

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AAF

Support person present: No

1. My name is AAF. My date of birth is . I live with my wife, and teenage son. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Background

2. I was born in Greenock. I was very young when I went into care so I can't remember what life was like before then. I've read in reports that we were living in "squalor" and the family home was an "unsafe environment". My father was an alcoholic and I would describe my mother as an uncaring person at the time.
3. I have three separate burn marks on me which I believe were caused by my mother burning me with a poker when I was a baby. They've shrunk as I've got older. I haven't managed to get to the bottom of this yet, but I think that's another reason why I was taken into care. I must have been a very small baby and was probably close to death. It was on the verge of murder. I can forgive someone losing control and doing something in a moment of madness, but putting a poker in the fire, waiting until it gets hot and then making three separate attacks on me seems calculated. It's too much to take. I can't bring myself to forgive her. I was then put into care to be looked after properly and the people who were supposed to do that were horrible bastards.
4. I was in Nazareth House in Glasgow at least once, possibly twice, and went back to my mother before going into Smyllum. I have no recollection of whether

anything good or nasty happened in Nazareth House, I just know that I've been there.

5. I went into Smyllum when I was about three years of age. I was there for six years and then moved to St Vincent's Children's Home in Newcastle. I think I moved to Newcastle in [REDACTED]. It was just before [REDACTED].
6. My older brother, [AAH], and I went into Smyllum together and were in the same house there. There was a point in my life when I thought my family consisted of only [AAH] and me. My younger sister, [REDACTED], was also in Smyllum but she was in a different house. She didn't really come into my life until I was about thirteen or fourteen and living in St Vincent's in Newcastle. She had been [REDACTED] for a period of time and then was shipped down to St Vincent's for whatever reason. I met another two older brothers, [AAI] and [REDACTED], who were already living in St Vincent's when I got there. I have two more older brothers called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I've been told also that I had two older sisters. One died and I haven't met the other.
7. Although I was moved to Newcastle, my understanding is that the Scottish authorities always had the final say in matters concerning my care. I had a Scottish-based social worker called Mr [IAA] until I was about thirteen. Even after he was gone, I continued to receive postal orders every Christmas, ranging from £5 to £15, from the Scottish authorities until I was sixteen or seventeen. A social worker based in Newcastle took over when Mr [IAA] left, but I think that might just have been down to logistics.

Smyllum Children's Home, Lanark

8. I don't remember who took us to Smyllum. I remember my first impression was that it was a castle. I didn't know what was going on or why I was there. I felt that I had just been thrown into it.

9. The first thing that sticks in my mind about my first day is that I was given hot custard and jelly for my dinner. I hated it and still hate hot and cold stuff together now. I also have a memory of there being loads of kids crammed together into a dining area and there was a plastic humpty dumpty on the window that I wanted to reach up and touch. I went to get it and just got pushed back down. After dinner, we went outside and all the kids were running about all over the place. It was mayhem. There were loads of kids. It seemed to me at the time there were about a thousand kids in the place. It was a dog-eat-dog world. That's my first recollection of what went on at Smyllum and it was all downhill after that. I feel that I was depressed from that point on.
10. There were different houses or dormitories. The one I was in was called St Kentigern's. I'm not sure if I've got the name correct. I think there was one nun in charge of the house and two female staff, although they weren't always on duty at the same time. I'm not sure if any staff lived in, but I did see staff through the night a couple of times when I was unwell.
11. We called the nuns 'Sister' and the staff were called 'Miss' and whatever their first name was. You really only spoke to the nuns when you were replying to them, you wouldn't start a conversation with them. That would have been an interruption. None of the people who were supposed to look after me ever showed any love towards me or gave me any praise.
12. I've never been to prison or anywhere like that but I imagine it's similar to Smyllum. It was dictatorial and Victorian in a sense.

Routine

13. We slept in big long dormitories. It was like something from Oliver Twist. There were three partitions in the room with rows of about twenty beds. When you're young everything looks bigger so I'm not sure if there were as many as twenty in each row.

14. You had to sleep with your hands on top of the blankets. I was told on numerous occasions to get my hands out from under the blankets and put them on top. I could never understand why they insisted on that. I now know it was down to their perversions. They were such hypocrites. They should have taken a look at what they themselves were doing instead of thinking things like that about little kids.
15. Smyllum was very routine-based. You got up between about six-thirty and seven o'clock. You got washed, brushed your teeth and combed your hair. There were about ten sinks in a row for washing. The toothpaste was powder in a tub and everybody went along and dipped their brush into it. You then fixed your bed and stood to attention beside it like you were in the army until it was time to go down for breakfast.
16. You always sat at the same place for breakfast. It consisted of cereal and a cooked breakfast. You went off to school after that.
17. Initially I went to what I think was a nursery school during the day. I remember you had to walk up a hill to get to it. I think it was a nursery school because they used to put us to bed for a sleep in the afternoon, wrapped in the hairy blankets you used to get in those days.
18. When you got back from school you polished your shoes and put them in a little hole with your name on it. You then hung up your coat, again where your name was marked, and went out to play.
19. You were called in for tea and did what you wanted after that until about six or seven o'clock. You had a shower before bed. The younger ones went to bed first, followed by the middle ones and then the older ones.
20. You had to eat everything that was put down to you. On one occasion I couldn't eat a salad and a nun physically forced it into my mouth and kept her hand over

my mouth until I swallowed. That lasted for about fifteen minutes. I was very young at the time and I'll never forget it.

