

**Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry**

Witness Statement of

PYP

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is PYP, though I prefer to be called PYP. My date of birth is 1960. I am 57 years of age and my contact details are known to the Inquiry.

**Background**

2. I married young when I was 20 years old but got divorced a year later and have one child from that marriage. I have spent much of my life away from home. My parents are both now dead. I have brothers and sisters all of whom I had difficulty in communicating with, except my sister who is also deaf. I have been profoundly deaf since birth and communicate using British Sign Language (hereafter referred to as BSL).
3. I moved around a lot and I moved back to Glasgow 20 years ago when I met my present partner, with whom I have one child and five grandchildren, with another on the way. Since I left school at the age of 16, I have probably had somewhere between 60 and 70 different jobs. At present, I work as a for a company called and have been with them for 5 to 6 years.
4. After I left school, it was as if I fell off a cliff and continually struggled with my communication with people. I really only started to pick up English about 25 years ago, through reading subtitles from the television or bits and pieces from the newspapers. My English is still inadequate but is better than before.

### Life prior to entering Institution

5. I was born in [REDACTED] and, due to the fact that I was profoundly deaf, I couldn't communicate with my mother. When I was about 4 years old, I was placed in a school in [REDACTED] where there were already 3 or 4 other deaf children. When I was 5 years old, I was moved to [REDACTED] Primary School in [REDACTED] which was a hearing school.
6. Because of my inability to communicate, I was running wild and my teachers found it difficult to control me. Quite often my brother [REDACTED], who was 7 years old, would have to come into the class to calm me down. However, as soon as [REDACTED] left, I would be acting up again. The teachers couldn't control me.
7. My sister [REDACTED], who is also deaf, was already at St Vincent's School for the Deaf and Blind and it was decided that, at the age of 6, I should also go there. I think it was my mother who took this decision. I am not aware of there being any social work involvement in this decision.

### Institution

#### St Vincent's School for the Deaf and Blind, Tollcross, Glasgow

8. It was a residential school which has since been knocked down. My first day at the school was horrible. It was 1966, [REDACTED] I think, and I went along with my mother holding her hand as we walked up this massive driveway. I'll never forget seeing this big door in the middle of the building which we entered, and then turned left where there was seating and some sort of refreshment area.
9. I recall that I was then sitting there while my mother spoke to a nun who I was later to discover was called Sister <sup>KTA</sup>[REDACTED]. After a short while, my mother left and Sister <sup>KTA</sup>[REDACTED] grabbed me by the wrist and took me away. The last thing I

remember was seeing my mum walking away and not looking at me. I was taken into a room and just burst into tears.

10. I never really knew what Order of nuns it was that ran the school but I later discovered it was the Order of St Vincent De Paul.
11. From records that I have seen for 1965, there were about 150 deaf and blind children in the school aged from 2 to 16 but I note, from the same records, that there had been anything up to 300 children in the school in previous years.
12. There was the old school which was run by Sister Monica and the new school which was SNR Sister KTA. I'm not sure if Sister Monica was in overall charge or if they shared responsibility but certainly Sister Monica was very dominant in the overall running of the school. The dormitory I slept in was in the old school and I was educated in the new building.
13. There were 4 or 5 members of staff in the residential part for the boys' accommodation and maybe the same for the girls. There were also somewhere in the region of 20 or 30 nuns. There were another 2 or 3 staff in the school as well as 16 teachers who didn't stay at the school. It was easy to recall the number of teachers because there were 8 classrooms on the ground floor and the same on the upstairs with a teacher in each room.

## **Routine**

14. My morning routine went from Tuesday to Friday which was due to the fact that I went home every Friday evening and returned on a Monday morning. I can't recall what time we would get up at but, once we got up, we would get washed. I recall that we had to use this awful toothpaste powder to clean our teeth.
15. We would then go downstairs to this massive dining hall where we would have breakfast. I think we were kept together in our age groups during meal times.

16. We would then go to school where we would be until 3:00 pm when it was back to the main building where we would play till 5:00 pm when we had tea. Bedtime, when I was between 6 and 8 years old was at 6:00 pm. When I got older I would be with the big boys who had a night club between 7:00 and 9:00 pm and thereafter have hot chocolate followed by bed at about 9:30 pm.
17. In the early years I wouldn't have any chores to do but, as I grew older, I would be expected to do things like help in the dining room clearing and cleaning up.
18. The girls' accommodation was at the front of the building while the boys were at the back. Each of the rooms had 3 beds though I am aware in previous years there had been large dormitories but by the time I was there these had been changed to smaller rooms. I recall that my clothes were kept in a locked cupboard downstairs.
19. There were lots of sports played when I was in the big boys group like football and P.E. was included in the curriculum. This would be done in the big hall after 3:00 pm. It wasn't anything that was organised, it was just something we did.

