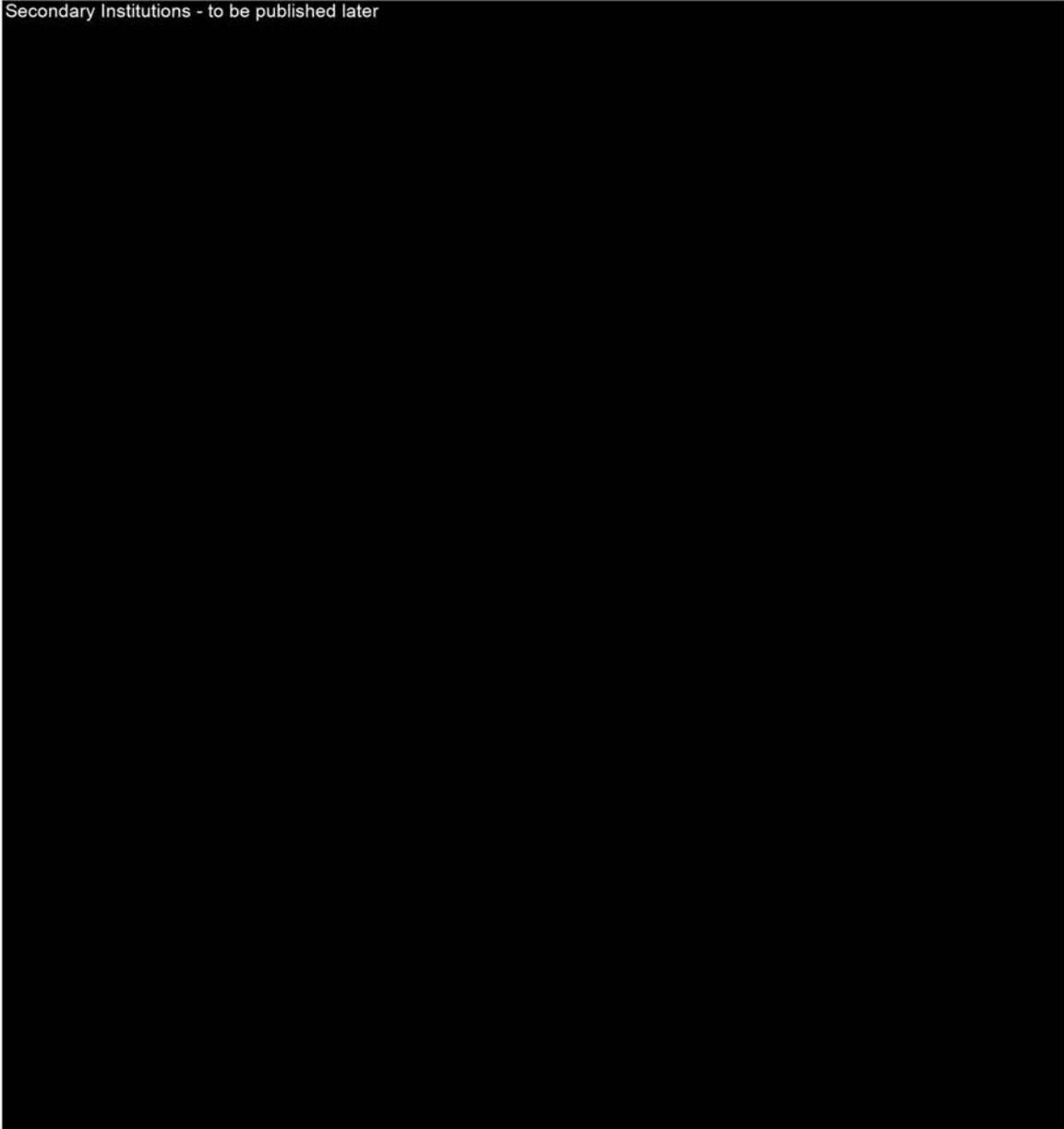
happened and I was there between three and four months. There is a chance it might be a year but I was seven or eight when I was in The Priory. It was just me that was ever placed into care.

