

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

GGF [REDACTED]

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is GGF [REDACTED], and my name at birth was GGF [REDACTED]. I was known as GGF [REDACTED] from birth as I was born on my brother's birthday and he said "look I've got a GGF [REDACTED] for my birthday". My date of birth is the [REDACTED] 1963. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. Before being placed into care I lived in [REDACTED] Drumchapel in Glasgow with my mum [REDACTED], my dad [REDACTED] and my six siblings. My parents are now both dead.
3. My brother [REDACTED] is eight years older than me, my sister [REDACTED] is six years older than me, my brother [REDACTED] is four years older than me, [REDACTED] is eighteen months older than me, [REDACTED] my brother is a year younger than me and [REDACTED] is two years younger than me. There is also [REDACTED] who was born to my dad's second marriage and is six years younger.
4. My mum walked out on us all when I was three years old and dad had to bring us up. Dad at the time was working nights at the ship yard and my Uncle [REDACTED] cooked and generally looked after us. I was happy at home and life was perfect until I was placed into care.

Smyllum Orphanage

5. At the age of four I was placed into care at Smyllum Orphanage along with my brothers [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], as far as I knew at that time the rest of my siblings remained at home. I later learnt that my dad had suffered a heart attack and couldn't cope with us all being at home. My dad apparently contributed financially to our care at Smyllum. My dad at this time was conducting an extra marital affair with a neighbour called [REDACTED] [REDACTED] who was married and I believe she was involved in influencing my dad to move us into care. It is my belief that at some point [REDACTED] went and saw the parish priest at St Pius Church with the aim of getting us taken into care.

Routine at Smyllum

First day

6. I believe that my dad drove us to Smyllum with no explanation as to where we were going and no social services involvement. As we approached Smyllum I remember seeing a long pathway which led to a horrible building with a massive black door which the nuns came out of. This was the first time that any of us had seen nuns and it was very scary.
7. We were met by Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] who was dressed in a black robe and collar, Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] was in charge and she would be the only nun that we ever had any real contact with.
8. On entering the house my dad left us to sit on a bench whilst he went to talk privately with Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED]. Once my dad had left the building we were told to strip off our clothes. Our clothes were taken from us and in return received Smyllum clothes which we picked out from a box. The clothes didn't fit and half the time I was running around in a vest and pants, you were putting shoes on that either crippled you or hung off you and [REDACTED], my baby brother, was always in rags. I also had a bag of toys taken off me by Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] which I had brought from home, which I never saw again.

When my dad left us with Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] I cried because I was scared and didn't want to stay there.

9. On entering Smyllum through the massive black doors it was a big square hallway and there was a room immediately on the right which contained a table and chairs, and there was a room on the left with benches and chairs alongside the wall which I later discovered was where you were sent if you were naughty. There was a further room on the ground floor where we had our meals and another room on the right which had no windows and a cold stone floor which I later learned was where children would be locked in as a punishment. There was a priest room and a staff room further into the ground floor. There were only two dormitories that I knew of for children on the first floor, and there was also a chapel, a grave yard, and an orchard outside and a family room in a building close by. There were other buildings which housed other children but I never spoke to them or saw them.
10. Once we had received our clothes from Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] we were taken upstairs to our dormitories, I was in a separate dormitory to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED], and mine had beds for the girls down the one side of the room and beds for the boys on the other. There were between twelve and sixteen beds in rows and there were cots in the middle for the babies. All of the beds and cots were occupied. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s dormitory was very near to mine, and [REDACTED] was in a cot because he was just a baby. We remained in the dormitory until we were brought back downstairs for something to eat and were then taken back to the dormitory. We weren't allowed to speak or play with the other children for most of our time there.

Mornings and bedtime

11. Between seven and eight o'clock in the morning Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] would ring a bell and we would all get up and I would go into [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]'s dormitory to get [REDACTED] up. [REDACTED] was able to get himself dressed but [REDACTED] totally relied on me. We would then go downstairs for our breakfast. If I didn't take care of [REDACTED] nobody else would have. Breakfast was served by the rather chubby cook who wore an apron and we would sit every day on the corner table. Everything was regimented.