### *Food*

20. The food was edible. It wasn't great and I suppose was your typical school dinners. I particularly loved Friday lunchtimes and I have spoken to others who agree with this. The reason it was so good is that we would get cakes though I now realise that this was just a ruse to put us in a good mood before we went home later that day.

### *Bedwetting*

21. Bedwetting was not a problem for me though I was aware it happened because a boy I shared the room with, called [REDACTED], used to wet the bed almost every night. I'm not aware if he was punished for this or what happened with the wet bedding.

*Medical/Dental Care*

22. There was a sister whose name I can't spell or pronounce who acted as a nurse who looked after us when we weren't well or got injured. Dental care was cruel. The dentist was at Parkhead Cross and we had to get the number 61 bus to get there. We always knew that if we were getting on that bus then we were going to the dentist.

23. We never seemed to just get check-ups or fillings. It was always extractions. I recall one time in particular when I was screaming with pain and the dentist seemed to be hiding something behind his back. I was having difficulty communicating to tell them I didn't want injections or gas and the dentist took my teeth out just using pliers.

*Visitors/Official Inspections*

24. I didn't have visitors as I went home every weekend but I know, as a general rule, visitors didn't come to the school. There was one boy in particular, [REDACTED] who never had any visitors even though he resided there full-time and didn't go home at the weekend. I felt so sorry for him. He has since died.

25. I know that there were official visitors who attended the school but nobody that I recall ever visited the residential part in any formal role. I remember the official visits because only those children who were considered as being good at things would be put forward.

**Abuse***Schooling*

26. School was awful, terrible. It was oppressive and abusive. It was an oral school and they didn't sign. We didn't get taught the sort of subjects that you would expect to get in a hearing school. We were taught by "the oral method" all day,



- every day. To put this into perspective it is probably best to explain how it was that such schools came to the conclusion as to how deaf children should be taught what they call "Oralism".
27. Oralism is the educating of deaf students through oral language by using lip reading, speech and mimicking the mouth shapes and breathing patterns of speech.
  28. It may be helpful to understand this as something similar to the 'medical model' or about 'curing' the Deaf person. Making them like a hearing person, making them normal, to fit in, to be able to speak but, as said, how can they when they can't hear to repeat sounds? Oralism was (is) the be-all and end-all. It is the acquisition of 'speech' at the expense of everything else.
  29. Education didn't happen. How could it with such dogma? Many have stated this methodology was (is) a form of abuse in itself.
  30. Oralism was constituted in the Milan Congress of 1880 and became the main way to educate deaf students for the next 130 years or so. It was only in July 2010 in Vancouver, Canada, that the board of the 21st International Congress on the Education of the Deaf (ICED) formally voted to reject all of the 1880 Milan resolutions.
  31. There were about 10 to 12 children in each class when I was aged 6 and about the same in the older classes. The first three teachers I recall having were PYQ, somebody called PYR and a Mr PYT. All of the teachers were hearing teachers with the exception of Mr LXG, who was deaf, though I note that he isn't even referred to in any of the records.
  32. What would happen was that we would be issued with headphones through which the teachers would play the sounds of vowels or consonants that we would then have to copy. I'm sure that would be fine if you can hear what is

coming through the headphones but, as a child who was profoundly deaf, I and most others simply could not hear anything.

33. It was bad enough that they had us puffing against bits of papers or blowing into balloons to get us to replicate these sounds but it was the physical things they would do to us that was the most painful.
34. To force us to replicate these sounds they would pull our cheeks or grab our ears or push our noses to the side. This was not only extremely painful but also constant throughout the day. They would be grabbing us and shout "Get it right. Get it right". They were constantly putting us under pressure to get it right.
35. In the early years from when I was 6 to 8 years old, if the teachers got annoyed enough with us being unable to do as they asked or if I used sign language, they would either slap us on the hand or hit us on the back of the hand with a ruler. Once I got to 9 or 10 and older they would hit us with the tawse. It wasn't just a couple of times a week that this happened. It was every day.
36. I learned nothing at school. As I moved up the classes, through the years, they were all the same. From the age of 9 oral teaching still ruled until I turned 15 when I rebelled.
37. My memory of when I was 6, 7 and 8 is hazy and my main complaint of that time was the manhandling we endured as I've just described. However, I do recall at the age of 7 that I hated Monday nights. This was for two reasons. The first was because I was back at the school having been home for the weekend but the second reason was because it was bath night.
38. When we finished school on a Monday we had to have a bath and to have our hair checked for nits and lice. There were long, low benches like the ones you used to see in gyms at school. We would have to sit on one of these waiting for our turn in the bath.