16. I was told by the social work that this would only be a short stay and that I would be back with my mother and siblings at the end of this period. That turned out to be a lie and I never got back to stay with my mum and was in the social work care until I was eighteen.
17. When I arrived there was another older girl staying with the [REDACTED]. I think her name was [REDACTED] and she was also being fostered by that family.
18. When I stayed with the [REDACTED] family I think it was over a Christmas period. I can remember being given a new BMX as a present. That was my first bike.
19. I don't recall much about the day to day routine but I don't have any bad memories of staying with them. I do remember it was over a Christmas period and I was missing my family.
20. I was still under the impression I would have been going back to stay with my mum. I can only presume that in between me leaving the house and the social work placing me here, mum has told the social work that she did not want me back in the house. As a result of that I can only think that was why the social work had to find me something long term. Nothing was explained to me at the time.
21. I was told later in life by my older sister [REDACTED] that my mother had grown to resent me. I was the only boy in the family and I was named after her abusive ex and reminded her of him. I was also becoming more difficult to handle. I was doing anything to get attention, including throwing myself in front of a car. All this combined to build that resentment.

Leaving [REDACTED] Family, Peebles

- 22. The social work had decided that my so called short stay with the [REDACTED] family was to come to an end and that I was being moved to The Priory Children's Home in Selkirk.

The Priory Children's Home, Selkirk

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Leaving The Priory Children’s Home, Selkirk

51. After being in The Priory for about a year it was closed down and I was moved to the new building Rowanlea in Galashiels. Along with most of the staff, and one other boy, I can’t remember his name, we were taken to Galashiels. The other residents were moved to other homes.

Rowanlea Children’s Home, Galashiels



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LAC-SPO Dalry, Glasgow

91. In the build up to going to LAC-SPO family the social work had been trying different things to have me adopted by a family. Along with the Be My Parent magazine, there was Who Cares, Barnardo's and some other adoption agencies all with a view of advertising me for adoption. After many months of those efforts they found LAC-SPO family who stayed in the Dalry area in Glasgow.

Routine at LAC-SPO Dalry, Glasgow

92. LAC-SPO were the family I was taken to. The social work told me that I was going out to this family. They did not tell me it was for adoption. They put it that I would be there for a while away from Rowanlea, like fostering. It was sold to me as being the best for me. I was introduced to the family one day and then when I was back at Rowanlea and asked whether I was happy to stay with them. Secondary Institutions - to be published later. I also thought I was going into a normal environment.

93. The social work took me to LAC-SPO either after a few days and certainly very quickly. Everyone seemed happy with the arrangement. I was definitely happy because I knew if I did not go, I would be in Rowanlea until I was sixteen, at least.
94. Both LAC and were in their fifties. LAC is an artist. Now as I look back I feel so sorry for them. They had been given a different story by the social work from what it was really going to be like. They were in no way prepared or experienced to be taking on an angry young boy. They had no clue of the problems that I had experienced and the behaviour that I would go on to display.
95. From day one they did not know how to talk with me or to deal with how I was still reacting to the abuse I had previously been receiving. They were just trying to do a good thing by giving a child a proper home. They would not have been aware that they were receiving a child. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published that there was every chance that at some point I would kick off with being angry inside.
96. Things had moved so fast with the arrangements and it was then the social work changed my name to LAC-SPO. This was from the very beginning of the arrangement before the whole adoption process had taken place. I was signed up for the local school, even though it was some years since I was last at a school.
97. I can say that at the beginning my time at LAC-SPO was really good. was Irish and a nice quiet woman. She was quite a good cook and I ate quite well when I stayed with them. I was never hungry there. Secondary Institutions - to be published later. It was obvious they had plenty of money with the large house they stayed in.
98. LAC was an artist who sculpted many things from clay. He made when I was there and I helped him with that. That item is was displayed in the Tate Modern Gallery. That was probably what made my time there good as I enjoyed art and this fitted with me. He had his own kiln in the shed.

99. Very soon after arriving I found that [LAC] liked to drink his whisky. That mixed along with him being a really big built guy, being over six foot in height and this big beard, he gave off a very oppressive appearance. When he was speaking to you, you could constantly smell the whisky on his breath. I don't think he realised with his build and demeanour that he was coming across as oppressive. I don't think he did it deliberately or realised how I might react when he did this.
100. We began having arguments and he would try to use his size to oppress me, standing very close and leaning over me as he was shouting. Because of my previous problems with bigger and older children and grown-ups, trying to hurt me, the first thought in my head was that I might have to defend myself. The more he argued, the more I was arguing back. I was used to standing up for myself and he had no idea what I was like.
101. On one occasion he was so drunk and it ended up with him and me physically fighting. He was trying to hold onto me as he was arguing and I was so used to trying to stop people doing that.
102. About twelve hours later I found myself back at Rowanlea. I had spent about eight or nine months with [LAC-SPO] family. I had previously had conversations with staff at Rowanlea that I was not happy about being with [LAC-SPO]. They did not listen, I don't know if it was because they were happy I was not with them or they were trying to see if things would improve with time.
103. I still feel sorry for [LAC-SPO] as I think they were trying to do something good for a child. I am almost certain that as a result of the experience of having me they would have been put off adopting ever again.
104. I have checked with different agencies and I was never actually adopted by the family. But even when I was back at Rowanlea the staff were still using the surname [LAC-SPO] me. This surname was being used in all my care records from then on.

