

WITNESS STATEMENT OF MR COLIN SANDERS

Application to the Scottish Redress Scheme

Applicant: Mr Colin Sanders

Applicants Date of Birth: 11th March 1972

Application Reference: APP855512

Personal Information

1. My name is Michelle Sanders.
2. Me and Colin met in 1997 and we have lived together since 1998.
3. I see and support Colin every single day.

Knowledge of Abuse

4. I first became aware of my husband's experience of abuse around 12 years ago when he opened up to me about it.
5. I found out about this abuse as our relationship had been affected severely by the problems Colin had from his time in care.
6. He had to tell me so I could understand his behaviour in our relationship.
7. Colin has told me everything about what happened in drips and drabs over the years.
8. A lot of Colin's behaviour did not make any sense until he had told me about the abuse.
9. He found this hard to tell me because he thought that if he did that I would not be sexually attracted to him anymore.

Changes You Have Observed

10. I have always known Colin has an anxiety issue, I remember him going to the GP to get medication for this.
11. When we would go out together he would always be quite aggressive and end up getting into fights.
12. I always thought that because he wasn't raised by his parents and was in and out of care he hadn't had a loving woman in his life so I wanted to show him what a faithful caring woman was like.
13. This was never natural to him because he never lived in a natural family environment.
14. Being around my family members he would shake and sweat.
15. Going out to family events he would try and make excuses not to go and if he went he would need alcohol.
16. Colin would accuse any other male in the room for looking at me or him, this would always lead to him fighting with other men outside the nightclubs and I mean like groups of men even when he was on his own.
17. It was like he enjoyed being hurt or having pain inflicted.
18. When my mum and dad visited he would say he is ill and shut himself in the bedroom.
19. Colin doesn't trust anyone at all, he trusts me more than he trusts anyone this is only after 30 years or connecting with him.
20. Colin will always question everyone's motives even our neighbor after having a quick chat in the garden.
21. The shame and guilt came more after he opened up and told me about the abuse.
22. He would feel very ashamed after I knew everything that happened to him.
23. He feels much shame about the abuse that happened to him a bit later on in his teenage years as these happened more recently.
24. Colin carries the shame that no one ever loved him after trying for years to get his mothers love and she always rejected him, this caused a lot of shame and made it harder for him to understand that he could be loved.
25. Colin struggled with counselling because he didn't want to open up to them.

26. Colin only felt comfortable telling yourselves about this because you are not local.
27. Colin first approached his GP in 1999 for his struggle sleeping, they prescribed him marzipan.
28. He struggles to sleep in the night when everyone else is sleeping but when I am up he will sleep fine on the couch.
29. He always has to sleep while he is facing the door.
30. We went to a phycologist meeting and he said that he could only sleep during the day because he felt comfortable when I was there.
31. Colin doesn't fall asleep naturally because his mind will keep him awake, he must have the tv or any sound for him to fall asleep so he doesn't get into his own head.
32. He wakes up in the night in cold sweats from nightmares then has to stay awake because he thinks he will go back into the nightmare if he goes back to sleep too quickly.
33. When I wake him up I have to always do it gently.
34. The build up to going out anywhere Colin can become very overwhelmed, simple things like going to the supermarket or to his GP he will get really worked up about.
35. Things like even just receiving a phone call from professionals he will get worked up about.
36. When someone calls to speak to him and I try to pass the phone to him, he will get very overwhelmed because he hasn't prepared himself in his mind for this.
37. He will sometimes be in the garden and see someone coming past or towards him, he will then quickly go back into the house to avoid any conversation.
38. I am officially Colin's appointee because he struggles so much with phone calls and meetings about his health.
39. The anxiety can be so bad he doesn't process anything in the time on calls or in meetings because he is just in his own head with anxiety.
40. I have tried lots of different techniques to help with this but nothing seems to really work.
41. When he was a smoker years ago he would burn himself with cigarettes when I wasn't there or looking.
42. Colin will say things like if i or the children weren't alive today he wouldn't be here, he says we are the only reason he hasn't gone through it yet.

- 43. Since I met him like the first 20 years he abused alcohol.
- 44. He always had to have drinks every day not to the point of black out drunk but just so he could fall asleep easier.
- 45. He used to smoke cannabis a lot and take class A drugs to go out and party just to detach him from reality as this was his only time he could escape his memories.
- 46. Colin has told me that things are much harder mentally for him now without having the escape of drugs and alcohol.

