

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AAI

Support person present: No

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

Background

2. I don't know much about my home situation before being taken into care as I was only about two years old when I went into the first children's home. I don't know whether my mother was married or was a single parent. All I've ever heard is that I went into care because of neglect.
3. I was taken into care along with my older brothers, and and my younger brother AAG I think the first home we went into was called Ravenscliff. I don't know if I've got the name correct. I know it was in Scotland. I can't remember anything about it. I believe we were there for a short time and then went back to my mother for a little while before being put into Smyllum.
4. I have an older sister called who was in Smyllum when we were there. She is or years older than me. I can't remember whether she was with us the day we went in. I haven't seen since I left Smyllum to go and live in Newcastle.
5. I have another two younger brothers, AAF and AAH who I met in St Vincent's Children's Home in Newcastle when I was about
6. I never returned to care in Scotland after I went to Newcastle.

7. The care arrangements were made by Greenock Council.

Smyllum Children's Home, Lanark

8. Smyllum is the first place I have any memory of. I was two years old when I went in. I don't remember everything but I remember bits like it happened only yesterday.
9. Our social worker, Mr Miller, took us to Smyllum in his car. I remember turning into the driveway and I'm almost certain he said "We're here". He pulled up to the front door and a nun came out. We went into a big room on the right and then the nun just took us. [REDACTED] was around [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] at the time; [REDACTED] was a year older than him; and **AAG** was a year younger than me.
10. Smyllum was run by nuns who employed female staff to look after us when they were off doing whatever it is nuns do. They didn't actually look after us; they were just there from time to time.
11. We were put into dormitories according to age, which were in different buildings. I was never in the same one as any of my brothers.
12. The premises consisted of a number of buildings, open spaces and a square sort of playground area with a kids' roundabout in the middle. There was a big open space to the front of the building. The kids used to wind each other up by saying that the swamp was down there.
13. When I first went in, I slept in the dormitory in the second main building as you went down the drive. There were around eight to ten of us in it. A staff bedroom, bathroom, sinks and toilet were on the same floor.
14. There was a roundish window at the end of the dormitory. I used to have dreams about it coming out and rolling towards me and I had to run away from

it. I could never work out why that was. Later on in life it turned to a millstone and I had to run from that.

Routine

Pre-school

15. In the first dormitory I slept in, you got up in the morning and stood in a line waiting to get to the sinks to get washed. It was quite regimented. I think that was the beginning of the institutionalisation process, which I still feel today. You had to be quiet. Kids were hit randomly if they were talking. That's what it was like all the time.
16. After you got washed, they got you dressed and you went down for breakfast. We didn't have a uniform. We just wore normal clothes which were passed to someone else when you grew out of them.
17. There were different dining rooms for the different dormitories/houses. You never saw any of the girls. I never saw [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]. I don't know how old I was when I saw them. I'm not sure that I saw AAG there at all.
18. After breakfast we were taken to a big room. That's where we stayed all day. It wasn't a nursery, it was just a big room where the kids ran about and played. I think all of the kids were pre-school age. We were allowed to make a racket in that room. There were no toys.
19. We must have got out at some point. I have a memory of having a pair of wellies on and the snow was up to my knees. I also remember being out in the farmland just before the swamp area.
20. At lunchtime, we would line up again and walk through to get lunch. Again it was a case of sit down, shut up, and eat. After that, we'd get marched back through to the big room.

21. I think putting us in a room was about control. In fact, the whole place was about control.

22. Bedtime wasn't long after the evening meal. We went back into the room for a short time before bed. There was no supper and we didn't get washed again at night. It was straight to bed and lights out.

23. I can't remember when bath night was. We must have had them, even if it was just to get rid of the smell of urine.

School-age

24. I moved into a different dormitory in another building which was under the charge of Sister [REDACTED] AGI [REDACTED]. She slept in a stud wall room and the kids' cast iron single beds were on each side of two other stud walls.

25. I saw a TV for the first time when I moved to that building. There was a TV/playroom there. I think there was a bit more freedom as well as I remember being out more.

26. Other than going to school and getting out more, the routine wasn't much different.

General

27. The nuns addressed me as [REDACTED] AAI [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] except Sister [REDACTED] AGI [REDACTED] who called me [REDACTED]. I used to think I was her favourite. I don't know why I thought that. There was no warmth or affection from any of them.

28. You had to say grace before meals. The food was pretty bad. You weren't allowed to leave anything whether you liked it or not. You had to eat it or put it in your pocket and get rid of it later. A lot of it went down the back of the kitchen

units. I remember doing that a few times. The best food we got there was jam sandwiches. I can't remember a good meal. We must have had one; I just can't remember it.

29. There were never any routine medical inspections. The only time I saw a doctor was when I broke my leg while messing about with other kids.