12. After breakfast we were either put outside to play, or if the weather was really bad we would sit on the floor in one of the ground floor rooms with tables and chairs and play with rubber bands.
13. A bell would again sound at lunchtimes and also for tea, between these times we would be left to our own devices either playing outside or indoors. We weren't supervised by the staff, but when we played outside we were kept away from the other children. I remember seeing other nuns walking around and there was also staff who used to help the nuns and they were dressed similarly but not in the full black robes.
14. At night I would sleep in my clothes and I would regularly get up when I heard [REDACTED] crying from the other dormitory. [REDACTED] would cry morning, noon and night. I would go into his dormitory to comfort him and if I was caught by Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] I would be placed in the stone floored room downstairs with no windows and left there all night with no mattress or blanket.
15. I remember on the second night we were at Smyllum I heard [REDACTED] crying and I went to him. Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] caught me and said "just leave him and let him cry". The following night I went to him and Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] caught me again and she proceeded to lock me in the stone floored room and left me until the following morning. This happened many times.
16. A bell was sounded for bedtime and Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] would make sure that we were in bed. Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] must have had a room close by as she always knew when we had got up in the night. We weren't locked into the dormitory and you could use the toilet freely.

Mealtimes/Food

17. The food was ok and I would eat almost everything as I was starving. We had porridge at breakfast time which I used to feed [REDACTED] with. The meals were supervised by the helpers and served by the cook, and I would always see the nuns walking around. We would regularly be given vegetables but there was never enough food. I was always hungry.
18. I can remember being given fish in milk on one occasion, it was nasty and I refused to eat it. I was told by Sister AEG [REDACTED] that I had to eat it and when I did, I was sick all over the plate. The following morning at breakfast the fish with the sick was produced again and I again refused to eat it. I was given no food at breakfast and this continued for about three days with the fish being presented and me going without breakfast. I do remember that a kid gave me some apples from the orchard and they kept me going.
19. I have witnessed other children being made to eat meals and being sick. One girl that I remember was crying because she knew that she was going to receive a meal that she just didn't like and would be sick, and she was afraid to go and get her food. I also saw [REDACTED] being made to eat food the same way and was being sick. [REDACTED]'s plate was put in front of him to eat the same meal the following day.

Washing/bathing

20. We would have baths a few times a week and we all shared the bath water which wasn't hot and it was dirty because somebody had already been in it. There were certain nights for the boys and other nights for the girls, and I would take [REDACTED] with me and bath him. BAH [REDACTED] one of the helpers would supervise bath time. You would always wash yourself and I think there were two baths. There was always loads of us in the bathroom.

Clothing/uniform

21. The only clothes which I wore were those taken from the box when I first arrived.

Leisure time

22. When the weather wasn't bad we were allowed to play outside. We were kept well apart from the other children, and [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I were told that we had to play inside a black metal fence whilst the other children played in the field and the orchard. I can recall watching the other children playing on the other side of the fence and I could see baby's in prams with nets over the prams. I think that Sister AEG [REDACTED] was watching us from a window, because every time we tried to join the other kids she would be straight out to us.
23. There was a witches hat swing that we would always play on outside, this is the swing that I would regularly climb up and fall off.

Trips and holidays

24. I can recall going on a day trip to the seaside at Girvan.

School

25. I don't remember being taught at school in Smyllum, even though I was of school age.

Healthcare

26. One time I split my head open after climbing on the witches hat swing and I was attended to by Sister AEG [REDACTED] who put a bandage around my head. Sister AEG [REDACTED] dealt with all the ailments which occurred in the home. I remember having terrible sun burn and my skin was blistered. I never received any treatment I was just pushed outside in the sun the next day to burn.
27. I do remember being in a bed at one point at the age of about seven and being surrounded by a white tent and the doctor thought that I had TB. I may have been in hospital but I can't be certain, as I was surrounded by nuns. I was there for a long time.

Religious instruction

28. There was priest that I would regularly see in the chapel and in the grounds. We would go to mass on a Sunday and we would have to say our prayers together in a room every morning before food. I had to learn the catechism and the rosary which I struggled with. I was always getting into trouble for not learning my prayers and the rosary. If I got them wrong when reciting them I would be flicked by Sister AEG's rosary beads.

Work

29. I had to wash mine and my brother's clothes in the washroom when they were dirty, and my hands were scabby and red raw from the scrubbing on the washboard.

Birthdays and Christmas

30. We went home to my dad's at Christmas, he would come and get us. On my birthday my dad would come to the orphanage and bring birthday presents and a cake. When dad left to go home all the presents and cake would be taken off us and I would never see the presents again.

