

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AAU

Support person present: No

1. My name is AAU My date of birth is My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. While growing up I lived in the Blackburn area with my parents, and My father worked all his life. I never got on with my mother. She was psychotic and hated the girls in the family.
3. My two eldest brothers are and They are seven and six years older than me. My sister is next in line and she is four years older. My brother is three years older and then a year younger than me. was in foster care because he had measles or mumps.

Smyllum, Lanark

4. I wasn't even a year old or walking when I was put in care at Smyllum. I would have been in the nursery to start with. I can remember when I was put into the dormitory that my sister was there. I was about five years old then. My brothers were only there for a while but and I were there much longer.
5. My first memory at Smyllum was Sister EAC On the first night in the dormitory I left my bed and went into my sister's bed as I was so scared. Sister EAC found

me there, dragged me out and put me back into my own bed. She warned me if I went back I would be punished. Sister **EAC** battered **██████████** because she was shouting at her on my behalf. She took a great deal of pleasure when she was battering my brothers or sisters for me. While she was there **██████████** tried to look after me. She was moved to another dormitory after this to stop us mixing.

6. The only time I saw **██████████** would be if she was in the meal hall at the same time or when my dad came to visit.
7. The only family I remember in Smyllum was my sister **██████████**, **██████████** and **██████████** were there at some point, but I never saw them. **██████████** and **██████████** left as they were a bit older and **██████████** left a short time later.

Routine at Smyllum

First day

8. I was less than a year old when I was put in care and too young to remember anything of my first day.
9. I was in Ogilvie House. Next in line was the main building, then the chapel, then St Joseph's and at the back, the dining room, laundry and kitchen. At the front there was a large field and two cottages. **██████████ BAC ██████████** stayed in one of the cottages with his dog. The railway ran round the perimeter of Smyllum.
10. I made a list of the names of the people at Smyllum including Sister's **EAC**, Josephine and **AEX**. I am not sure if she was the head nun, mother superior. There were Sister's **BAF**, **██████████**, **EAD**, **AHS**, Cecilia, Claire, **BAE** and **EAA**. There were people there that helped out, but weren't nuns. They were Angela Gilmour, **IAN** and Agnes who arrived nearer the time I was leaving and lastly, **BAC** and his dog **██████████**.

Mornings and bedtime

11. We would get up from bed between seven and eight, get washed and then back to the beds. We would have to fold the pyjamas and put them under the pillow, make the bed, fold your housecoat and put it on the end of the bed. If this was not done right we would get a slap from the nuns.
12. I can remember when we were in the dormitories in some mornings and we were about 6 or 7 years old. We would jump about the beds in our vest and pants. Sometimes we would have pillow fights. When the nuns caught us we were told it was immoral and we would be battered for it. Everything they we did wrong they tell us it is immoral.
13. We would then head to the mess hall for breakfast. The hall had long wooden tables with wooden bench seats. After breakfast we went to school.
14. Sometimes after school we would be allowed out to the farm beside Smyllum. I think it was run by a family known as the Mortimer's. I'm not sure if they or the nuns owned it. Mrs Mortimer regularly made scones and gave them to us as a snack. We were allowed to feed the animals on the farm. I remember being allowed to play in the haystacks and jumping off them.
15. There was a set of gates next to the chapel that we were frightened to go through. It led to the back of the chapel and we knew them as the "Angel Gates". There were other stories of a "Green Lady". This was when the older kids would make scary stories to us about her to scare us.
16. At night time we would be in our pyjamas, house coat and slippers and watch television on rows of seats. We were given half an orange or apple and a glass of milk. I learned not to drink the milk to avoid bed wetting.

Clothes

17. Clothes were provided by Smyllum as you were not allowed your own. You had clothes for school and a change when you finished. You would be given a change of clothes once a week and it had to last all week. There was no school uniform because we were not out of the grounds.
18. My dad would sometimes hand in clothes for us, but we seldom saw them again.
19. The shoes were just ordinary. You were never taken to a shoe shop to have your feet measured. The nuns would just have you try a set on and if they fitted then that was it.

Cinema

20. We were sometimes allowed to go to a local cinema in Lanark on a Saturday afternoon and we would be given ice cream and sweeties. If you misbehaved during the week then the nuns would not allow you to go.