30. You had to go to mass on Sunday and benediction. Other than that, there was no formal religious instruction.

Birthdays and Christmas

31. I can't remember any celebrations for my birthday. I didn't actually find out when my birthday was until I was eleven years old.

32. We got toys one Christmas, but they were gone when we got up the next day. I was gutted.

School

33. The school was part of the premises. I'm almost certain the kids from Lanark used to go there as well. The teachers weren't nuns so I presume the kids from Lanark went there too.

34. The teachers were alright to me. We were treated the same as the other kids and weren't singled out. I remember I had started on italics before the summer holidays began. I could read okay and was doing alright. Reading has never been a problem for me.

Physical abuse

35. You got that many beatings in the place, you didn't even question it. It was just the norm. The nuns and staff beat the kids. You got hit for anything, like

speaking or not eating your dinner. You never thought anything of it when you saw other kids being beaten. You never spoke about it either. You'd speak about catching a frog or throwing dead crows at one another; we only ever spoke about playing, not what was happening to us.

36. You got a kicking if you wet the bed. The nuns would slap, punch and kick you, which probably caused the bed-wetting. I think every kid in the home wet the bed. They put the wet sheets round your neck. I really don't know what that was about. I also have a memory of the sheets being cold to touch when they were round my neck, so they must have been off for a while that time. You had to keep the sheets round your neck while you waited in line to get washed.

37. There was a big table in the pre-school room which had a part like a bookshelf that swung out. I don't know what it was used for. I remember it because I was sitting sort of tapping it with my hand one day and I got a beating for it. I can't remember the name of the woman who did that. I must have been annoying her.

38. One of my first memories of Smyllum is when Santa was brought in to see us in the pre-school room. We were all sitting round the walls of the room. I think it was the first time I had seen Santa and I was that frightened I threw up. A plump member of staff gave me such a beating for throwing up. I was about three or four years of age. I wasn't taken to a nurse or doctor to find out if an illness had caused me to be sick. This, and coming up the drive to Smyllum are my first memories.

39. A nun called Sister AGJ replaced Sister AGI when she left. Luckily, I didn't have long with her as she came in shortly before I got moved to Newcastle. She was apt at giving you a good kicking. She was younger and bigger than Sister AGI so she was faster and her hits were harder.

40. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I went up there a few years ago to try to put some ghosts to rest. I

spoke to a priest to find out where the kids were buried. He said the records of where they were had been lost in a fire. He then asked me if I remembered Sister [AGJ] He said "She was a hard one, wasn't she?". I thought "Is that what you call it ?". I nearly gave him a crack.

41. I remember one day I got dirty outside and went in for something. Sister [AGJ] made me take my trousers off, wash them and hang them up to dry in the drying room. I had to stay in the room until they dried. It seemed like the longest day of my life. Needless to say, they were still a bit wet when I put them on.

42. There was a man called [BAC] who was employed as a [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I don't know his last name. He was a vicious child beater. He got a puncture on one of his tyres once and blamed me. He hit me so hard that my feet came off the ground. I don't think I've been hit that hard since. It wasn't just me, he was known for beating the kids.

43. He's buried in the kids' plot. I think some of the kids have tried to get him exhumed. It makes me feel sick that he's there on top of them.

Sammy Carr

44. The other incident that scarred my life so much happened in the little ginnel next to the square playground. I was six years old and it was the school summer holidays. My friend Sammy Carr came running up to me with a match and piece of pink nylon cloth. I had never seen a match before. I asked Sammy what it was and he told me that it caught fire when struck against the wall. We were right giddy. Sammy was great. He said "I'll do it and set fire to the cloth. You grab it right quick and let it go as quick as you can." He lit the cloth and I grabbed it. We didn't know what would happen to nylon. I started screaming my head off. He still had a hold of the main piece and I was screaming.

45. Just as I started screaming, Sister [AGI] came round the corner and asked what had happened. I shouted "Sammy's burnt my hand". She went straight for

him. She was slapping and punching him around his head and body. I was holding my wrist and knelt down on the ground, looking down. When I looked up, I saw Sammy was on the ground and she was kicking into him. I had to put myself on top of him. He was only five years old. I said "Sister, please don't hurt Sammy". I was six and I knew that wasn't right. How did she not know that wasn't right?

46. A few days later, our [REDACTED] came up to me and told me that Sammy was in the sick room. This is one clear memory I have of seeing [REDACTED] there. [REDACTED] took me up and we looked through the window and saw Sammy. I was knocking on the window and waving, like kids do. We went in and [REDACTED] said to Sammy "Show [AAI] Show [AAI]". Sammy got his penis out and let a little bit of urine go and there was blood.