Siblings

31. Whilst I was at Smyllum I was the only person who took care of [REDACTED]. I used to change his nappy and wash his clothes when needed, and feed him at meal times. [REDACTED] was stronger and tended to look after himself, but I was there for him when needed.

Family contact

32. I was aware that my dad would come regularly every week to the orphanage to pay for our stay. When dad came to visit us we would see him in the family room which

was located outside of our building. My dad very often would be accompanied by my older brothers and sisters.

33. On one occasion I was stood at the window of my dormitory and saw dad walking up the path and he was greeted by Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] who appeared to turn him away. I don't know why he was turned away maybe we had marks on our bodies that were visible.
34. I would tell dad during visits and when we were at home about the physical abuse involving the wooden paddle and the rosary beads, but he just ignored us and sent us back. My dad treated the clergy like gods, I remember being at St Lawrence's Church in Drumchapel and the priest belted my brother in front of my dad. My dad just stood and watched and did nothing.

Personal possessions

35. All my personal possessions were taken from me when I started at Smyllum which included my clothes. My clothes were given back to me when I returned home for holidays. When I went back to Smyllum I would again have to pick clothes from the box and my own clothes would be taken from me.

Running away

36. I thought about running away a lot, and on a few occasions I took [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] down the front path with the intention of running away. We didn't have a clue where we were when we got to the bottom of the drive so we headed back to Smyllum. Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] would never be far away and she would run down the path after us, and when we returned all three of us would be hit with the beads or whacked with the paddle.
37. I begged my dad to take us home, and [REDACTED] would plead with him by grabbing hold of his ankles, but we were ignored.

38. I recall that a girl called [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] who had long blonde hair ran away on one occasion and she went through a glass panel whilst being chased by the nuns. She was covered in blood and her arms were cut. I don't know what happened to her and I never saw her again after the incident. I was about six or seven when this happened and she was aged ten or eleven.

Bed Wetting

39. [REDACTED] was constantly wetting the bed and it was my responsibility to wash his soiled sheets and clothing. The first time he wet the bed I didn't do anything about it and we went downstairs for breakfast leaving the sheet on the cot. I met with Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] and she told me that I would have to wash his sheets.
40. I took the sheets to the wash room and watched what the other children were doing. I would then stand on a stool at the sink because I couldn't reach it, and using a block of soap I used to rub the sheets and clothes against a wash board, and then hang the sheet out to dry. On my return to the dormitory later in the day the sheet would be on top of the bed waiting for me to make the bed.

Abuse at Smyllum

41. Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] used to regularly smack [REDACTED] either on his bare bottom or over his romper suit. She would use either a wooden paddle or her rosary beads. The wooden paddle could have been the end of a brush or a paddle. I just didn't know but it looked like a paddle. [REDACTED] was terrified of Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED], whenever he saw her he would wet himself.
42. I recall that on one occasion [REDACTED] was caught entering the orchard where the other children were playing. Sister ^{AEG} [REDACTED] caught him in the orchard and I saw her beat him with the wooden paddle several times on his backside and anywhere on his body that she could reach when [REDACTED] jumped. He was left with red welts and bruises. It

was then that we knew that we would be beaten if we entered the orchard with the other kids.

43. Sister ^{AEG} used to wear rosary beads with a three inch crucifix attached to it. Sister ^{AEG} would regularly flick you with her beads if you said something that she didn't like and she didn't care where on your body the beads landed. I think I either got flicked by the beads or hit by the wooden paddle on about fifteen occasions each week and I would jump to avoid being hit and it would land anywhere on my body. The blows would leave welts on your body.
44. I would get hit if I was found to be tending to at night. Sister ^{AEG} would then lock me in the stone floored cellar with no light no heating and no mattress. The room was like a large square pantry and the only light was seen through the key hole. I hated it. I was cold and very frightened it was so dark and horrible. The room had nothing in it but it may have been big enough to fit a small single bed in it.
45. I recall that on one occasion my dad and came to visit us at Smyllum and we were sat outside and we were playing on the witch's hat. My dad and to my horror started to get undressed and have sex in front of us. had her blouse off. Afterwards I went to Sister ^{AEG} and told her what I had seen and she immediately accused me of lying and she hit me around the body with the wooden paddle. Sister ^{AEG} then grabbed my hair and pushed soap into my mouth holding my head under the tap and saying that I needed my mouth washed out. Sister ^{AEG} then put me into the stone floored room as a punishment. I was in there for a night and a day.