21. On a Saturday night, everybody got head lice cream on and had to comb their hair with the special head lice combs. I remember we got the same tea every single Saturday – chips, beans and a Scotch pie.
22. The routine was a bit different during Lent. You got up at five o'clock to go to church. You'd then wait around for your breakfast when you got back and go off to school after that.
23. We usually wore t-shirts, jeans and jumpers. The clothes were given to us in Smyllum; I was never taken anywhere to buy clothes. We got new plastic sandals in the summer and new shoes in the winter. That was always a big deal. We got them regardless of how hot or cold it was, so they must have been issued at set times each year.
24. Songs about the IRA used to get played regularly on the record player. One particular song used to get sung all the time but I can't remember what it was called. The records were 33 rpm and we used to play them on the 45 rpm setting so they sounded like Pinky and Perky. That's where our fun came from.
25. Another fun thing we did was potato picking. The tractor would plough the potatoes and we would walk behind it and put the potatoes in little wire baskets. We did that every day for a week and got ten shillings for it. We weren't forced to do it. We put our names forward as it was a popular thing to do.
26. There was a TV, but it was privileged so you only got to watch it if something spectacular happened.
27. We used to go away on an annual holiday but it wasn't really a holiday as the regime was the same. It was still oppressive.

28. We got a medical examination once a year. The nun we called the nun doctor was always there. There might have been other people there but I don't remember. It was all done in military fashion. We lined up in alphabetical order, wearing only our dressing gowns and slippers. They measured and weighed you, got you to cough and stick out your tongue and off you went. That's the only medical I can remember. I can't remember if I ever went to the dentist.

Religious instruction

29. The religious education at Smyllum was really intense. It was as orthodox as you can get. It was drilled into you when you had your breakfast, dinner and tea. It was part of what you did. You went to mass on a Sunday and benediction in the afternoon. You did all the religious stuff. Easter was an intense time as well. You went to mass in the morning during Lent. It was all built round the nuns' ideas of Christianity.

30. The happiest week of my life in Smyllum was the week leading up to my First Communion. I was put into a separate dormitory with the other boys and girls who were also going through the ceremony and we were treated like kings for a week, right up until the day I got inducted into the Catholic faith.

31. It was the biggest day of my life. I couldn't believe it even at the time. I thought it was fantastic. I wore a white shirt, red tie, sash and new pants - everything was brand spanking new. Before going to church that morning we got what I would describe as a wedding breakfast. In fact, the preparation and build-up to it, and the breakfast and meal after it, was like you were getting married. After that, it was just back to reality. I couldn't understand why there was such a massive difference in quality. I got to wear the smart clothes one more time afterwards when my class led the procession for the older ones who were being Confirmed.

32. When I was Confirmed I was given a pen by the person who sponsored me. I don't know who they were. I never saw them before or after the service. I remember thinking that a pen was of no use to me as I couldn't write.

33. Priests and trainee priests visited on a regular basis. You could always tell when a priest was coming as everything would be tidied up and the place would be dandy. The priests were like God. You didn't talk to them. They would sit down and cushions would be placed at their sides and behind them, and a pouffe would be put under their feet. There was a Celtic football mat in front of the fire and they were the only ones who were allowed to stand on it. They were kings.

Birthdays and Christmas

34. I used to celebrate my birthday on [REDACTED] but it's actually on [REDACTED]. I didn't realise that until I went to St Vincent's. It was never a big deal anyway. I never got a cake, card or present.

35. You got some presents at Christmas, but the truth is they were never really yours as somebody would always take them and you'd have to fight to get them back.

36. We used to go to Christmas parties organised by people outside of Smyllum. I don't know who they were. The parties were the same each year but were held in different places. We'd all go on a bus to a big room somewhere and there'd be people playing musical instruments like the flute and accordion and I absolutely loved it.

37. One Christmas in particular sticks in my mind. We were told that sailors from the Royal Navy were coming and it was built up to be a big, big thing. They were going to be bringing us presents and it was going to be the biggest Christmas ever. When we got up that Christmas morning there was nothing at all for us. It was so disappointing. Dinner came and went, then it started to get dark and there was still no sign of the sailors. At about five or six o'clock, in rolled the Navy and gave us our stuff. I was given a soap bag with a tiny cannon with one wheel, and an old beano book with one cover. As a young child it was really gutting. Everybody was the same. I remember my brother and I looking at each

other and I was fighting back the tears. Then I heard "Be grateful for what you've got" being said repeatedly followed each time by the sound of a kid being walloped. I heard it going round the room, so there was no way I was going to show any emotion as it would have come my way. That Christmas was a talking point in Smyllum for quite some time.

38. I know now that it wasn't the fault of the sailors. They probably had their own families to look out for and what they were doing for us was just a bonus. They had obviously gone round and collected stuff and probably thought it would be additional to what we would get. But, because Smyllum was run as a business, they decided to capitalise on it and increase their profit margins by leaving Christmas to the sailors. That was typical of their thoughts and how they ran things. I don't want to sound ungrateful and I know we were probably better off than some kids who were really deprived, even although being with your mum and dad to my mind far outweighed any benefit we had, but it was hard to take as a kid.