47. An ambulance came either the same day or the next after that. Lots of kids were following it as they'd never seen one before. A man and a woman brought Sammy out in a red blanket. I hadn't cottoned on to what was happening and was wondering where they were going with Sammy. That was the last time I saw Sammy alive. I found out recently that he had been taken to a hospital in Edinburgh. I think it was Lanark first, and then Edinburgh. I can't be certain, but I've got it in my head that he lived for a week after he was taken away.

48. Sometime soon after that, we were all lined up and led into the chapel. Our [REDACTED] was ringing the bell. She used to hang onto the rope and go up and down with it. We were marched round what I now know was a little coffin and when I got to it, I saw Sammy in it. I still hadn't cottoned on. As I was going past, I said, fairly quietly, "Sammy, what are you doing in there?", and carried on walking past. That's how much control they had over you; you asked a question and you knew not to stop. You knew you had to keep moving.

49. A few days after that, Sister [AGI] took me down to a graveyard which I now know was St Mary's. She took me to a plot, there was no headstone, and

told me that Sammy was buried there. I said "What's Sammy doing under the ground?". I still didn't get it.

50. Sammy and I used to have so much fun. It was always when the nuns were away. We would go out and just play. We would throw dead crows at each other and go frog hunting. We started school together. We must have been naughty lads as we sat right at the back.

51. Sister [AGI] never said anything to me about what she had done. She was replaced by Sister [AGJ] not long after that, and then we were moved to Newcastle. There was no investigation. Nobody from the police or social services came to speak to me.

52. When I was in Newcastle, a nun from Scotland came down and spoke to [AAG] and me. She asked us whether we remembered her. I told her I didn't and she just turned and went. I can't say for definite that it was Sister [AGI], but putting two and two together I think it was her coming down to make sure I couldn't remember anything. She's dead now.

53. I reported it to the police this year in a town south of Glasgow. They had an investigation and told me all they could find was that Sammy was malnourished and had bleeding from the back of his head. They got the autopsy report with slides. They closed the investigation. I was kind of dumbfounded when they said they were closing it. I had one of those moments when you feel out of your body. They had found that he had bleeding from the head, yet the investigation was being closed. The findings tied in exactly with what I told them. She had been kicking him on the head and body. He was a five year old kid.

54. I presume they closed the case because they couldn't tie the times down with me. I think it was the police who told me that she was dead.

55. I know in my heart that Sister [AGI] killed Sammy. I know it, no matter what the police say. I know she killed him.

56. I went through a stage with drugs and something happened one time when I was smoking weed. You smoke that stuff and then you don't see the point in it, as it's not doing anything any more. I was used to it and wasn't stoned enough for it to be a hallucination so I don't know what it was. I just dropped to my knees and shut my eyes. I saw Sammy standing at a tree. He was still the same age. It wasn't on this world. He just turned to me and said "You shouldn't be here" and I said "Okay", and got to my feet again. I don't know whether I actually saw him or whether it was my mind trying to give me some peace and quiet. Just seeing he was alright did give me a bit of peace.

Sexual abuse

57. Sister [REDACTED] AGI [REDACTED] used to come and get me out of my bed at night and take me to her room. She'd sit on her bed facing the door and I'd have my back to the door. She would take my penis out and put it between her fingers and thumb and rub it. I was about five at the time. It was weird. I used to wonder what she was all about. Later in life I couldn't work out what sexual gratification she was getting from that. She would say to me "Do you play with this [REDACTED] AAI [REDACTED]?" and "That's why you wet the bed." She didn't shout or anything, she was softly spoken. There was also a bit of what you might call religious education sometimes as she'd say things like "You'll go to hell."

58. When I was six years old, a member of staff used to take me up to the dormitories above the first year school and have intercourse with me. She always wore black ski pants with a hole in them. She'd part her legs and tell me to get my penis out. She'd get it erect and tell me to put it inside her and go in and out. That happened on a number of occasions. One of the older lads walked in one time and she pushed me off her and gave me a telling off. I don't remember her name. She had a [REDACTED] and was [REDACTED]. She left not long before I got moved to Newcastle.

59. She came back one time and took three lads to a fair in Lanark. She was with a guy in a black car. I remember standing at the passenger door and saying "Miss, can't I come?". She didn't look at me directly in the eye. She put her head down and said "No". That really hurt. I remember it hurting at the time. That was the last I saw of her.
60. Kids between the age of five and just reaching puberty did sexual stuff with each other. There could be about twenty kids in the haystack at the one time doing stuff they shouldn't have been doing. There were also games of advanced doctors and nurses down at the pavilion.
61. As with the physical abuse, the kids didn't talk among themselves about anything sexual being done to them. They must have known not to talk about it. When I think back now, I think all of those kids must have learnt that from somewhere. They didn't learn it from each other; there's no way they learnt that from each other. Sex doesn't come into your head when you're a kid. They were taught that. People must have been doing sexual stuff to them. There is no other explanation for it.
62. The only time I ever heard any interaction between an adult and child of a sexual nature was when the female with the black ski pants made a comment to another boy. She and I were walking back through the dormitory after having done stuff and she said "You can do it bare naked next time." There was a little lad there who was younger than me and she said to him "██████ done it naked, haven't you █████?" and he said "Yes, Miss".