39. Immediately after school I used to run to this bench to try and ensure I was first in the bath. This was because of a woman called LXF. LXF was the woman in charge of the bath and it was her who would turn the taps on and off. If you were first in line you could check the temperature of the water and it wasn't a problem.
40. However, if you were third or fourth in line the water would be roasting. This was because LXF kept adding hot water to the bath. The problem was that her hands were used to the rise in temperature but, to those of us getting in at that stage, the water was scalding hot. We would complain but LXF would just slap us saying "Don't be a baby". She would slap us on the legs and thighs. We would be screaming with the pain.
41. Another concern about the baths was when I got to about 9 years old. For some reason, every second or third week, LXF would have 3 or 4 schoolgirls from [REDACTED] with her. I would say they were about 14 or 15 years old. I would be sitting on the bench naked trying to hide my private parts and they would be laughing at me and telling me to take my hands away. It was horrible. To this day I don't understand why those girls were there.
42. LXF was eventually sacked because she apparently had sex with some of the boys. I know about this because some of the boys concerned told me about it.
43. As you got older you could use the showers which were more private. Margaret Walker, a lovely woman, would maybe pull the curtain back while you were in the shower but that was just to check you were okay.
44. About the age of 9, in the school, I was with Sister Margaret and Mr LXG who was the deaf teacher whose name doesn't appear in the records. He was a cruel man who used to carry [REDACTED] which he loved to strike out with. He was especially nasty to [REDACTED] who was such a nice boy but couldn't write or communicate. LXG hit him constantly with [REDACTED].



45. Sister Margaret was okay and I don't recall any abuse from her. Sister **KTA** was okay as well but she was old and left and Sister Margaret followed her not long after. Sister **LXH** took over and at some point changed her name to Sister **LXH**. She was the cruellest of them all. She used to bang our heads of the wall constantly even though she was so small. She used to also pull my hair and frequently gave me six of the belt.

46. I remember I was in a class with Mrs **LXM** one time when I was 9 years old. I had her as a teacher from 9 till I was 11. She would write something on the board and get us to repeat it again and again. For her oralism was everything and if I turned to a friend and signed she would dig her knuckles into my back. That was so painful.

47. On one occasion I was struggling to say the word "STEP" but when I eventually managed to say it she seemed shocked but delighted. At that point Sister **LXH** came in and Mrs **LXM** said "Look what **PYP** can do!" and I thereafter repeated the word. Sister **LXH** just went "huh" and walked away. I was so hurt because I thought I had done so well and I've always felt that was the start of a downhill spiral for me. I was simply being devalued.

48. Again, when I was about 9 years old one of the jobs I had was to take the attendance register round all the classes. This was to take note of those absent or off sick. This was quite a good job until each time I got to class 9.

49. This class was run by Mr **KXX**. He was a horrible, sick man. I would go to his class and he would tell me to come in. He would then hold me and grind and rub his body against mine. He used to do this to all the kids and used to just love to grope you. If another teacher came in while he was doing this he would suddenly push you away. This went on every week for a year.

50. Mr **KXX** was sacked and the inference was that it was sexual abuse but he was later to return to the school. I recall that he was once rushed to hospital because one of the boys, **[REDACTED]**, grabbed hold of him and threw him

through the school window after having been bullied by him. [REDACTED], a really wee guy, also went for him.

51. At the age of 10 I was in the big boys' group. In the residential school there was a youth group every evening for us between 7:00 and 9:00 pm from Monday through to Thursday. On a Tuesday and Thursday evening we would do gym and this was run by Mr [REDACTED]. When I first started at the club I was told by others not to bite my nails.
52. It turned out that the reason for this warning was that Mr [REDACTED] would line us up and examine our nails. On my first night he lined us up in order of height and, being the smallest, I was first in line. He looked at my nails and suddenly battered me over the back of the head saying "Don't bite your nails". I just remember crying so much. This then happened to everybody in the line.
53. When I went home at the weekends I would refuse to let my mum cut my nails as I knew that, if they were short, Mr [REDACTED] would accuse me of having bitten them and would hit me. Even the older boys didn't seem to be able to stick up to him.
54. We were all outside running round the two football pitches one day. Mr [REDACTED] saw me struggling to breath but just told me to keep running. I eventually stopped near one of the goalposts and collapsed. When I came to, I was in a bed with the nuns all round me trying to give me cakes and ,milk and there was a doctor checking my breathing. I never did find out why I collapsed.
55. Another thing we used to see in the summer, was Mr [REDACTED] slaughtering live rabbits by slitting their throats right in front of us. He would slit them open and show off their internal parts to us. He was just a cruel man.
56. Another thing he used to do was get us to climb ropes. Sometimes when one of the kids got to the top of the rope they would freeze and be too scared to climb

back down. When this happened Mr KXX would shake the rope until the kid at the top had to let go whereupon they just fell to the ground.