Physical abuse

39. We were hit by the nuns and the civilian staff. Although the staff were not as bad as the nuns, they had their moments and were willing and able to hit the kids, myself included, on numerous occasions. They would slap you so hard on the face it would put you on your back. In general though, I would rather have had them looking after us than the nuns. I always felt threatened and on guard when the nuns were there. I remember they would go off on holiday or retreat for between ten to fourteen days and I could feel the stress lifting from me. As time went on, the stress would then start to build up again with the thought of them coming back.

40. The hitting started when I was in the nursery school. You would get slaps on the face and legs for whatever reason. That's what happened in those days.

41. As time went on, it was constant hitting, constant bullying and constantly keeping you on your toes. You got hit for anything. I was hit for things like wetting the bed, asking a nun when I was going to get my long pants for school instead of the short ones, and putting my hands under the blankets in bed. I don't think I was treated any better or worse than any of the other kids, although I did suffer a couple of proper hidings.
42. I wasn't a regular bed-wetter, but if you did wet the bed or were sick on the bed you were punished for that. Some kids wet the bed on a regular basis and they were hit and ridiculed. Everybody knew that they wet the bed. All the kids who wet the bed were put in the same segment in the dormitory and were given nylon sheets.
43. I got a hiding when I contracted the measles. I was about five or six at the time. I remember getting up that day and I was red and covered in spots. A staff member came in and said that there was something wrong with me. The look on her face concerned me. She told me to stay where I was and everybody else went down for breakfast. A nun then came in and gave me a hiding for being unwell. I don't remember her name. I got slapped about and put to bed just because I was ill. I cannot understand why anybody would do that to someone. It was unbelievable. I knew about ten minutes later that I was really ill as they got the nun doctor in and I was given a bottle of lucozade. You only got that if you were at death's door.
44. I was put into a room by myself and that same nun used to come in and be nasty to me for no reason other than I was ill. I must have been in that room for about six weeks. Measles was a big thing in those days. I was sick on the bed and she hit me for that and made me change the sheets. At one point I was sick in the pillow case so she wouldn't find out, but she did. She got me up in the middle of the night and forced me into the shower. I have never been able to understand that. I also got hit for wetting the bed when I was ill and was given nylon sheets.

45. I joined the cubs when I was about seven or eight. There was a big long waiting list and I got in. I was so proud to wear the uniform and to feel part of something. Also, it was an activity outside the premises so that was a bonus. I know they wear green now, but then it was a dark navy blue jumper with a collar and for me it was a matter of real pride to wear it. One day I was late for the cub meeting at the church hall and went out the back way to avoid being seen. On my way there, I walked past the boiler house on the Smyllum premises and saw the door was open. I have a very good memory of this. You weren't allowed in there and for whatever reason I decided to go in. As I walked in, I looked up momentarily and saw two nuns, one of whom had her arms around the other. The nun, whose arms were on the other, grabbed me and then attacked me. She strangled, punched, kneed, kicked, pushed my face in front of the thing that was on fire and did everything you could think of to me. I was knocked unconscious. I don't know how long I lay there.

46. When I woke up the only thing I was wearing on top was the collar from my jumper. The jumper was lying at my side. I had blood coming from my ears and nose, and my teeth felt like they had been sawn. I remember picking up my jumper and my only concern was that I was going to get done in for ripping the jumper. I hid out of the way until the other lads came back and I hid my jumper. I had to steal someone else's jumper to cover up what had happened.

47. I didn't seek any medical attention. I just got on with it because that's what you had to do. I'm convinced it would have been worse for me if I had made anything of it or raised concerns. My body was marked and I was in a lot of pain. I had scuffs on my eye, redness on my face and bruises on my body. I used to play rugby as an adult and I would liken the pain to how I felt after having played a game with lots of hard tackles. The injuries would have been visible to the staff and nuns but nobody said anything to me. It would have been nothing to them.

48. It wasn't until years later when I was an adult that it dawned on me what had been going on that day. I had questioned myself numerous times over the years

and couldn't work it out. I was watching a TV programme and a scene came on where a girl was kissing another girl. I realised then that that's what had been happening and the nun thought I had found out about it. It's been horrendous for me trying to sort this out in my mind. It was a proper kicking for nothing at all. I have racked my brain trying to remember the nun's name. All I know is that she was the nun in charge of the section I was in when I left. There were four separate sections and, as I've said before, I think mine was called St Kentigern's. I never even saw the other nun's face, she could have been anybody.

49. After that incident, my life was absolutely horrendous until I left Smyllum eighteen months later. The nun was always at me – she would strangle me, slap me, spit on me and set about me. I literally wanted to kill myself. There was a little bridge where we used to go to watch the steam engines pass and I used to think about jumping off it.
50. One Christmas I was given a tinfoil-covered chocolate Santa. I walked down to the cloakroom to eat it and the nun came in, took it off me, threw it to the floor and stood on it. I knew I was going to get a hiding so I hid behind the coats. She then kicked me on the chest and winded me badly. It wasn't just a little kick, she lifted her leg up so that she struck me with full force with the sole of her foot. I cannot understand why somebody would do that. Stamping on a chocolate Santa and kicking somebody for no reason whatsoever. I just don't get it.
51. On another occasion, I got six whacks on the hand with a cricket bat for telling her that I was going to Lanark on a Saturday afternoon but went to the boating lake instead. Cricket stumps were also used sometimes for punishment.
52. If someone did something really bad then everybody got punished for it. I remember it was a really big thing when kids ran away. There was a proper lockdown then. Instead of being just dictatorial it was proper Nazi-like. You were marched to school and back and weren't allowed out at all. It was like that until

the runaways came back. That's the only time I remember any sort of formal discipline being in place. I'm not aware of any discipline book being kept.