Other staff

63. I remember a nice staff member called Miss AEV who worked in the kitchen. She gave me my first taste of coffee which was really hot and burnt my tongue. I spilt it on the floor and she didn't give me a crack. She just got a tea towel and wiped it up. A nun would have given you a crack for that. She ended up looking

after the kids in one of the dormitories. One day she just didn't come back and they told us she'd died.

Contact with siblings

64. I remember bumping into [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] a few times. I used to see our [REDACTED] when I got to the age where I could go into the square where the roundabout was. I didn't know they were my brothers. I also remember Sammy was talking to his sister one time and [REDACTED] came up and said to me "I'm your sister". I think that was the same year we got moved away from Smyllum.

Contact with other family members

65. I think I saw my mother once when I was there. It was in the same room where we saw Mr Miller. A nun brought her in and said "This is your mum", which meant nothing. I seem to remember thinking "What's a mum?".

Contact with social services

66. We had intermittent visits from Mr Miller which lasted about an hour. The nuns were different when he was there. They didn't slap you about. They were polite to him and didn't say much to us.

67. I always have fond memories of Mr Miller. I remember climbing over him and play-fighting with him. His visits were fun times.

68. I never told Mr Miller about what was happening at Smyllum. He never asked. I think the only time any of us told him anything was when he came down to Newcastle to say goodbye when he was retiring. [REDACTED] told him what had been happening. I was about sixteen or seventeen by then and was in [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] told me afterwards that Mr Miller's response was "I know [REDACTED], other people have been saying things".

St Vincent's Children's Home, Newcastle Upon Tyne

69. [REDACTED], [REDACTED], AAG and I were driven to Newcastle by Mr Miller in his car. I remember him saying "You're going to be Geordies", which didn't mean anything to me. I was six years of age.
70. I was never told why we got moved to Newcastle. It was written in the Greenock social services records that Mr Miller thought we would benefit from the interaction with men. That was a bit ironic as St Vincent's, like Smyllum, was run by nuns and female staff.
71. St Vincent's was run by the Sisters of Charity nuns. There were five nuns and four female staff initially. It was actually just another place run by psychopaths. Most of them were absolutely mad. I don't know what they were following but it definitely wasn't their religion.
72. There were one or two nuns who were okay with me. The second Mother Superior, Sister AHQ, was alright. Sister IAG only ever slapped me once, which was nothing in the scheme of things. There was yet another Sister [REDACTED], but this one was quite soft.
73. There were around thirty five to forty kids in the home. Initially it was boys only but they started to bring in girls. As in Smyllum, we were put in dormitories according to age. Again, I didn't see too much of my brothers.
74. There were three dormitories: little dorm, blue dorm and white wing for the older boys. I was in little dorm when I first went in. There were about twelve kids in it. Apart from going to school, that was my little world for a few years.
75. At some point they split the home into three separate homes, each of which had its own kitchen, living room and bedrooms. I think that happened around the time people who had left the home were starting to talk about their experiences. I think the change was to make it look like they were taking some sort of action.

Routine

76. The routine was much the same as it'd been in Smyllum. You got up, washed and dressed and then went down for breakfast. We all ate in different parts of the same dining room. Again, the clothes were passed down from others. The first item of new clothing I ever got was a shirt when I was twelve years old.
77. When I was in little dorm we spent our day in a kind of day room, which was about six by four metres, when we weren't at school. We were allowed out to play in the summer.
78. We had to go to church on a Sunday and benediction on a Friday. We got most of our religious education at school, although we did regularly get told by the nuns that we'd go to hell. I was an altar boy when I got a bit older and had to get up at 5.30 am, which I didn't particularly like.
79. We used to get thrupence a week pocket money and spent it at their own little shop, which consisted of two drawers with sweets in it. At some point though, we managed to work out that you could open the cupboard below and get into the drawers.
80. We did have some laughs, which was generally when we were away from the nuns. We'd find rope and make swings. I'm quite sure kids wouldn't be allowed on them nowadays – they were a bit dangerous. Our **AAH** broke his arm when he fell off one. We were a bit mad. I think that was fair enough under the circumstances.
81. At one point they bought a minibus and used to take us to the coast at weekends. We also started going to Bridlington for a week's holiday. Each house would go for a week. I remember seeing proper shops for the first time and everybody just started picking stuff up and putting it in their pockets. They didn't know they had to pay.