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

Unknown Children's Residential School

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Underley Hall Residential School, Cumbria

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Hillside Residential School, Aberdour

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Supported Accommodation, Galashiels

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Life after being in care

150. When I had left Rowanlea I managed to get a job working in a [REDACTED] factory in Galashiels. I had nowhere to really go and found myself migrating back to Rowanlea to visit with the staff. Eventually they had a conversation with me and told me that as I was no longer in their care the insurance would not allow for me to be on the premises, so I could not go back there.

151. Working in the [REDACTED] factory was just a constant routine, from the job and for when you could have meal or toilet breaks. I knew that I could not function like that. I knew I could not do anything as the social work had parental rights over me until I was eighteen.

152. Two days after my eighteenth birthday I packed my things and handed over the keys to my flat. I had about one hundred pounds saved up. I used the money to get a train to London. When I arrived there I did not like it and got the last train as far south as I could go. The last stop for the train was Hastings and that was where I got off and have stayed ever since. The furniture and all my property was sold by the social work and they forwarded the money. I had left contact details when I left.

153. I was homeless for a little while. I eventually managed to get a job in a bar and then into security work. I then worked and was trained by that security firm, where I spent about seventeen years. I then had a wide range of other jobs, putting wedding marquees up, photography and landscaping.

154. I did have a job as a senior bar man with Pontins holiday camp. During that time I was living on the site. At that time I applied for my CRB and never gave a thought about anything. As far as I was concerned the issue with my girlfriend had been dealt with at the Children's Panel. It took about four months for that to come through and when it did come back I discovered the conviction for the sex offence. I was taken into the office and given four hours to grab some of my things and had to leave the camp. I had nowhere to go and no family or friends that would be able to help me. I managed to stay with a friend in Hastings and two days later went back with a van. When I arrived at the camp they had completely emptied my chalet. Everything I had was disposed of.

155. It happened again when I was working at a hospital. I was there for about six years as security officer then as a porter. I then completed the course as a health care assistant and was working as an auxiliary nurse in the Accident and Emergence Department. I wanted to progress into emergency nursing. Again I was back into the office trying to explain the record. The manager listened to me and I was able to show the dates involved I eventually left that job as I was taking custody of my oldest son and was fighting the family court to retain that custody.

156. Even now I will not apply for a position if there are any children involved. There is nothing to stop me it is just so I do not have to go through any embarrassment and find out will they believe me.
157. I have tried to start a project within my boy's school about growing strawberries, turning it into jam and selling it for profit for the school. But again because of my conviction would be disclosed. I had a business where I was growing some of the hottest chillies in the world. I only gave that business up when I had to deal with all the issues I was dealing with at the family court.
158. I have had to go through two family courts where this conviction is disclosed. The judge has had to make a decision in each case knowing of this conviction. As well this the conviction has been disclosed to my ex-partners who already have issues with me.

Impact

159. I went from a life of living in a home, being fed three times a day and staff helping out with all my washing, to living in flat and no knowledge at all how to live there. I had never been given any education as to what I would need to do to survive. The social work were happy that they got me benefits and then just left me to fend for myself.
160. I managed to track my mum down and when I went to see her she told me wanted nothing to do with me. I did get to see [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] when they came home from school but they did not remember me and it was obvious mum had told them nothing about me. Although they now know about me there is not what you could call a relationship.
161. Part of not having a real relationship with my sisters is that I feel I am not there and being able to protect them if necessary. My youngest sister was in a bad marriage and I feel that if we were a normal family I would have been there to guide and protect her as any brother would. She had to suffer in that relationship being physically abused and I could not be there to help.

162. I am trying to make sure that neither of my sons will ever end up in any care system and educate them on the many pitfalls they will face in the real world.
163. I know my education was affected by my time in care. Despite all of that I put a lot of effort in at the end and got good grades with my exams. My whole family have all managed to make a success of life and had good careers. I took after my father who was a senior engineer with [REDACTED] My uncle, on dad's side, works in Oxford as does one of his sons and his other son is a [REDACTED] Again I take some of those skills as I love my cooking. My son is even named after [REDACTED]
164. While I have been in Hastings I started to do a Diploma in Mechanical Engineering at Hastings College. I had to leave the course for financial reasons.
165. When I was fighting for custody of my older son I spent six years educating myself in Child Custody laws all which led to me being able to represent myself in those courts and winning the case. I was doing a Master's degree in Applied Social Science. I had to give that up while I fought my ex-partner who had made false allegations of abuse. I then had to waste two years of my life fighting and again winning that case.
166. As far as education is concerned it showed that if I was given the opportunity I passed my GCSE's with only a short period of study, I was accepted and doing well on the Diploma course and later the Degree course in a different field. I feel if I was given a better opportunity I know I would have been successful.
167. Later in life I found out that an aunt and uncle fostered children throughout the whole time I was in care. It turned out that because of family circumstances they were not aware I was in care. I have been told by them had they known, then they would have taken me under their care. That means if that had been known I would not have needed to be in care at any of the placements. There is a big opportunity that was missed which could have changed my life.

168. My time in care has affected my son where he has never received birthday cards from his wider family, he goes to nativity plays at his school, but no grandparents smiling back at him. On school sports days he has no grandparents proudly cheering him on. He has a younger brother who he has still to meet. When he does that will be the first baby he will have held. I have not been in a family relationship long enough for him to learn what it is like. I can provide all the things a father should provide but he misses out on other relationships.
169. I really have difficulty in putting into a few words the many things that affected me in my life. Looking into any window of someone's house, you can see the close family connections. Some of the way I have been told that when I am in relationships is that I come across as someone who doesn't care, which is not the case at all. I think the person that the social care system created is not the person who gained some freedom and grew into a vastly different and better person. The impact on being in care for twelve years has not just affected me but also my own sons, and my sister's lives.
170. I have very few people in my life that I can say are friends. I have stayed in Hastings for twenty years and my neighbours only know me as LAE they don't know my surname. They don't know how I ended up coming to Hastings to stay.
171. As far as my health is concerned my time in care has left me with so much stress in my life. I am always doing and planning many things at a thousand miles an hour about fifteen different subjects. I have never been to have any proper psychological help.
172. I also have issues when I visit the dentist that I have to have a pair of safety glasses completely painted black so I do not see the dentist leaning over me. This is a direct result of the people leaning over me when I was being restrained and abused.
173. I was recommended to try a twelve week cognitive therapy course, which would have needed much more help as this short course would have only opened the problem and not enough time to sort the issues. I once dated a cognitive therapist, who bluntly told me I had no chance of making any changes within that twelve week programme. As far as I am concerned it would take many doctors years to be able to make any

changes to my mental health. Perhaps if I was seen back when I left care it may have made a difference but not now.

174. I think when I was in the early years at Rowanlea I was sent to see a psychologist but it was a short period and never long enough to get the benefit they were looking for.

Reporting of Abuse

175. I have not reported any of the incidents that happened to me and my sister within the family home, by the babysitters. We have no idea who those people were. As for the incidents while I was in care, there was no one I could talk to. Any reporting that was carried out was the social work reporting me, Secondary Institutions - to be published later
Secondary Institutions - to be published late If they were not taking any heed of that there was no chance they would listen to any complaints I had to make.

176. I did contact the Scottish Police at one point and tried to make enquiries if there was any way I could fight the convictions on my record. They told me there was nothing that could be done as I could not have a conviction removed.

177. Secondary Institutions - to be published later
[Redacted]

178. I have made contact with "Who Cares" as that organisation are making enquiries about incidents where children in care have received convictions for things that happened to

them while within a home environment, where if the children were within their natural family environment it would not be classed as offences. They have since sent me their 2018 report but it does not help my circumstances. I would have to see someone on a one to one basis.

179. As far as the offence of being with my girlfriend I have to accept that this was an offence, but having had no education on those matters I am upset about that, but also know ignorance is not a defence. I would question the fact that at no time during any of the incidents I was convicted of did I ever have any legal representation.