53. Children running away was a fairly regular thing. I don't know how they were punished but they were segregated and were under extra scrutiny when they came back.

54. A child was killed by a car one time after running away and that was a massive thing. It took a long time for the lockdown to be lifted. Even the swings in the playground were taken down and it was deadly silent in the house. We weren't allowed to be kids.

55. The priests who visited used to slap us about as well. When we went on holiday we used to stay in places like schools, not hotels or bed and breakfasts. I remember one time I was playing with a bouncy ball in the yard where we were staying. There was a small locked access gate in the yard and my ball bounced out through it. As I reached out to get it, a man came past, picked up the ball, passed it through to me and off he went. A priest then came up behind me, grabbed a hold of me and slapped me about the head. For what reason, I do not know. I can only assume it was because I had interfered with somebody else's life.

56. There was a man called [REDACTED] BAC [REDACTED] who was the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] He slapped me so hard one day that he knocked me out. I was totally unconscious. It was in the orchard at the back of the Smyllum. You weren't supposed to go in there, but we all did. When I woke up, there was nobody there. I just picked myself up and off I went. I took it that that was what happened in life.

57. He also gave me a beating when someone broke the window at school and I got the blame for it. He's buried in the cemetery beside the kids. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

58. He used to play golf in a cow field and if you got the ball you got a shot at hitting it, so the kids used to stand in front of him to try and get to the ball first. If he caught the ball clean it would fly to the back of the field but if he didn't, it would hit the kids and knock their teeth out or give them black eyes. He never tried to make sure the kids were out of the way. He used to just say "You shouldn't have been in the way" and laugh. I witnessed kids getting hurt that way but it never happened to me.

59. He used to walk about with a shotgun over his arm. He gave it to me to fire one day when I was about six or seven. Anybody doing that nowadays would get the jail.

60. So many things happened I could go on forever. That's just how it was for us. It was all the time. It ranged from grabbing and pushing you, a slap, a couple of slaps, a punch in the face, whacks with cricket bats or stumps, and then there were the proper hidings which would be done out of the way. I saw everything being done to the other kids except the proper hidings, although you sometimes heard them or heard about them.

Incident with the nun doctor

61. This is the first time I've ever spoken about this incident. When I was about six or seven, I had to see the nun doctor because I had a sore throat or something like that. I don't remember the nun's name. I remember the incident well, even to the point of waiting outside to see her and a boy showing me the cut in his leg where a part of a metal fence had got stuck.

62. I took my top off when the nun doctor examined me and after she had finished, she took her clothing on top off and put her arms around me and pulled me to her, with my face on her breasts. She was bare on top. She didn't say anything. I've never been able to work out what that was about. It's always troubled me. It was such a strange thing and I'm not even sure I would say it was abuse. In

fact, I feel a bit embarrassed talking about it. I can decipher a lot of stuff but I've never been able to decipher that one. The more I think about it, I feel sad for her. I don't think I've been affected by it.

School

63. The school premises were on the grounds at Smyllum. The teachers weren't nuns. I only ever saw the teachers in school. It was an exceptionally old-fashioned education. I was constantly hit at school. If it wasn't every day, it was at least every other day. I used to get thrashed with a belt for not getting my spelling right. We used a little blackboard and I used to get hit on the head with it. Even to this day my English is horrendous. I found out later in life that I was dyslexic. I know they didn't cater for that sort of thing back then but why attack and hit people for having that? There was no sympathy or anything, I got hit for not being able to do the work. I hated school for that.

64. The thought of going to school used to turn my stomach. It was constantly on my mind. Even walking down the corridor was a worry. I was frightened I would get attacked. I used to walk down the middle of the corridor so that I had a better chance of seeing people coming.

65. Once a week when I went to school, we would be given a thrupence, sixpence or a shilling. You gave it to the teacher and she marked it off in a book. This was every week without fail. You were never given the money but you could see in black and white how it had accumulated at the end of set periods. You always knew how much you had. You thought you were a millionaire when it reached a quid. I never got that money when I left Smyllum and I always wondered what happened to it. That was my only personal possession. I might have had a brush or something along those lines but I never really had anything else that you would class as a proper personal possession.

Contact with family

66. AAH has told me that my mother visited, but I can't remember that at all. No other extended family got in touch.

Contact with other people outside of Smyllum

67. We sometimes spent time with families, which I enjoyed. We used to get put on buses to go to places like Glasgow and Motherwell to do things mostly around a church environment. I don't know what this was. Afterwards you'd be taken away by a family for a few hours. And, every now and again you'd be asked to go with the families or they'd come and take you, maybe if they liked you.

68. For a couple of years, a man and woman, who I assume were married, used to take me to their house a couple of times a year around Easter and Christmas. That was a really nice time. I don't know why it stopped. In fact, that was the only time at Smyllum I was taken shopping. I remember I ruined my socks while trying to dry them in front of the fire before I went back Smyllum and they took me to Woolworths in Lanark for a new pair.