Birthdays and Christmas

82. I think Christmas was celebrated but I don't think birthdays were.

School

83. My educational standards dropped a bit when I moved to England. I was off for a long time during the summer holidays because of the timing of the Scottish and English school holidays.

84. I started in the [REDACTED] of junior school at St Cuthbert's. I didn't remember how to write when I went back to school. I tried to mirror what someone else in the class was doing and started trying to write with my left hand. I think that threw me back years educationally. I have a feeling I was right-handed but through time I've become left-handed. I write with my left hand, but use my right hand when I'm working with my tools. I think I would have been alright if I'd only remembered when I went back to school to use my right hand.

85. The kids from the home were singled out in the Newcastle schools, both primary and secondary. The secondary school was St Aiden's. We were called the St Vincent kids. I don't know if it was because we were more troublesome. You don't go through what we did and not go a bit doolally. It might also have been because the other kids' parents went to the school and did a bit of shouting on behalf of their kids, whereas nobody ever came for us. Plus, the teachers knew that if they reported us to the nuns, we'd get a hiding when we got home as well as being hit at school. I think the nuns maybe gave the teachers the go ahead to deal with us as they saw fit.

86. The teachers were more ready to have a go at the kids from the home. We definitely got hit more and there were other silly things. For example, we had to write an essay about how chocolate was made and send it to Cadbury's. Cadbury's sent back chocolate bars for the class and the kids from the homes only got half a bar because there wasn't enough to go round.

87. We were never allowed to miss school because it would interfere with the nuns' daily routine. At the end of the year in St Aiden's the teacher was giving a selection box to the kid with the best attendance. I hadn't been off, but he gave it to someone else who had been off two days. I didn't say anything, but the other kids were saying "Sir, he's had two days off and AAI hasn't missed a day all year". The teacher just said "No, he hasn't", and left it at that. These things might sound trivial now.

88. The other kids didn't pick on us as they knew we all stuck up for each other.

89. I knocked about with three lads in school who weren't in the home. They were from what I suppose you'd call working class backgrounds, so presumably their situation was similar to mine. I never spoke to them about the physical abuse from the nuns. I did tell them that I'd had sex but they didn't believe me and just laughed at me. I didn't mind that from them.

90. The parents in Newcastle used to say to their kids "Behave yourself or you'll go where the naughty kids go". Why call us naughty when we didn't do anything wrong? We just got put in homes. That used to hurt. They used us like the bogey man. How is that right? I could never understand that.

Physical abuse

91. The physical abuse at St Vincent's was really harsh. That's where the anxiety was built into me. It was even harsher than Smyllum. The beatings were more sustained. It happened that often you don't remember the detail of every incident.

92. Sister IAC, who was in little dorm, was off her trolley. She was really violent. She must have had mental health problems. There was definitely something wrong with her. Before she went to bed every night, she used to get us up for the toilet and kick us with her pointy nun shoes right up the backside, which was

really painful. She used to pick up a little boy from his cot, drop him and then kick him. His name was [REDACTED]. He was only two years of age. I've always wondered what happened to him. That must have really scarred him.

93. I remember an incident in the boiler house with Sister [REDACTED] IAC. It was the first time I'd been in there and it was dark. The boiler must have clicked on and I jumped, which made her jump, and she whacked me on the head with the big boiler house key. I remember the blood was running down my face.

94. There were two nuns there called Sister [REDACTED]. One left and then another came. You must get that name if you're a nutter. One of them ripped a girl's ear half-off. The other one, who was there first, held me up off the floor with a knife to my neck for talking in a queue. I thought she was going to stick it in me. I was screaming. I have never been so frightened in my life. It was a brown handled butter knife, but it was still a knife. I was about seven years old and was absolutely petrified.

Sexual abuse

95. There was sexual abuse of the kids in the home. The only time for me was when a member of staff, who was quite young, took [REDACTED] AAG and me to her house. I don't remember her name. I don't know why she picked on us. I know I did something with her mother, but I have a block in my head. I know I was frightened. I can picture being between her legs but can't picture the rest, which is probably a good job really. I'm happy to leave that block there. I was about nine or ten at the time. The staff member had sex with [REDACTED] AAG.

96. There was a [REDACTED] called [REDACTED] IAF who used to interfere with [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] set about him and got sent to a borstal. He was there for four years. That is another example of how the kids from the homes were treated differently. [REDACTED] never got sent to court. It was straight to borstal without any due process. That must have been illegal. The procedure for the other kids from school was court first and

then they'd be sent somewhere else. They'd usually be sent to a home first and then to a borstal if they were back before the court a second time.