Records

180. I applied to Scottish Borders Council to obtain my social work records. I was told by the person dealing with this that it took a member of staff five days a week for four months to go through them all and have them redacted. There are two folders of my life in care. I have still to read most of it, but have read about specific times that I wanted to find out about. Most of what is written has been from someone who had punished me and was giving a one sided account.
181. Within those records there is a note signed by my mother saying that she was relinquishing all parental rights to me. I think that was written when the children's services were trying to have me adopted. My father has since told me that he was never asked about that and he never gave up his parental rights. That note is also saying that she is giving up ^{LAE} [REDACTED] not ^{LAE} [REDACTED]
182. I think this is a critical factor as it potentially means they had no legal right to do what they did. Where is the formal paperwork to say they had the legal right to have sent me for adoption? Throughout this does it mean they had no legal right to restrain me, to keep taking me back when I ran away, or me to suffer being handcuffed and taken to a different country. My health records, police convictions and all the documentation are all in the wrong names. Before I was twenty seven I had no formal identification in my real name, other than my birth certificate under ^{LAE} [REDACTED] which they have ignored.

183. I have made enquiries with deed poll and different adoption agencies and at no point is there any record of an official paper showing my name having been changed. The only change made was by the social work department and they have gone against the one official document I have for myself, my birth certificate. [REDACTED] family could not have given me the new name as they would only be allowed to do that when the adoption process was completed, which it never was.
184. Because the social work changed my name [REDACTED] that was the name they gave to the police when I was charged with offences. As a result of me making enquiries with the police I discovered that there were no convictions under [REDACTED] but all under [REDACTED]. Since then the records have either been amalgamated or cross referred somehow. These convictions follow me wherever I go.
185. Having been involved in Child Protection system with regard to my own family I have studied and been able to confirm that to change my name they should have had some sort of legal document with that name on it, but they never did. They just took away my family identity and that has affected me throughout my life.
186. They should have been in possession of legal documents showing that my correct name is [REDACTED]. It is completely inappropriate to have a person with a wrong name in their care history. I cannot request correct information as it is all under [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] Everything the social work, police records and health records as they are all in the wrong name. As an adult because of how the social work changed my name, I cannot get anything with [REDACTED] because they changed the name without authority. Even if they had recorded me under my correct name but marked it as preferred to be known as whatever they wanted, we could still get my proper records. I cannot even tell if my health records are properly documented because of the name changes. At this time I don't know if they have the original health number or have they had me issued with a new health number. If I was to die suddenly all the traces they would try would be under [REDACTED] who does not exist. Even the police fingerprint records are under the name of [REDACTED].

187. How many other kids in care have had their names changed by the social work or carers without any legal authority? Do the people making these decisions know the damage they are doing by taking away the identity we have. At what age were these changes being made and how much has been lost by those kids or people trying to trace them later as adults. They are taking away any links to a person's past.

Lessons to be learned

188. Some of the fundamental things that the Inquiry should be looking at is the legality of the things that the social work did to me. From the very basics of changing my name, not just once but on two separate occasions. None of them with me being consulted in any way. I was LAE then went into care as LAE and came out as LAC-SPO Neither of LAE LAC-SPO having any legal right to be given to me.

189. Do the social work have the right to take parental rights over a child without any court order or by parents handing over a child when the name was wrong? If not, how many kids in care were placed there without any legal power? Children's rights are something that need to be looked at and protected. Secondary Institutions - to be published late

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Other information

- 191. There must be a better oversight of children in care. But you have to get a balance where there are not too many managers checking the systems and not enough people looking after the children.

- 192. There must be a proper and considered care plan for children taken into care. It must also be recognised that respite is fine and well, but it does not take four months. That is something more and needs better planning and structure.

- 193. There must be a method for the children who are in care to have someone listen to them and take heed when changes of moods and character are taking place. People need to be there to listen and take action on behalf of those children. This cannot be a one off and must be an ongoing thing for the children throughout their time in care. There should be an allocated Advocate or Guardian for the children to ensure the legal things are done for the sake of the children, to look after my human and legal rights are looked after and not to do with the finances and ensure events and decisions are not hidden by members of staff. Those Advocates or Guardian also need powers independent of Social Work to ensure if anything is needing to be done it is and with the relevant authority. I think Children's Services are needing to be reformed and stop them operating outside the law.

- 194. 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..... 18 April 2022