Day-to-Day Impact

- 47. Colin's sleep is very bad and ends up sleeping in naps during the day.
- 48. Our son and daughter both live at home and as they have gotten older now they have started noticing and mentioning his lack of hygiene day to day.
- 49. Things like not showering or changing his clothes regularly, we even got a new shower 2 weeks or so ago and he hasn't used it yet.
- 50. Where we live there are not a lot of people, it is very small so we can spend a lot of time outside together but when we have to go to the city for shopping or other things he will not come with me he has to sit in the car.
- 51. Colin was a drummer but he always had to be under the influence of something to be able to perform or play drums so he doesn't do that now because he doesn't feel comfortable taking any substances anymore.
- 52. Colin's Dad played the drums and taught him but he doesn't do these things anymore which causes his opinion on himself to be very low.
- 53. He was a very talented fly fisherman and our son wanted to try it so he took him once but he doesn't do it for himself anymore.
- 54. Any sort of hobbies and interests he had he does not do anymore.
- 55. Colin was very un-educated, he is very smart and just lacked a proper education so he was unable to properly read a book.
- 56. Now all Colin really does is listen to music and watch tv.
- 57. He doesn't socialise at all, he will have a conversation with our neighbor when he is out doing the garden but that's as far as he goes socialising outside the family.
- 58. He only keeps up with a handful of friends over text messages but does not go out to see them.

59. In terms of managing money, he does have a bank card and we do have a joint bank account but I sort all the bills out and pay them all.
60. When I became very ill in hospital with pneumonia for a while he realised how much he was unable to do on his own.
61. He keeps a bit of cash in his wallet for himself and to get me birthday gifts and things but in terms of everything else financially I take care of that.
62. Colin is triggered all the time, things like smells I can't predict.
63. A lot of the time when something comes up on tv he will be triggered by that and i will have to turn it off quickly.
64. He doesn't like plum tomatoes because of something that happened to him in care to do with plum tomatoes.
65. When we pass the buildings sometimes where he was placed in care and abused this can ruin Colin's mood completely as you would expect.
66. Colin can go from being in a great mood and being really happy and as soon as a trigger comes up then he just shuts himself up completely, goes quiet and wont speak to anyone.
67. I have to speak to him a few times when this happens and try to bring him back to reality as he ends up getting in his head with his past memories.
68. When Colin becomes triggered or distressed he goes into fight or flight, wont eat anything and does things like sit on the bed staring into space with all of his clothes on.

Impact on Relationships and Family Life

69. In the beginning of our relationship there were a lot of trust issues, jealousy and accusing me of things with no substance.
70. Over time he gained trust but always thought that i was going to leave him, saying that i would leave him after something as if i was waiting for something to happen to then leave him.
71. Once he dropped the act and I got to know the real him after he opened up about the abuse he struggled to understand that I loved him more for this.
72. Colin felt very insecure after initially telling me about the abuse.
73. If we weren't having sex then Colin would always think that i dont want to be with him anymore.

74. He has never been physically violent towards me but he has been very aggressive in front of me.
75. He knows that he can't be angry with me, it's just all of the emotions coming out from the past.
76. I would always try to help him through these times of anger but he has told me he does feel jealous over the fact that I had a totally opposite upbringing. This made it very hard for me to understand how Colin felt.
77. On occasions when I have tried to help Colin it doesn't matter what I say to him, he will take it as criticism even when I'm just trying to help.
78. Colin will tell me that I don't understand, that I have had a perfect life and have my mum to talk to still.
79. He has a good relationship with my mom and dad, they have always respected him because of how much i wanted to be with him.
80. Colin always tried his best with our relationship and they see that so they are very understanding.
81. In terms of our children, Colin is a great dad, the children are all very happy and have a good outlook on life like myself.
82. Our children just struggle to understand that their dad still struggles with his mental health and physical health.
83. The abuse is obviously something that we would hide from the kids.
84. If Colin ever became triggered or was having a bad day he would isolate himself from the kids, say he is ill and stay in bed.
85. We have a granddaughter that he would not change her nappies at 2 years old because he thought it was inappropriate as well as sleeping in the same bed but to me this was normal for families to do.
86. Colin can feel as though he is a hindrance to his children because of these things.
87. Our children just really struggle to understand why their father is still struggling because they are living a happy life.
88. Sometimes our children will not sit with him because they have seen him sometimes staring at a wall when he has been triggered.
89. Colin can become jealous of my relationship with the children saying things like 'they aren't like that with me' when I have had a long conversation with them or I'm having a laugh and joke with them.