97. I'm not aware of any investigation taking place into what the [REDACTED] did. I don't know if he did it to anyone else. It was just a case of [REDACTED] a bad lad, send him away. There was no one to report it to. If you told a nun, they would say you were being evil and would burn in hell. You just didn't tell the nuns anything. Why would you? They were our abusers too.
98. I remember one time all of us were lined up, marched into a room and told to drop our trousers. A doctor then parted our cheeks and examined us. I think they were trying to find out what had been happening. I think it was around the time one of my brothers was being interfered with by [REDACTED] IAD [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] IAE [REDACTED], who were volunteers who used to come into the home. I don't know what volunteering they did. I think they did it to our [REDACTED] as well. I remember our [REDACTED] saying that he could still smell [REDACTED] IAE [REDACTED]'s pipe on his breath. That's the only medical inspection that ever took place.
99. The volunteers just stopped coming after that. I don't remember any sort of investigation taking place. That's how things were done then. It was hushed up and everybody pretended it didn't happen.
100. The kids were sexual with each other there too. An older boy, called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] made me watch him masturbate once. That was scary. I ran away so fast I think I broke the four-minute mile record. I have nothing against any of the kids. They were just doing what they had been taught to do.
101. There was a kind of initiation thing with the kids; the older you got the different stuff you did. I have nightmares about it which I just have to live with. It will haunt me to the end of my days. I've told the police about it. I think they look at it the same way I do: they were kids and that's what they were taught to do. What court in the land is going to do anything? I never actually had sex with anyone, but the doctors and nurses went a bit too far.

Contact with family

102. Sister IAG used to read out letters to AAG and me from a Mrs [redacted] who lived in London. We never read the letters ourselves or wrote back. She asked in the letters what we wanted for Christmas and sent presents up. My guess is that the letters were from [redacted] as I can't see complete strangers doing that. I didn't think it was [redacted] at the time. I only made the connection later.
103. I found out later that Mr Miller didn't want us to have anything to do with [redacted]. I've heard she went back to Port Glasgow and had a bit of a troubled time. She fell pregnant when she was about eighteen and was thought to be a bad influence. I don't know if she's still alive. I would like to see her before I die.
104. I met my two brothers, AAF and AAH, when I was at St Vincent's. AAG and I were having our tea when we noticed two lads standing at the window. Sister IAG brought them through and told us that they were our brothers. They were younger than us and had just come down from Smyllum. I had never heard of them before in my life. It was weird the way they were introduced to us. This was shortly before I went to the Arethusa in Kent, but I suppose I would say there was enough contact between us before I went for a certain fondness to set in.
105. I had no contact with my mother when I was there.

Contact with social services

106. Mr Miller came down to see us a couple of times. I don't know why he kept us on. He was the one constant.
107. I don't remember any visits from any other authorities.
108. I was at St Vincent's around six years and was going on twelve when I left.

The Arethusa

109. The Arethusa was a training ship on the Medway in Kent. A couple of the lads from St Vincent's went there and used to talk about what they got up to when they came home on leave. The home had changed into three separate ones at that point and there was a lot more younger people there. I was getting bored and wanted a change.

110. None of my brothers came with me to the Arethusa.

111. The Arethusa wasn't that bad. They weren't abusive. We got up to the usual stuff lads do. We were also educated there. I learnt how to sail and went on canoe trips. In fact, I learned a lot of stuff.

112. I was there until I was about fourteen or fifteen. I think I was missing Newcastle and wanted to move back up. I went to live in [REDACTED] in Newcastle after that. You weren't supposed to go there until you were sixteen, but I think St Vincent's was full so I couldn't go back there.

[REDACTED] Hostel, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne

113. [REDACTED] was run initially by Mr and Mrs [REDACTED]. It was a big Victorian upper class terraced house.

114. There were around twelve residents and five staff, including the Whitneys. It was run as if we were a family when Mr and Mrs Whitney were there.

115. It changed when the [REDACTED] came in. Mr [REDACTED] was a conman and had a habit of punishing the lads. He brought in a routine which involved getting up at 6 am, doing housework, going to school, coming home for tea, doing housework again, and then going to bed. He called it the old routine. Some of the older lads who'd been there before me told me it had never been that way;

there had never been an old routine. He conned us into that. He also stole all the lads' post office savings books.

116. He ran the place for himself. He changed the upstairs layout and made it into living quarters for himself. It was quiet up there as you couldn't hear the noise from the road. He basically lived up there and just came down now and again to throw orders about. It went from being quite a happy place to live to being miserable.

School

117. I went to St Aloyious secondary school, which is where all the 'uncontrollables' went. It was a normal secondary modern but it had all the pupils the other schools couldn't handle.

118. It was alright at St Aloyious. Mr O'Conner was the headmaster and he'd come and stick up for you if you got arrested. The police knew us as O'Conner's boys.

Sexual abuse

119. The only other thing that happened at [REDACTED] was an incident when I had moved out into a bedsit. A few of us had been to the pub and were walking past [REDACTED] on the way home. We were all still under-age for drinking alcohol. A staff member saw us and asked us in. I don't remember his last name. All the residents were in bed. He gave us vodka and we were a bit blotto by the end of the night. We'd never had spirits before. I went to the toilet and he came in and asked me to nudge along. I thought nothing of it. When I finished, he dropped to his knees and started giving me oral sex. I lifted my foot up to kick him in the face and fell over. He would've got a right kicking if I hadn't been drunk. I've since found out that he abused a few of the lads and threw himself off a tower block when he was due to go to court. Hand on heart, I don't think anybody deserves that.

Life after the institutions

120. I was put into a bedsit with three other lads and that was it. We were abandoned. We had no money, no bedclothes – we had absolutely nothing.
121. Three of the lads ended up in prison within six months.
122. My mother had moved down to Newcastle by then and I moved in with her for a while.
123. At one point I was up in court and the judge told me I had two options: prison or the army, so I joined the army.
124. I was in the [REDACTED] for six years. That's when I realised I was stateless. When people were having a go at me in Newcastle, they'd call me a Scottish git; and in the army they'd call me an English git. Now, I say I'm a Geordie as my heart's in Newcastle. If asked about nationality, I say British.

Impact of experiences

125. For a long, long time I was just like the nuns. You become the very thing you're fighting against. The nuns would turn on you in a split second and give you a good kicking and then talk to you two minutes later as if nothing had happened. That's the rage. You pick it up. I had that rage. You don't know it's building and growing in you; even when you do, you don't see it. It's bred into you.
126. I've suffered bad anxiety attacks as a result of being on edge all the time with the nuns. When you were around the nuns, you'd be thinking "Who's going to cop for it?". You'd then try to stay away from the people who were copping for it. People with anxiety are a bit quick off the mark. When I'm having a panic attack, I genuinely think someone's going to have a go at me so I get in there first.

That's how it manifests itself in me. It's got me into a lot of trouble over the years.

127. I was eventually diagnosed as suffering from PTSD by a clinical psychologist.

I used to get flashbacks which was like a slideshow. That really drives you mental. I had been suffering from it for a long time before it was diagnosed and it took a long time after that for it to go. From what I've read, the earlier you catch it, the shorter the treatment time. I think that was another way in which the rage manifested itself in me.

128. I have a friend [REDACTED] who has three children. I remember around eight years ago I was sitting watching her and her daughter interacting together and I thought "So that's what love is". That was my first experience of that kind of love. I was fifty years old and that was me just finding out what love was, what it meant. It's just so wrong that people can strip you so naked that you don't experience that. The people who were supposed to be looking after me did that. Nobody has the right to take that from you.

129. The same thing happened with my sister and brothers. There was no notion of family. It was just stripped away from us.

130. My relationships with women have suffered. I've been married twice. They were both nice lassies, good decent people but they couldn't cope with the rage and trust issues. I don't blame them for things breaking down. I would be lying to myself if I did. I used to think that the sexual abuse didn't scar me as much as what happened to Sammy, but looking at my relationship with my two wives and with women generally, it certainly did its job.

131. Four of my closest friends now are women, but I can't trust them. They're alright at arm's length.

132. I have trouble mixing with people. I'm self-employed doing general building work. I'm alright with people for a short while, but couldn't work eight hours a day with them. I much prefer animals.
133. I decided not to have kids because I didn't want to pass on how I was. I knew there was something wrong with me but didn't know what it was. The very things I needed were love and kids and I've denied myself for whatever stupid reason. A lot of people who've been abused find love in their own families and that helps them heal. I don't know why I didn't do it. I just didn't want to pass it on. The thing is, I now get told off by my friends for being so soft with their kids. I know kids need discipline but it shouldn't be too harsh or involve violence.

Treatment and support services

134. I've had twenty-odd years of counselling and have seen psychotherapists. It has been a bit hit and miss. It had its place to put into perspective why I was the way I was. I couldn't tie it down in my head that I was the way I was because of the homes. I couldn't tie down that my defence mechanisms had become part of the problem. In that sense it served its purpose but I really don't think I needed it for quite so long.
135. I don't think psychology is a science. It's a bit hit and miss as to whether it works. When it does, it's good. I don't think using one type of therapy for a specific group of people works. Everybody is different. The key is hitting on the right therapy for the individual. I don't think the problem is that people aren't trying to help, it's not knowing how to sort the problem.
136. I was on anti-depressants for twenty five years. That's what I mean about people not knowing how to sort the problem. About eight years ago, I told the doctor that I wasn't awake long enough when I took the tablets to actually feel depressed, and I stopped taking them. It was me who decided to stop. It's not like they worked or the doctor made the decision to take me off them.