57. Mr KXX was particularly cruel to [REDACTED] in class. [REDACTED]'s main problem was his lack of ability to communicate and I used to have to sign to him to help him understand things. Mr KXX made no allowances for [REDACTED]'s inability to communicate and regularly hit him with the belt simply because [REDACTED] didn't understand what he was supposed to do. He would also punch and slap him.

58. [REDACTED] was such a nice guy but was abused so much. He never got to go home and was constantly physically abused. Because he didn't get home every weekend he would get his hair cut in the school and they were so rough with him. He used to have loads of cuts on his head because of the razors they used.

59. Mrs LXM also used to run the youth group sometimes and was very cruel. She used to dig her knuckles into your back which was extremely painful. I remember I would see her and Mr LXJ having conversations which obviously I couldn't hear or understand. They would be looking at me and then I was suddenly the bad boy and would be punished. It was always my fault.

60. We all know that kids can be naughty but with these two, all you got was punched, slapped, hit with the belt and sent to bed early. The youth club was held in the school, not the residential part. This meant that if they sent me to bed early I would have to pass some of the nuns who would assume that, because I had been sent to bed early, I had obviously been bad.

61. The youth club on a Wednesday was about woodwork and was run by LXL [REDACTED]. Sometimes it was great but other times it was horrendous and it just seemed to depend on what kind of mood he was in. Sometimes he was fine but on other occasions he could be so dismissive of us. They used to say I was mischievous or naughty but when I look back I don't think I was.

62. The club was held in this big room and would have all the woodwork stuff at one end with a cooking benches at the other. In between these would be all the bits of plywood and Mr LXL used to hit us on the hands with these if he was in a bad mood.

### **Sexual Abuse by Colin MacDonald**

63. At the age of 12 or 13 I was with other boys going off on school trips with a man called Colin MacDonald to places like Aviemore and so on. He wasn't a teacher at the school, he was brought in to help with such trips. I was sexually abused by him when he took us to the isle of Rhum.

64. I wasn't the only one, the other boys there were also sexually abused by him. These trips would be for three or four days or over a weekend. This continued through the years when I was possibly 12,13,14 and 15 and only stopped when I eventually rebelled at 15. It's possible that I was staying at home by the time the abuse from MacDonald happened because I have no recollection of attending any night club run by him.

65. I don't want to go into the detail of what happened as I've already done that when giving evidence against MacDonald and it was a horrible experience.

66. It first came to light again about 12 years ago when I spoke to another guy called [REDACTED], who was [REDACTED]'s brother. He was moved to the school in [REDACTED] after being sexually abused at St Vincent's.

67. He had such a terrible life. He was abused anally, was buggered and was sodomised. He was terribly scarred by this treatment and was fed up by the fact that Colin MacDonald was regularly on television telling people how good he was and how much he was doing for the deaf community.

68. [REDACTED] eventually had heard enough of this nonsense and this ludicrous public persona of MacDonald and he reported the abuse that he had suffered at the hands of MacDonald to the police in London.

69. I heard about this and I thereafter also gave a statement to the police.

70. A police investigation was held in respect of this and I believe 100 people were interviewed. It eventually came down to 12 of us.

71. Charges were brought against Colin MacDonald and he pled "Not guilty". He was very cold about the whole thing. Several of us then gave evidence against him and he was found guilty of all 12 charges.. He was sentenced to 12 years but released after 8. God knows where he is now.

#### **Further physical abuse**

72. Everything in the school was about oralism. When I turned 13, it was during the school holidays, I asked my mum if I could come home every night instead of being a resident at the school. I was delighted when she said yes.

73. Going to the school from home meant I had to get 3 passes for the bus to [REDACTED], then the train to Glasgow and then a second bus to the school. Sister LXH [REDACTED] wasn't happy about me not staying overnight and had a go at me for it. A lot of the other boys were jealous that I got home every night. While at home I managed to get jobs as a paper-boy and in a chemist.

74. When I was 14 years old I had Mr KXX [REDACTED] as my teacher and saw that he was still molesting the boys that would bring the attendance register into his room.