Contact with social services

69. The social worker, Mr IAA, used to come to see me every three to six months. I used to really look forward to his visits. I felt it was something that was mine. I was never told in advance that he was coming, but his visits really picked me up. His visits made me feel that somebody was focusing just on me, not a big group.

70. I never told Mr IAA about how I was treated in Smyllum. When you live in an environment like that it's so common that it's just part of the routine; there's nothing unusual about it. You don't talk about the routine things in life, you really only talk about the unusual things.

71. I don't remember anybody else from outside Smyllum coming to speak to us or any inspections taking place.

72. I was in Smyllum until I was about nine years of age.

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

73. Mr IAA took AAH and I to St Vincent's. I'll never forget that day. It was only about two or three weeks into the new term at school. I got up as normal, had breakfast and was about to go to school when AAH and I were taken into a room where Mr IAA was talking to a nun. We were then put into his car and off we went to Newcastle. That was the first I knew we were going there. I didn't even know where it was. The furthest I had ever been was Girvan or Ayr. There was no conversation with Mr IAA about why we were being taken to Newcastle.

74. I look back on that day as one of the saddest of my life because, although I didn't realise at the time, I lost my nationality through it. It was taken away from me just like that.

75. We arrived at St Vincent's in the afternoon and I know it was around September because I remember everybody coming in shortly after we got there, and they were all talking about having moved into their new school year. One of the first things I had to contend with was the Geordie accent. It was foreign to me and difficult to understand.

76. A nun called Sister IAG ran the place when we first went in. She was Scottish so there was a bit of a connection there. She was quite proud of her Scottish heritage. I think she knew some of the nuns in Smyllum. They wore the same uniform as the Smyllum nuns so I believe it was the same order.

77. I was introduced to my brothers [REDACTED] and [AAI] at St Vincent's. I hadn't known anything about them until then. I know now that they had also been in Smyllum, but I don't think we were ever there at the same time.

78. St Vincent's was more homely than Smyllum. It was more of a house than a mansion. There was less space and it was more open to the outside world. I was able to make a connection with people who had a normal life and were not in the care system. I went to a normal school so I was away from the premises more often than in Smyllum and felt less under scrutiny. There was more time to be yourself and not get told off for every little thing you did.

79. All of that said, there was still fear, intimidation and bullying and you had to be on your toes, so in a sense it was no different to Smyllum, just not as intense.

Routine

80. The dormitories were small, with two to four beds in each. There was a definite distinction between my washing gear, like soap, towel and toothpaste, and everybody else's, and you got the chance to be in a bathroom by yourself if you wanted.

81. The morning routine was different from Smyllum, you didn't jump and stand by your bed. You got washed, ready, and drifted downstairs at a reasonable time to get breakfast with everybody else.

82. After breakfast, we all washed the dishes and then went off to school. It was more like a family environment with everybody having household chores to do.

83. We got cornflakes and a cooked breakfast, it was good quality stodge. We got our dinner at school and our evening meals and supper back at St Vincent's. The supper consisted of something small, like toast or cornflakes but it was always there for you. The evening meals were good family meals, with a good variety.

84. I was force-fed a couple of times. It was turnip on one of the occasions. I was warned twice that I would be sent to bed if I didn't eat it and then when that didn't work, the nun opened my mouth and put it in. The nuns always wanted to win the battles of wills, but the St Vincent's ones were more easily beaten than the ones in Smyllum.

85. You were taken out to get clothes at a certain time of year when a strict allocation of money was spent on you. I got my first football strip when I was there and I cherished it. I even wore it to bed.

Physical abuse

86. Sister IAG used to tip off the edge every now and again and set about you. She was a fantastic footballer and she expected everybody to be the same. One day we were playing football in the yard at the back of St Vincent's. There was a gate at one end which was used as a goal and a rendered wall at the other. I was in the goal at the rendered wall. I let a goal in because I didn't want to dive down onto the hard surface. Sister IAG's reaction was completely over the top. She called me useless and slammed the ball into my face, knocking the back of my head against the wall. It was very painful as I got it from both ends. The ball struck the corner of my nose which made it bleed and my head was cut in numerous places due to the surface of the wall. She just walked away and left me like that.

Sexual abuse

87. IAH was a trainee priest in about his early [redacted] when he first started coming to St Vincent's. He used to bring us a can of lager or Taunton. It was just one can. I was about ten or eleven, AAH was about eleven or twelve and [redacted] was a bit older than AAH. We were all young. We used to sit with IAH out in the woods at the back of St Vincent's. It was a bit of fun at first, but then it started to develop into something else. His exact words to us

one time were "Have you ever had a wanking competition?". We told him we hadn't and he said that we should have one, but we didn't ever do that. That was the start of it.

88. After that, he would come into the bathroom and would always be around when you were in the toilet. He would also make insinuations about sexual acts. Nothing really happened until we went on holiday to the Wallis campsite in Scarborough. It was great fun there at first. It was at the seaside and the kids were all over the shop, out on bikes and all that kind of stuff. We had two big caravans, the girls in one and the boys in the other. The nun, Sister **HAE**, and the female staff slept in the girls' one and **IAH** was the sole adult in with the boys. I wanted to be in the room with **AAH** and the others, but for some reason I ended up having to sleep in the same bed as **IAH**.