137. I was told afterwards by a nurse at my GP practice that I shouldn't have been taking the tablets for that long. How was I supposed to know that? I don't remember what her title was, but she helped me. I asked her if it was normal for people like me, who had been through what I had, to do what I was doing. She sat me down and told me straight. That worked better for me than anything else. She told me that even if something is bad, there's always a positive and I should try to focus on that. It just kind of worked for me.

138. I know mental health problems are being talked about more now and they're starting to recognise that it should be treated like other serious illnesses, but more needs to be done. The right things need to be put in place for people who have been abused. There needs to be a better understanding of the problem. It needs to be recognised that the abuse is just the seed from which things that are far bigger and far more complex grow. I was stuck in a cycle for years of getting short-term sick lines, going back to work, getting into fights, getting the sack and being on the dole.

139. I could get access to the nurse again if I needed to. It would probably take about ten weeks though. However, I genuinely don't think I need treatment any more. You have to go through a process, live through it and learn. It's a hard, hard fight but you have to do it no matter how painful it is. Nobody can take it away for you. You mature and learn to laugh at it. That's quite a big saviour. You learn to laugh at people in the pub telling paedophile jokes. You learn not to let things bother you. Things still hurt and I could be depressed again if I were to sit and dwell on it. I'm a Jehovah's Witness and have Jehovah watching over me now. That's basically all I need.

Current life

140. Being a Jehovah's Witness helps with the anxiety attacks. It says in the bible that you should throw your anxieties onto Jehovah. It's a bit like counselling yourself. You're asking Jehovah to take away your anxieties. It eases it. It doesn't take it away fully, but it leaves it a level where I can manage it.

141. I seem to have the rage under control now, but it does rear its ugly head every now and again.

142. I've isolated myself as much as I can to feel safe and no one can hurt me. The people who are in my life are kept at arm's length. I enjoy spending time with my friends and their children. I know that they don't want anything from me.

143. One of the sickening things for me is wondering what I could have been. I managed to get a 2:1 degree when I was forty years of age even although I left school without being able to write. What could I have achieved if I had done that sooner? My degree is in community and youth work. I choose that so that I could look into stuff relevant to my situation.

Records

144. I saw my social services records when I initially started seeing a counsellor. He wrote to Greenock social services and got them sent to me. I don't have them now as I had to send them back. They said they had to take bits out because other family members were mentioned. There wasn't a lot there for sixteen years of my life. The bundle was about three quarters of an inch big. I thought that was a bit sad.

145. Smyllum said that they had lost records over time. They didn't have staff records showing which staff were there and when. It makes it impossible to tie anything down.

146. I didn't get any records from the homes in Newcastle. They kept giving me reasons for not releasing them, even although all of my brothers wrote saying it was okay for each of us to see anything relating to the others. I think I just got a bit fed up trying to get them in the end.

Reporting abuse

147. There have been police investigations into the homes in Newcastle, and I think possibly in Scotland too. I lost the rag years ago when I saw how little I had been sent in the way of records from Greenock Council and made threats in the presence of a social worker about disclosing things that had happened. She said she would have to take it further. I think that's what started off the investigations. I remember the police doubted that I would have been capable of sexual intercourse at the age of six. I know there were some court cases came out of it. My brothers will probably speak more about that.

Final thoughts

148. I think about all the kids and the things they must have taken from their experiences in those places. I think about the futility of it all and question whether there's a point in growing up and becoming an adult. People have had to battle through their whole lives just to get to where they are and it might not even be a good place. Yet, it could all have been stopped. Things could have been so much better. It's a shame for all those kids. They'll never get it back.

149. You get priests and bishops saying that it's all about money when victims come forward. My reply to them would be that they're right, it is all about money. That is how it all started. The kids were used for financial gain. I don't know how much social services paid the nuns to look after us, but we never got new clothes or shoes and the food wasn't that great. Also, there wasn't much in the way of travelling expenses and they didn't employ that many staff, all of whom were young and probably didn't get paid much anyway. They were creaming it off. They weren't doing their job properly and weren't using the money they were given to look after us right. So, they're right it is about money, but people don't seem to reply to them like that.

150. I'm coming to the end of the battle, the end of my little war. I would like it to stop. I'm treating giving my evidence to the Inquiry as the last bit I've got to do. I

don't think any lessons will be learned. I just want this written down. I don't want my life to be nothing. When I went to college there was a lot of talk on my course about the harm men do. I was thinking "That's what women do. They're talking about my life in reverse". If it's written down, it can't be rubbed out and nobody from the Catholic Care can claim it's been lost in a fire. It's legal and it's not going to get lost. People will know that I was there and that it happened.

151. 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.

AAI

Dated.....

20-01-17