Bathing

21. You were allowed a bath once a week on a Sunday. The routine was the baths would be poured and when one person had been in, the next person would follow in the same water. At the start the water would obviously be clean and quite hot, but if you were at the end the water had been used by several people and was always cold.
22. You would stand and wait with a towel around you and then use the bath. There was no other privacy and the girls were all just lined up. The nuns would give you some shampoo to wash and clean your hair. The nuns would give you a brush to get rid of any tugs in your hair. If you were in any bother they would use that brush to hit you. You were only in a short time, long enough to shampoo your hair, rinse it, quick wash and out.

Food

23. Food at breakfast was always porridge. There was never a choice. I hated it. If you didn't eat the porridge the nuns would force feed you. They would grab your hair, pull your head back, hold your nose so you would have to open your mouth and force the food down. If you spat it out or still refused it, you were punished with a slap to the head. If you did not eat it, you were fed the porridge at lunch time.
24. At meal times my sister and I were at different tables. One of the times I was being forced to eat by the nuns and being sick. My sister [REDACTED] came over and threw the porridge at the nuns. She got battered for protecting me.
25. I hate fish. We were given fish every Friday. I got sardines once and tried to hide them up my sleeves but I got caught. Sister [REDACTED] EAC just whacked me off the bench and battered me in front of everybody. She would shout "The lord provided this food". I would say back to her "Well tell him I dinnae like it". I would get another slap for this.
26. You would never do an Oliver Twist and ask for more because the food was horrible and if you did you might get battered. You were always hungry at lunch, especially if you had not eaten your porridge in the morning. Mrs Mortimer always had scones and cakes and would feed them to us. She would make a comment asking whether they fed us at Smyllum as we were always hungry.
27. Sister [REDACTED] EAC would call us names like an ungrateful wretch, scum of the earth, the devil's spawn. If there was a crowd she would call you the devil's children, that nobody wanted you, that you would be nothing in life. This would be every time she was raging.
28. Meal times were the worst. If this woman set her sights on you then you weren't escaping her. If she hit you in the face you were left with a mark on it. She never held back. She would hit me every time she was on meal times.

29. The abuse from the nuns was just total brutality. You were just an inconvenience to them.

School

30. Schooling for the girls was held within Smyllum. The boys were sent to St Josephs. You were not allowed to mix or go to St Josephs and the boys were not allowed to mix with us. They always kept us separate.
31. At the school some of the nuns taught, if you could call it that. The teachers there were Miss **AEW** and Miss McKeown. Sister **EAA** was the head teacher and she was alright.
32. At Smyllum I could read and write. The nuns only taught you what they thought you needed. The quality of education was quite basic. It was primary standard education, based around just reading and writing.
33. The classroom was large and partitioned for different groups. The class would have a mix of ages and abilities. We were all taught the same thing. There might have been secondary education in that room in one of the partitions, but I don't know if there was or what happened for secondary kids.
34. There were no books to read in the playroom or outwith school that I can recall and certainly no library.

Religious instruction

35. I was part of a Catholic family. At Smyllum we had to go to chapel on Lent and Sundays, but it wasn't morning, noon and night. Mass was conducted by a priest who came to the chapel just for the service. I can't remember any of their names. The only other religious thing were prayers at meal times.
36. I didn't have to go to confession, although some of the other kids may have.

37. During the time I was at Smyllum there were a couple of nuns who had died and we had to go to the chapel for the funeral service. I don't remember much about the service other than there was a coffin.

Holidays/trips

38. My dad would sometimes take us out to Lanark Loch. I can remember there were pedal boats on the loch. There was an ice cream parlour that he would take us to, next to the picture house. Sometimes he would be allowed to take some of my friends with us. He would try and take different children each time. Sister Claire would be the one that allowed this. These included [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and her brother whose name I can't remember, [REDACTED], her brother JAA, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and her sister, who were all friends at different times allowed out with us when dad had us for the day. Some of them didn't have anyone that visited them so dad would give them a day out.
39. I remember we were taken to St Andrews, near a red building by the seaside. We were there for about a week. Some of us decided that collecting crabs would be a good idea and we would put them in the nuns' beds. The biggest crabs were reserved for Sister EAC. Sister EAC battered all of us for this and the other nuns would join in. We were threatened if it did not stop we would be sent back to the orphanage in disgrace.