Leaving Smyllum Orphanage

46. Within a week after the incident with my dad having sex with [REDACTED], I can't remember who picked me up, but my sister [REDACTED] was there and she informed me that I was going home to my dad's house in [REDACTED]. I was about eight years old.
47. I was glad to be back at home, but very sad that [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had been left behind. For a very short period of time I attended at St Pius Secondary school, but was only there for a couple of weeks.
48. I discovered very quickly that I was branded a liar for making things up about my dad and [REDACTED]. I remember going to [REDACTED]'s house to go to the toilet. I overheard [REDACTED] discussing me, and she said that I had been making up stories about my dad having sex with the nuns. I presumed she was saying this because I had seen them together to cover her and dad's affair.
49. I was only at [REDACTED] for a couple of weeks when we were told by dad that we were moving house to live with my mum. I was shocked. When we arrived at the new house in [REDACTED] I was expecting to see my mum and I realised that it wasn't my mum we would be living with but [REDACTED]. Dad told us to call [REDACTED] 'mother'. I was at the house with my siblings [REDACTED], [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]. I remember [REDACTED] saying that if she had her way we would be back in care within the year.
50. I wasn't back with my dad for long until myself and [REDACTED] ran away. My dad and [REDACTED] were subjecting us to physical, mental and sexual abuse. The police and social workers were involved with us, and the police were regularly picking us up and returning us home. We pleaded with them not to take us back. We used to sleep in coal bunkers and at one point we were away for six weeks.

Reporting Abuse

51. Whilst we were running away from home we used to regularly tell the police and social workers that we were being abused at home, but we were ignored.
52. The social workers were always changing but I had regular contact with a male social worker who had gingery blonde hair from Drumchapel. He would listen to us and he appeared ready to do something for us, but then he got moved away.

Robertson House, Great Western Road, Glasgow.

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Robertson House

57. After staying at Robertson House for about two months I left to return home. I have no memory of any conversation taking place regarding my move.
58. I hadn't been home for a month when I started to run away, things at home weren't very good.
59. [REDACTED] and I ran away to live in Knightswood with my granny, but when we got there she phoned my father and he came and got us. We went to my Auntie [REDACTED]'s house but she phoned my father and he took us back.
60. We were still being abused at home by my dad and I told the Police about the abuse but they still ignored us and they didn't believe us, and continually returned us home.
61. I remember that we had run away on one particular occasion and the police had caught us and we told the police that if they took us home we would run away again. The Police again ignored us and they returned us home, and we immediately escaped out through the back. What we hadn't realised was that the police were just taking us back to pick up some possessions, and their plan was to place us into the Beechwood Detention Centre in Glasgow.
62. We were immediately apprehended by the Police and driven to Beechwood by the police. I do recall at some point attending a children's panel whilst I was at Robertson House to decide whether I was going to be sent home, and a second one to decide whether I was going to Beechwood.

Beechwood Detention Centre, Glasgow.

63. On arriving at the centre we entered through a main door, and there was a sitting room on the left with a television in it and on the right hand side was a room where you had your meals. There were stairs immediately in front of you which led up to the bedrooms. Also on the ground floor were two cells and a kitchen. There were two square cells which contained nothing but a grated window.

64. There were six beds to a room and there were just girls at the centre. I think that there were quite a few bedrooms. [REDACTED] and I were in separate accommodation and I realised very quickly that I wasn't meant to be there because I was too young. I was only ten years old. The whole building was secure and we weren't allowed out.

Routine at Beechwood

65. The woman in charge was a big woman with short blonde hair and she had very long nails and she was aged between thirty and forty. This woman used to unlock the bedrooms in the morning and we used to get up, wash and get dressed and we would go down to breakfast. The food was ok. We went to bed at a time dependent on your age and the girls at Beechwood were [REDACTED]'s age and older. There was day staff and night staff who ran the house.

Leisure time

66. Most of my leisure time was spent in the TV room.

Discipline

67. I recall that on one occasion I was being picked on by a girl called [REDACTED]. I told my sister [REDACTED] and she dealt with [REDACTED]. The woman in charge smacked me across the legs with her open hand and I was sent to my bedroom and locked in. [REDACTED] was placed in the cell for a couple of days.