89. One night we went to the club campsite. You had to be a certain age to get into the club but we managed to get in. A band was playing and we were drinking shandy. I had a good laugh with my brothers and it was a really good night. Later on that night I woke up in bed and **IAH** was feeling me all over and trying to stick his penis in me. I got out of bed and went to where everybody else was sleeping and lay on the floor beside them. The next morning he came to me and said "Don't say anything because I was having a wet dream". I didn't know what that was. I just said "Right". I didn't say anything about it for years.

90. I kept away from **IAH** after that and didn't give him the opportunity to be with me on my own again. The only other time he had a bit of an opportunity was when he was driving the minibus and I was sitting in the front. He put the brakes on really hard and put his hand out to stop me going forward. It happened so quickly that I didn't get the chance to stop him. He was pretending that something was coming just so he could put his hand out to touch me. That's the sort of skunk he was and still is.

School

91. The primary school was a normal school away from St Vincent's. We got the bus to it. I hated it with a passion. I have absolutely nothing nice to say about it. My teacher was called either Miss AGS or Miss AGS. She didn't like the people from St Vincent's at all and she made that quite clear. One day somebody gave me a little sweet shaped like a lipstick and when she saw me eating it, she dragged me up and made me stand on a chair on the table, and told the class not to give me anything as I got a lot more than they did. She made me feel so uncomfortable.
92. I was good at sport but wasn't allowed to play because she knew how much I liked it and that's how she punished me. She didn't allow me to go swimming one time because I could swim faster than everybody else.
93. She used to ridicule the St Vincent kids and call us the orphans. She would exclude us from trips, probably because we were taken out of school sometimes to go on day trips and she resented that. You could see the resentment in her. I have often thought about what she did and how she went about it. Her behaviour was quite subtle at times. You had to be there to experience it.
94. She also kept me back at school and I never got to progress from the second last class to the last one. She retired in my last year at the school. I didn't get the chance to connect with any of the other teachers as she was my only teacher.
95. On the day of my 11-plus exam I was taken out of class and taken to the school next to mine to do it there. The pupils from both schools were sitting it at the same time. I didn't even know that I was doing the test. I only found out after it was done. I failed it. The 11-plus was a big thing in families in those days, yet I didn't even know anything about it.

96. I was put in what was called the 'nut hut' when I went to St Aiden's Secondary School. The nut hut was a portacabin on the premises and all the kids who had problems picking up English or maths went there.
97. St Aiden's was a great school. The first teacher I came across was called Mr [REDACTED] and he was the complete opposite of everything I had ever known. He took time with you and showed affection. I felt that he cared. The sports teacher, Mr [REDACTED], was also good. He would praise you and mark up in your book that you'd done well and tried hard. I did enjoy going to that school. It was completely different to anything I had ever come across. We did sports on Wednesday afternoons and everybody turned up at school to do all the different sports such as football, rugby, hockey and netball . It was great fun.
98. It was a really big uplift for me going to that school. There were people from St Vincent's there, but not a large number so I met kids from different backgrounds. It was a completely alien environment to me. I was there until I left school [REDACTED] in [REDACTED].

Life after care

99. I was released back into my mother's care when I was about fourteen going on fifteen. She was living in [REDACTED]. She had met a bloke and he had a bit about him so it was he who instigated getting me out of the home. Social workers used to visit so I was still under the care of the Catholic Care or the Newcastle and Hexham Diocese. I don't really know the full ins and outs of the social work set up. Mr [IAA] had left the scene by that time and the social worker was called [IAJ]. As I've said before, there was still a connection with the Scottish authorities though.
100. [IAJ] involvement with me started when I was about thirteen. Initially, I saw him about once every three months but started to see him weekly or fortnightly in the lead-up to going back to my mother's.

101. My return to my mother's was done on a phased basis. I think that was more to see how they would cope, rather than me. I used to go at weekends, then mid-week and eventually I returned on a full-time basis. I think it was a big gamble by everybody.
102. Going into my home environment was a very difficult time for me. There was constant fighting between my mother and step-father. I wasn't used to people swearing, drunkenness, or arguing and fighting. It wasn't a good time in my life.
103. [REDACTED] AAH [REDACTED]. I lived there until I was about twenty one and then got my own place.

Impact of experiences

104. As a result of being taken out of Scotland, I don't feel like I'm part of anything. I feel really sad about that. I want to be Scottish. I go to Scotland regularly and I've done quite a few Munros. A couple of years ago I was up in Glenfinnan and I sat on my own for a few hours on a hill above the viaduct just looking around and thinking about everything. I've still got it marked on my GPS. I sat there thinking "I want to be part of this, but I'm not. I'm not part of anything. I'm just a mongrel really". It was really upsetting. It was about a month after the Scottish Referendum and I even thought about not having the right to vote – that just ratified that I don't belong.
105. It might sound daft and people might think they're not bothered about that sort of thing, but when tested they are. I watched a programme showing the woman who won the Bake Off TV show going back to the village she's from in Pakistan. She had criticisms of it, but she spoke about it as the place that she's from even although her home now is in England. I understand that, but I don't have it. It was taken away from me. It's gone now and I'll never get it back. I live in [REDACTED] but I want to be from somewhere. I should never have been taken out of Scotland. I think it's disgraceful that there wasn't even any conversation

with us about it. I should have been put somewhere in Scotland. Why send [REDACTED] to Newcastle? The only reason I can think of is what my brother [REDACTED] has told me.