Bed wetting

40. I was a bed wetter during my time at Smyllum. This would happen two or three times a week and always ended in me being punished. There would be checks carried out during the night by the nuns. Sister EAC was particularly bad. She was psychotic. She would drag you out of the bed and you would be battered. She would punch or kick you and use her knuckles to punch you to the top of the head. She would also

use a brush or a metal ruler, whichever she had a hold of at the time. We weren't even allowed to use the word "toilet". I had to be "bathroom".

41. Sister EAC would make you stand with the wet sheet over your head. You had to stand up straight with the sheet for what felt like hours. You were then taken to the baths which had freezing water. Sometimes you were made to wash the sheets and bath at the same time.
42. The bed wetting probably went on until I was about eight years old.

Birthdays and Christmas

43. I didn't know when my birthday was. Birthdays were not celebrated at all while we were at Smyllum. If they did we would probably be celebrating most days, as there were so many of us.
44. My dad would sometimes give me presents but I did not know what it was for as I never knew what birthdays meant. Anything given to me was taken by the staff.
45. At Christmas we would be taken to the local church hall. There were lots of adults there and we would be assigned to couples for Christmas. Some of the couples had children, some didn't. You would then spend about a week with these people. Today, I find this strange that you would be given to people with no checks carried out. Couples would just be given kids without knowing what they were like.
46. I was always allocated to Mr and Mrs Stevenson and spent four or five Christmases with them. They would give you toys for Christmas, but when you were back at Smyllum, you never saw them again. █ my sister, was always with a different family.
47. I remember when I was about six years old, Mrs Stevenson read a book to me in bed. This was the first time that had ever happened to me.

48. One time when I was staying with them I wet the bed. I got out of the bed and put the sheet over my head and stood up straight. Later in the morning the Stevenson's came in and asked what I was doing. I told Mrs Stevenson this was what I had to do and told her she was to batter me for it. She took the sheet from me and told me no one was going to batter me at her house. I was then given a warm bath with bubble bath. There was so much bubbles and the water was so hot it was great, not what I was used at Smyllum.
49. While at the Stevenson's breakfast was great. You were given a choice of Rice Krispies or Sugar Puffs. I thought I had died and gone to heaven.
50. Sometimes the Stevenson's would take me through to Glasgow to see all the street lighting and I was taken shopping.

Visits/Inspections

51. My dad would come to visit us every six weeks or so, but my mother never came to see us. Mum hated us so would not come to see us.
52. Sister Claire and Sister [BAE] were sound. They were older nuns and never touched you. Sister [] was the same. Sister Claire would usually be the one who told us dad was coming to take us out.
53. Dad hated Sister [EAC] and Miss [IAN]. Sometimes when I was due for a visit from him, Sister [EAC] would try and refuse it saying we had been bad or done something wrong. I would try and answer her back saying Sister Claire had said we were allowed. Sister [EAC] would slap me for answering back. My sister bit her because she had hit me. She would get battered for that. Dad always refused to listen to Sister [EAC] and there would be arguments between them, but most of the time dad would get us out for his visit. The other kids relatives would accept what she was saying, but dad wouldn't. Sister Claire would send us to get ready and try to keep the peace between dad and Sister [EAC].

54. My sister [REDACTED] would tell dad about us being hit. He would tell Sister [REDACTED] EAC that if he could prove they were hitting us there would be trouble. Sister [REDACTED] EAC would say we were just making it up, but he refused to listen to her and believed us.
55. Sometimes from the slaps to the face there would have been bruising, but by the time dad came for a visit it would have cleared up.
56. One of the officials that visited Smyllum was the child officer Mr McDonald. He was sound. You would be taken to a room, like the play room to speak with him, but you were never left alone with him. There was always a nun present. You would be too scared to say anything to him about any abuse, because it would lead to more punishment. I don't remember any other people or officials visiting.

Healthcare

57. Routinely I was not sick with anything. I did break my arm and ankle when I had fallen out of a tree. I was taken to Law Hospital for treatment.
58. I cannot remember getting any vaccinations like BCG or anything. I may have had other injections when I was a baby but I am not sure. I never had reason to visit a dentist and was not seen by one. I never had enough sweeties to rot them.
59. When any of the kids were unwell I think they were taken to some sort of sick bay area. This would be separate from the main dormitory.
60. There was no emotional support given to us while we were at Smyllum. If you were upset or crying the nuns would batter you. There was no compassion whatsoever. Mother nature never crossed their minds. It was all so regimented.
61. When I was at Smyllum there was mention of a boy called Sammy Carr. All the kids were crying. I was about five when Sammy died. At the back there was some outbuildings and toilets. I was later told he had been playing with a dead rat and he

caught something from the rat and died. Sammy was a year older than me. I never knew him. It was just the kids that talked about him. The nuns never spoke about him.

Abuse at Smyllum

62. While I was at Smyllum I never saw my sister other than at meal times. If she saw one of the nuns trying to force feed me porridge, she would run over and throw it at the nuns. Sister **EAC** would grab **█** and batter her for defending me.
63. It was regular for the nuns to bring your brothers and sisters in when you were being battered. They tried to say it was setting an example but it was just horrible.
64. A lot of the punishments were around meal times. We would be sat on the benches at the tables and whoever was sat at an end seat was always a target for the nuns. The nuns would just be walking by and slap the people at the end for no reason. Obviously no one wanted the end seats. There was no justification for it.
65. The punishments were the same for all the kids. I don't think they missed any one out for being a favourite.
66. At night Angela Gilmour, one of the workers, would go around the dormitories and check on the kids who had been punished. She would give them a hug to try and settle them at night. She was the only one that really showed any kind of affection. Sometimes she had sweets in her pockets which she would sneak to us. She must have been quite young, compared to the others, because when she left it was to get married. She had to stop working there because she stayed in Ayr and it was too difficult to travel to Smyllum.
67. Miss **IAN** was supposed to do the same, to make sure you were alright, but she was nothing like Angela. She would hit us as well as Sister **EAC**

68. Sister [BAE] and Sister [EAA] were alright, but there was no one you could go to for any comfort.
69. Sister [EAC] was the worst, the main one, but the others hit you, just not to the same effect. She literally snarled at you while she was hitting you. She was a maniac. She didn't need anything to set her off. She wasn't an old nun, she was [REDACTED]. She wasn't [REDACTED] or anything, maybe [REDACTED].
70. Sister's Claire, [BAE] and [EAA] were older. They looked how you would imagine nuns to look.

Leaving Smyllum

71. I don't know why I left. I was in the school and my big sister was standing outside. One of the nuns came and got me. Our pal [REDACTED] was there and we said we would be back shortly. We went over to the main building and Sister Claire told us we were going home to our parents. Mr McDonald, our child officer, was there.
72. They said to one of the other nuns to take us away and get changed. We went with Mr McDonald and he took us home. My mother came out and Mr McDonald introduced us to her. I didn't recognise her and did not want to go in. My dad wasn't there at the time, he was at work. My brother [REDACTED] was there but [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were old enough and had already left the family home.
73. When my dad came home we ran to him. It was alright the first night, but after that my mother would start battering us.
74. When my mother was battering me, my sister would try to protect me. I was about ten or eleven and she would be about fourteen. Mum would rant and rave and batter me.

Reporting of abuse at Smyllum

75. There was no one you could report anything to while you were at there. You could not trust anyone. I never reported anything to any of the authorities.

Life after being in care

76. A couple of months after we were home my brother [REDACTED] came home. He came back to us because his foster mother had died. [REDACTED] did the same as us when he was introduced to mum. He did not recognise her. She hated [REDACTED] and I.
77. We would go to school but she wouldn't let us out to play. We climbed out the window so we could play. Every time my dad was out we would get battered.
78. Eventually we ran away. [REDACTED] would be about ten and I would be about eleven. We hid in some hay until we heard the tractor in the morning. We were away for a week before we were brought home by the police.
79. Miss Darling, Mr McDonald's replacement at the social work department would speak to mum and she would tell her I was uncontrollable. We were back at school for a while and then ran away again.
80. Mum would threaten to commit suicide and then take overdoses. She did this lots of times. We would phone dad while he was at work and tell him that she's done it again. She would be kept in hospital for a while. On one occasion dad told the psychiatrist she hated us. He was told to bring us to the hospital. As soon as we arrived she was shouting how she hated us and to get us out of there. Dad told the doctor that was never going to happen again.
81. She would get out for a while. At that time there was just [REDACTED] and I left. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had left to go to Oban. I would be about twelve. After a while mum would be back on the phone to the social work. We stopped going to school and ran away again. One time we went to Middlesburgh and slept on the empty buses in the

garage at night. We were found by the police and sent back to Edinburgh to stay with my brothers for the night.