Leaving Beechwood Detention Centre.

68. I was only at Beechwood for about a month and I was told by either a member of staff or a social worker that I shouldn't be there because of my age. I recall attending a children's panel to decide where I was going after Beechwood.
69. I left Beechwood and returned home to my dad and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] remained in Beechwood. I continued to run away and was only home for a week.
70. I recall some phone calls being made and I remember going to a house in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Drumchapel Glasgow, this was the home of [REDACTED]'s daughter [REDACTED]. I wasn't there long before [REDACTED], the boyfriend of my mother, took me on a train to live in Birmingham with him and my mum. I was eleven years old.
71. I hated being in Birmingham and I cried to return to Glasgow. I was only there a week before I again ran away.
72. I was eventually put on a train back to my dad's in Glasgow. I continued to run away from dads and the police were always involved with me and continued returning me to my dad. I kept telling the police that I didn't want to be at my dad's but they just kept ignoring me.
73. Eventually at the age of twelve the ginger haired social worker arranged for me to go to Snowdon Girl's School in Stirling.

Snowdon School for Girls in Stirling

Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Secondary Institutions - to be published later

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Leaving Snowdon School

80. I recall attending a children's panel to decide where I was going to live when I left Snowdon, the decision was made for me to go to Birmingham with my mum who was present at the panel. I wanted to go and live with [REDACTED] and her partner but my mum put a stop to that.

81. My mum took me on a train to Birmingham, I didn't want to go with her. There was no further involvement from the Social Services.

Life after being in care

82. Life in Birmingham was horrible because I just didn't know my mother. [REDACTED] her boyfriend was nice, but by this time [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] had been living with her. I stayed with my mum until I was sixteen and then I moved in with my boyfriend's sister having fallen pregnant. The only way I could get away was by getting pregnant. I was married at seventeen and worked as a full time mother and a factory worker, and eventually I got a council house.
83. I have had a number of broken relationships and have three children as a result of these relationships, two girls and a boy. I recently divorced from my second husband, having been separated from him for about eighteen years.
84. My father was convicted twenty six years ago of abusing my daughter and other children. He received an eleven year sentence but was released through ill health.

Impact

85. I have suffered from depression since I first fell pregnant, and the depression got worse after it was discovered that my father had abused my daughter.
86. I attempted suicide after my father's abuse and attempted suicide twice before that because of the way I had been brought up.
87. One day I was watching Sister Act and I started to cry. It must have been the effect of seeing the nuns again.
88. If I get too depressed my sister and daughter help me through it. I think about my time in care at least twice a week. I have a terrible sleeping pattern because of the abuse I have suffered.
89. Some fifteen years ago I started to speak with counsellors twice a week. I tried to talk to people as a child but I was ignored and I had to bottle everything up. I now don't trust people in general. I have no real friends, only my sister and I rarely leave home.

- 90. Religion is the worst thing ever. I have never had my kids christened and I have never been to church.
- 91. I have never had a real education, if I had received an education things for me may have been different.
- 92. I couldn't show my kids love because we never got love as a child. I hate being consoled about anything and I feel uncomfortable with any closeness.

Reporting of Abuse

- 93. I was contacted by the Scottish police about ten years ago, and they came and saw me in Birmingham and asked me if I was this person who had attended at Smyllum. I told them all about the abuse in Smyllum, a bit about Beechwood and a bit about Snowdon and they recorded what I was saying in a written statement. I didn't hear anything until about two years ago.
- 94. Two female police officers, both called Gillian from Glasgow returned to see me about two years ago. The officers had with them my original hand written statement, and they took another statement from me going over what happened to me at Smyllum. The officers returned to Scotland, and sometime later they contacted me by phone and informed me that Sister AEG [REDACTED] was dead.
- 95. I was happy and angry at the same time that she was dead, but I wanted to have the opportunity to face her and ask her why she had treated us so badly and to tell her about the damage it had caused particularly to [REDACTED].
- 96. I reported my dad for abusing my daughter and he was arrested and convicted for child abuse. I was told by the police that apparently it was too late for him to be charged with abusing us.

Records

97. I have never sought my records.

Lessons to be learned

98. I hope by making a statement to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry that it will stop people from hurting kids. I think that adults should listen to kids and not ignore them or else it will happen again.
99. I blame the authorities for ignoring the children.
100. 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.....GGF.....

Dated.....10 November 2020.....