106. The homes were run as businesses and that's all you were to them. I think it could have been so different for me if people had been looking after me properly, if I'd been given proper guidance and direction. I think about my son and what I'm like with him. I've never lifted a finger to him. I try to guide him in the right direction. Even if he's going the wrong way I try my best and sometimes let him find out for himself. I look after him the best I can and tell him I love him every single day. That's all that's needed. That didn't happen in the homes. They ran them as businesses and didn't even fulfil their business.
107. I feel it's had a massive effect on me. I think I could have been such a better person. I feel that I could've been more productive; there's stuff I feel inside that I want to do but can't because I've been told for years I'm useless and can't do anything. I've been treated like I'm nothing - pushed to the side and trampled on. I was dragged to a different country and not even told about it and then dropped in a school where I had no idea what was going on.
108. I'm convinced that I could have achieved different things. I have so many ideas in me. I feel that I've failed in everything I've ever done. I just feel it's been a waste of time. I've been a traitor to myself because I should have done something different, but you just plod on. Instead of waiting on someone to direct me, I should have taken my own way and done something – something constructive and worthwhile. I suppose it might still come, I'm only fifty five.
109. I never got a proper education. My written English to this day is horrendous. I've been doing a programme called 'return to learning' at work in an effort to brush up my English. I've been successful in a sense as I've progressed quite a lot. It was one of the teachers there that found out I was dyslexic.

110. Being in care has had a disastrous effect on my family, although some of the blame lies with my mother. My family is fragmented, obliterated actually. We find it difficult to talk to one another. We live all over the country and never really see one another.

111. AAH [REDACTED], AAI [REDACTED] and I went up to Scotland together to take part in the National Confidential Forum (NCF) and it was horrendously difficult to be together. All we've got to talk to each other about is negative stuff. Other families get together and remember times in childhood, like fun holidays, but it's not like that with us. We talk about times when we got hidings and that kind of thing. It's always negative and always ends up in an argument. We can't really be together. I don't want to keep going on about stuff that happened years ago. It wears you out.

112. I know I've got so many brothers and sisters but I might as well not really have them. I hate [REDACTED], which is a sad thing to say. I can't talk to her or bear to be in the same place as her. [REDACTED] I'm only close to AAH [REDACTED] and he's going to blow up one day. I'm super concerned for him. The NCF sort of pointed him in the direction of help but I don't think he goes. I really feel for him.

113. I get flashbacks and I think about why IAH [REDACTED] and that nun did that to me in that room. If she had just chased me out I wouldn't have been any the wiser. I wouldn't even have questioned it. After that she constantly picked on me, attacked and targeted me.

Current life

114. It wasn't until I moved in with my wife that life changed for me. I got a little bit of control and was better able to dictate my own destiny after that.

115. My wife has been an absolute rock for me. Without her I'd have been a scumbag. I was living in a part of [REDACTED] which isn't very nice and I

managed to get myself out of there and make progress. We got our first mortgage and never looked back. I'm now mortgage-free.

116. I don't need any sort of formal support. I'm alright. I try not to dwell on what happened. I don't think I'm depressed. I think I was depressed at some points when I was living in care and also when I was back with my mother. There are different levels of depression. I don't get depressed to the point that I would want to end it. I do get upset though when I think of my family and the fact that we can't be together properly.

Court proceedings - sexual abuse

117. I told my brothers about what happened with [redacted] IAH shortly before I got married. I was in a pub with [redacted] AAH, [redacted] and [redacted] AAI and as usual the chat reverted to what had happened in the past. I told them what he had done to me and [redacted] and [redacted] AAH said that something had happened to them. [redacted] AAI also said that he had tried it on with him.

118. The first time the authorities became aware of it was when [redacted] AAI was trying to get his records. I thought I could use the information about Traynor as a big lever to persuade the Catholic Care/St Vincent's to give [redacted] AAI his full records. A member of staff from St Vincent's called Kate Cavendish came with me to support me when I met them. She was lovely and very supportive. However, that didn't work out as planned.

119. After I gave them Traynor's name, they said that he had been taken out of circulation. They then brought in a cold and hard social worker to deal with me and I then realised what they were all about. We spoke to the police and Traynor was eventually prosecuted for offences against me, [redacted] and [redacted] AAH. He admitted to certain parts of it but not it all. On the first day it was supposed to be in court, it didn't go ahead because the Catholic Care said he was going through a cleansing process. That process lasted eighteen months and it gave them the time to get their stories right, and prepare themselves so they could

say he was cured. I first spoke to the police about it in 1992 and the case wasn't finalised in court until [REDACTED] 1994.

120. When he eventually did appear in court, he sort of won the case in a sense because nothing happened to him even although he had pled guilty. He wasn't jailed or fined. He didn't even get put on the sex offenders' register as that wasn't in force. He got away with it scot-free. He turned up in his suit and tie and the judge even apologised to him for being late. He was allowed to walk out the back door, like a skunk, at the end because there were people with cameras out the front. I did not get any justice from that at all.

121. He didn't even say sorry. The bishop sent us a long letter saying how apologetic he was. The letter was mentioned in court. I don't want him to say sorry anyway. He has wrecked a few people's lives. He lied in court too. He said he hadn't done it again. Other people have told me that he did it to them, but they don't want to get involved so I can't mention any names.

122. What made it even worse was that during the court hearing, his barrister asked the judge if they could go into another room to discuss Traynor's past. The prosecutor went too. You could tell it had been agreed beforehand that that was going to happen. They went away to discuss him secretly. How bad is that? It was as if what he had done was alright because he'd also been abused. It's not alright. They should take a blunderbuss to the lot of them.

123. The prosecutor never spoke to me. The only one who talked to me was a policeman who worked in child protection in Newcastle called Campbell Findlay or Findlay Campbell. He was gutted at the outcome, so were his staff. Nobody could believe he walked away from it.

124. All of the hypocrite nuns were in the public gallery in court that day beside me and were all praying for a nice outcome for him. This, for a man who had admitted to masturbating while sitting on top of [REDACTED] a kid of fourteen years

of age, and ejaculating on his face. That was read out in court. They looked like they wanted to high-five each other when they heard the result.

125. Afterwards, I was plagued by people from the BBC, ITV and daft ones like Women's Own asking me if I wanted to give my story. That's why I don't want my name published anywhere.

126. When it comes to the Catholic faith and the Catholic people, you have no chance of winning. They're corrupt from top to bottom. They will say anything they want you to hear. They are liars through and through. I've lost my faith through them and I detest them for what they are. They have so much power, which I've seen with my own eyes.

127. To add insult to injury, I later tried to get justice through a civil court and the Catholic Care batted down the hatches and brought in what I call the 'shit-deflectors'. They sent me down to a psychologist in [REDACTED] and he said that I wasn't really affected by the sexual abuse, it was more about Traynor getting away with it. That annoyed me so much. He got paid a fortune to come up with that. It's actually both - had the sexual abuse never happened, there would have been no court case.

128. The solicitors brought in a barrister from Newcastle who was really good. An offer of compensation was made [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] It wasn't about the money, I wanted justice and wanted Traynor in a court. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] In the end, it was all dealt with in a room rather than a court, I got £5000 and Traynor didn't even need to show up.

129. Before the trial Traynor was earmarked for promotion in the Catholic church. He was an intelligent bloke. He owns a [REDACTED] now in [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]. He was working with kids before that. I saw him with kids in a

swimming pool in [REDACTED] before the criminal case. I still think he's the sort of person who moves in suspect circles.

Records

130. I tried once to get records from Smyllum but the nuns were really obstructive and I didn't get anything.

131. As I said, I met with a social worker from the Catholic Care/St Vincent's when I was trying to get records. This is when I had gone to speak to them about what Traynor had done. I sat at a desk with the woman and she refused to show me them. I call her the head of the 'shit deflectors'. She put up barriers and I could actually feel the coldness from her. She said that other people's names were mentioned and I couldn't see them. Before she was brought in, I spoke to two social workers who were really nice and they took things seriously. They worked for St Cuthbert's care, which was based at St Cuthbert's House in Newcastle. I got quite a bit of information about my life from them. The burn marks had been on my mind and I wanted more information about that. The two workers were then kind of pushed to the side and that woman and others were brought in. They were brought in to batten down the hatches and they succeeded.

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132. What I hope comes out of this is that kids who are in care get treated with dignity and respect and are not treated like criminals. When I look back I think that's how I was treated, like a criminal. The kids need to be given an education and guidance and direction. It needs to be tailored to their needs, I'm not talking about putting round pegs in square holes. It's not a case of running down the M1 motorway trying to get to London as fast as you can, it's okay to take the scenic route if you have to. They need to be supported so they can fulfil their potential and get to where they need to be.

133. Also, a lot of people who've been in care need to be cared for now. My brother **AAH** needs that. I love him to bits but he's going to blow up one day. The thing is, people don't know what he's gone through. It's not an excuse but it's relevant; it all stems from neglect. Too many times you hear about someone having done something bad and their background is that they've been in care and gone through horrible experiences. You rarely hear that they've had a fantastic life and been educated somewhere like Eton. Those people need care now and it's not happening. I see people walking about the streets begging for money. It's heart-breaking. I'm not saying everybody who does that has been through the care system, but a lot have.

134. A kid called **██████████** was in St Vincent's with me and was treated like a dog. He used to play the drums and could do all sorts of stuff. He now walks about the town with a stinky parka, manky hair, and trousers full of urine and it's all because of the care system. He's gone through that system and then been booted out the other end to fend for himself. It's a case of we've had our money, we're getting nothing now so get out. They still do that. People can't cope with that. They can't do it. How many eighteen years old can do that? I give **██████** twenty quid every time I see him. He's a nice bloke and he needs looked after. All I can do for him is give him twenty quid.

135. I don't think the Inquiry will be strong enough to take on the Catholic people. They have too much power. They've got a line of people they can put in front of you until they wear you out. People might want to try but they sicken you to the core. I've seen it with my own eyes how unbelievably bad they can be. The stunts they pull are shocking. You've seen nothing until you've been involved with them.

136. 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.  AAF

Dated. 19-1-17