Support You Provide

90. I try my best to reassure him but sometimes he can take things the wrong way, it makes me realise that I can't help in these times with words but instead he just needs a cuddle and reassurance that we still love him.
91. I am Colin's appointee as he will struggle to process information at any sort of appointment or phone call so I must be there with him to process for him.
92. I cook all of his meals, clean his clothes, I take care of basically everything for him as he really struggles to do it for himself.
93. I order all of his medication and go to pick them up and things like that.
94. I don't have a driver's licence as Colin has a worry that if I start driving then he won't be doing anything for me so he still drives me to places and drives me to pick up medication.
95. Colin does take responsibility in taking his day time and night time medication but I do all of the orders and things like that.
96. Supporting Colin after nightmares can just depend on how bad it is. Usually I just talk to him to ask if he wants to tell me about the nightmare.
97. I try to encourage him to do something that will distract him but sometimes it just doesn't work.
98. I just always try to converse with him to distract him, if he's sat up at night I will always check up on him, stay up with him and talk with him.
99. If I need to go anywhere then the only way I can get there is by him driving me.
100. In terms of doing things for himself I can't encourage him to do these things.
101. I have tried but he has no intention in becoming friends with anyone because he really struggles to trust anyone.
102. He always questions everyone's intentions and never thinks positively about interactions with people.
103. He just always worries that we do not love him and I always try to reassure him that I want to spend the rest of my life with him.
104. He always thinks that people talk to him just try to use him, not to be friends and growing up that's just how everyone treated him in care.
105. It would always be me monitoring his emotional and mental health by checking what he's watching on the tv and what he's listening to.

106. I just try to stop him from being triggered by turning off anything on the tv that can cause him to be upset but sometimes it just gets too much and I can't.
107. Support for Colin is needed every day, every night, constantly.
108. Currently Colin knows that harming himself would just have more of an impact on me and his children so he would not do anything now, no.
109. In the past he had a motorbike that when he asked me to marry him I asked him to get rid of it because I thought he might use this as a tool to harm himself.

Wider Impact

110. Colin's lack of education means he can't really read a book.
111. This always made him worry that people would look at him differently.
112. Over the years I have taught him how to spell and read and he actually picks things up very quickly.
113. He went through a lot of different jobs as he would become confrontational with the managers as he struggles to express himself without becoming agitated.
114. Colin had a spinal injury at work and this was the last job he had about 16 years ago and hasn't worked since.
115. Back then there were a lot of jobs that you would have a timesheet or health declaration form that he would get me to fill out for him.
116. Recently Colin has had two offers to join a band as a drummer, he was speaking back and forth over text messages with the person to arrange it but when the day comes to meet them he can't bring himself to do it because of the anxiety.
117. Some of the medications Colin has been prescribed are Diazepam, Timazepam, Quetiapine, Propranolol.
118. Many times he has been referred for mental health, waited years for an appointment, went once and never went back.
119. He never managed to trust any doctor to open up as on one occasion the psychiatrist was younger than our eldest daughter which made him very uncomfortable.
120. There was another occasion when they would keep changing the doctor for the meetings making it hard for Colin to open up to them.

121. Colin has recently been referred to a community mental health team that has a psychiatrist so I am hoping that he will be able to keep going here and be able to open up.

Impact on You

122. In the beginning I found living with Colin difficult because I didn't understand.
123. I was a very trustworthy person but Colin did not see that in me and I did not understand.
124. I would go through moments of frustration because I have created a good life for Colin but I couldn't understand how he is still not getting better.
125. He would hide a lot from me and I always felt that wasn't fair.
126. I felt a lot of anger towards the people that did this to him.
127. I have always been a very happy person and treated both males and females the same but I have had to change how I act towards males to make Colin comfortable.
128. I have had to change my personality because Colin showed me a world that I had never lived in.
129. I focus on the children and then Colin over myself.
130. Financially we have always struggled but I was lucky enough to have my parents help us with this when we needed it.
131. Physically it is very tiring as I have had to do everything, cook all the dinners, do all of the night feeds with our children as infants.
132. I have given the last 40 years of my life to him to help him get better.
133. I find it difficult to be able to go out to work and come home from work without Colin worrying about who I have had contact with while I was out.
134. All I want in life is him and the children to be happy and I have dedicated myself to him for this.
135. I have always been very physically well up until last year when I had pneumonia, when this happened Colin had really stepped up by making sure the kids are fed and well looked after while I was in hospital.
136. The most difficult part about supporting Colin was realising that I would not be able to help him with everything, I can only do so much and he must seek professional help, this was very hard to come to terms with.

Overall Impact

137. The abuse that Colin suffered is still to this day stopping him enjoying life, stopping him from getting pleasure from anything and he doesn't feel or accept the love around him even though there is so much from his loving family.
138. If Colin had not suffered this abuse, oh gosh, intellectually, socially, emotionally he would be completely different.
139. He is still such a caring, compassionate person even after that happened to him so had it not, he would be a different person.
140. He would also have a better relationship with his children even though it is good it would be better.
141. Being part of a family is not natural to Colin, he still questions every interaction with his children because he does not know the normality of family life. The times where he feels uncomfortable in front of his own children when they are half naked or try to be physically intimate with them are clear examples of the lasting impact of the abuse.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Name:

Signed:

Dated: