

Statement Addendum

Client Name: Annmarie Beattie
Date of Birth: 12/03/1981
Care Setting: Foster Care Gibbons
Dates: 1984
Persons Involved: Thomas Gibbons

Full Statement

Before I went into care, I was taken away from my mother because my stepfather was sexually abusive towards me from a very young age. I was also severely neglected. This abuse and neglect caused deep trauma and left me extremely vulnerable and in need of protection.

When I was placed into care, I was placed with the Gribbin household. From my very first memories of being with this foster family, I felt sad, lonely, and unsafe. Instead of being protected, the abuse continued. I was allowed and encouraged to drink alcohol with the foster carers, even though I was a child. Thomas Gribbin would then take me to bed after I had been made to drink.

At the time, there was also a respite carer living in the home, Stephen Weaker, because his other carers were on holiday. The first time the sexual abuse happened, Stephen left the room, but Thomas Gribbin stayed. While I was intoxicated, Thomas Gribbin touched me under my pyjamas and sexually abused me. Because I was drunk and a child, I did not understand what was happening or how to stop it. The next day, Thomas Gribbin threatened me and told me not to tell anyone.

Despite this, I tried to tell my social worker what had happened, but nothing was done. After that, the abuse became ongoing. Thomas Gribbin would make sexual comments to me, touch me in secret, force me to drink alcohol, and take me to bed. The sexual abuse happened most nights and continued for several years. I estimate that this happened to me at least 20 times, if not more.

Alongside the sexual abuse, I was also physically and emotionally abused. I was punished and controlled and was not allowed to express myself as a girl. I was stopped from wearing dresses or lipstick. I was often bullied and at times locked in my bedroom. A neighbour witnessed Thomas Gribbin physically assaulting me and reported it to social services. This was a clear cry for help at a time when I felt completely unable to speak up and completely unsupported.

Although the female carer could be kind to me at times, she repeatedly turned a blind eye to the abuse. When she was drunk, she would fall asleep, leaving me alone with Thomas Gribbin. During these times, I lived in constant fear. I panicked from morning until night, never knowing when the abuse would happen again.

When the sexual abuse started, I tried to run away to protect myself. Eventually, a woman I knew helped me when I ran away and took me back to the foster home. She saw that the foster carers were intoxicated, witnessed Thomas Gribbin's behaviour, and heard inappropriate things being said to me. She reported this to social services. As a result, my social worker was dismissed. This intervention saved my life. I truly believe that if I had been forced to stay in that placement any longer, I would have taken my own life, as I was not being listened to and the situation was destroying my mental health.

I later became aware that another young woman who had previously been in the Gribbins' care had made similar reports of abuse, yet no action had been taken at that time either. This shows a serious failure to protect and that the abuse could have been prevented if appropriate action had been taken earlier. When I was first placed with the Gribbins, it was classed as supported lodgings because no foster placement was available. After approximately two and a half months, I was moved to another foster placement with people of a similar age. I believe I was targeted and mistreated because I was the last child placed, which is how I ended up living with the Gribbins.

Throughout my time in care, I was repeatedly picked on, manipulated, and harmed. The most damaging experience of all was being a victim of sexual abuse and the repeated failure of professionals to protect me. The long-term effects of what I went through have been devastating. I now suffer from severe anxiety, PTSD, and depression, and I am currently on medication. I struggle to trust people and find it extremely difficult to form relationships. I suffer from frequent nightmares and ongoing emotional distress.

Being forced to drink alcohol from a young age led me into substance misuse as a way to block out the trauma. I have worked hard to regain control of my life and am now drug-free, but the pain and impact of the abuse remain and will never fully disappear.