82. Back at school we had Miss Fenny as a religion teacher. We didn't want to be taught that. One time when she went to get the books from the cupboard, we locked her in. We got expelled for that.
83. I wasn't stupid at secondary school. I did alright but just hated it. We didn't want to go because we had been battered so much and were looking like pandas all the time.
84. After being missing again, this time in Edinburgh, we were returned to school and this time I was expelled for using a Bunsen burner to light cigarettes.
85. One afternoon after I had been playing outside, my brother and his wife [REDACTED] were at the house. I went inside and my mother grabbed a frying pan off the cooker and threw it at me. I managed to get out the way. [REDACTED] could not believe what she did and she told my dad. He told her that was what it was like all the time.
86. One time we had drunk all the spirits in the house and replaced it with custard, lemonade and the like. It was discovered when my uncle came to visit and we were sent our room. When everybody left dad came to our rooms. I heard [REDACTED] screaming and then he came to my room. Dad started banging at the furniture and told me to start shouting. He was just pretending to hit us for my mother's sake, but he never laid a hand on us.
87. After many more times of being expelled from school and running away we were caught on one occasion by the police. They put me in handcuffs because they could not catch us if I ran away. I was taken to my aunt [REDACTED] at her restaurant. She got the cook to make us something to eat and she got new clothes for me. My cousin was told to take me home and get a bath. On the Sunday I was sent to bed early for school in the morning. I went to school the next day and stayed with them for a while.

88. I had been staying with my aunt [REDACTED] my mums sister, and had to attend the children's panel. Also there were my mum and dad. The panel never asked me anything and treated me like I wasn't there. My dad told the panel that he wanted to take me back, but my mum didn't. We got back to my aunt [REDACTED] and I kicked off in my room, shouting and throwing things around.
89. After about six months the panel and the social worker, Roberta Laing, wanted me to go back to my parent's house. [REDACTED] didn't want me to go back but there was no choice. I got some clothes and went back to mum and dad's. I was only back for about three hours and mum said she was saying I wouldn't get to see my aunt [REDACTED] again. I told her I would and she threw an ornament at me and burst my eye. She took a dive at me and burst my nose. My dad stepped in and grabbed her. I got out the window and made my way in the snow to my aunt [REDACTED] Dad phoned [REDACTED] and told her what happened. I got there and I was covered in blood. She let my dad know I was safe.
90. We ended back at the panel and I was allowed to stay with [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] When I got back to the house I went to the room and found the mattress on the floor and the room in a mess. I was indignant and I asked what happened. They told me they thought it would save me some energy.
91. After all the running away, aunt [REDACTED] and uncle [REDACTED] persuaded me that I would be better going to school. I took the advice and managed to get my O-levels. I went on to Moray House and studied youth and community work. I started working at Woolworth's and became the chief security officer. After Woolworth's I went to work in a whisky bond [REDACTED]
92. I can remember the lead of the children's panel as being an Ian Hunter. He would have been better being involved in the Girl Guides for all the help he was. I stayed in the care of the social work department until I was 18 years of age.

Impact

93. My eating habits have been affected by my time at Smyllum. My friend calls me a hamster as I would store lots of the food in my mouth, because of the fear of not getting fed again for a while. I can't stand if someone puts a big plate of food in front of me. I have to eat it even if I am full. It is built into me now.
94. Everything I had at Smyllum had to have a place, especially my clothes. They have to be sorted. I am still like that now.
95. I have told [REDACTED] some of what happened but not all of it. She was horrified. I just bottled it up.
96. My brother [REDACTED] died about six years ago. My mum ruined his life. It would have been better if she left him where he was in foster care.
97. I have never looked for support to deal with what happened. I have just suppressed things over time.
98. I have a lack of trust for people and I am a bit of a loner. I have acquaintances but no real close friends.

Records

99. I have never seen my records but would like to see them, just to give some closure. I would like to see why some of those things happened to us. My aunt told me when I was young that my forename was changed from [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] I don't know why, but it might help when I try to get my records.

Other information

100. I have made a list of the nuns within Smyllum that I can remember. I have also included teachers and people who I met through Smyllum.

101. 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.

Hopes for the Inquiry

102. I hope that any kids going into care now will be treated with dignity and respect. If there were no nuns involved that would be a start.

Signed..  AAU

Dated. 29-8-17