75. Mr KXX [REDACTED] used to do beautiful drawings of the earth on the blackboard in colour. His problem was that his communication skills with us were still dire. On one occasion he gave us pieces of paper that had the same drawings he had



done on the blackboard and with lines of longitude and latitude on them. He also gave us a ruler and told us to draw a line between point X and point Y.

76. Myself and another boy tried and tried but every time we did Mr KXX would angrily tear up the piece of paper, throw it to the ground and tell us to try again. It eventually got to the point that he was shaking us in our chairs and slapping us on the back of the head. The other boy eventually clicked what we were doing wrong and worked out that we should have been drawing a curve and not a straight line. So why did he give us a ruler?

77. I was signing to the other boy about this when Mr KXX came up behind me and punched me in the ear very hard. I had a hearing aid in and my ear started bleeding.

78. I ran out of the class and met another teacher, Alex Connolly who was very supportive of the deaf pupils, who saw me and took me into the toilet. Mr KXX came running into the toilet and demanded I be sent back to the class but Mr Connolly refused. This was on a Friday and Mr Connolly stayed with me until it was time for me to go home.

79. I told my mum what had happened. She was furious and on the Monday she marched into Sister LXH's office and made a complaint about what had happened to me. After that I wasn't to be in Mr KXX's class but, instead, was to report to Sister LXH's office any time I was due to be in his class.

80. The problem with this was that, while I was in Sister LXH's office I had to write out lines saying things like "I must obey" which made me feel that it was me who was being punished.

81. When Mr LXL left he was replaced by a man called Mr KQE. He simply couldn't communicate with deaf children and was very scathing and derogatory to us.



82. When I turned 15 I started to get a bit more rebellious. I was also that bit bigger.

There was one occasion when I had come out of the library when I saw a girl called [REDACTED]. She was deaf and a lovely wee girl but looked a bit lost. I was about to go and help her when, unbelievably, Sister LXH suddenly grabbed her, threw her to the ground and just smacked and smacked her.

83. I jumped in and threw Sister LXH off the girl who I then tried to comfort. I took her back to her class and told her teacher that enough was enough and that I would be taking no more of such treatment.

84. I've always been of the belief that there had been a murder at the school. There was a girl called [REDACTED] who died because one of the sisters hit her on the head with a big spoon and she died. I wasn't there at the time but I've been told the story by a few people. In particular, my friend [REDACTED] was actually present when [REDACTED] got hit with the spoon.

85. I am sure [REDACTED]'s name appears in the [REDACTED] book of records that I don't have.

86. There was another incident when Mrs LXM wouldn't let a boy go to the toilet. As soon as the bell went at the end of class he ran out and started to run down the stairs. However he tripped, fell down the stairs hitting his head and subsequently died. Again, I wasn't there but quite a few people have told me about this.

87. There was one other thing that happened that I feel I should speak about. My friends [REDACTED] and one friend called [REDACTED] just disappeared one day. It turned out that they had been restrained and sent to a mental hospital. They returned about three weeks later but were never the same.

88. That was typical of the way they would deal with deaf children. If the child couldn't communicate and became frustrated they would be restrained with a straitjacket and sent to a mental hospital.

### Leaving the Institution

89. I left the school as soon as I turned 16. During my time there I got no word of credit and no qualifications. It was a horrible, horrible place. I believe the school was an experiment and that me and my friends were considered failures because we were poor oralists. I would say that 10% could do it but the rest of us were failures.

90. I always thought that when I first went through that door I would get an education. I didn't. I got nothing and it was just horrible.

91. The only good times I can think of at the school was the break-times which were great because me and all my pals could communicate with each other using sign language.

### Life after leaving the Institution

92. After I left the school I maybe worked on [REDACTED] till I was 18 then went to work with my dad. I struggled on the [REDACTED] because nobody did sign language. I also worked for a [REDACTED]. As I got older and stronger I worked on [REDACTED] around Scotland and England.

93. I still struggle with English but I try to understand it better. I also try and help others who are profoundly deaf with their communications with the hearing world.

### Impact

94. The impact is the damage the school did to me both physically and emotionally. I always wanted to meet the teachers who treated me in that manner to ask what good they thought they were doing but they are all dead now.

95. I got no education and was forced into a methodology that simply didn't work.

My son, who is hearing, got a great education but I got nothing. I've always thought that if I had got the sort of education I deserved to get I could have made so much more of myself and my life. This was all down to the fact that I was not taught in sign language.

96. When my son first started school at 5 years old I was able to help him with his homework. However, by the time he turned 8 and was doing fractions I simply couldn't help him any more as I had never got even that far in my education.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

97. I have never reported the abuse I received to anybody. I couldn't tell my parents because I couldn't communicate properly with them. That's why I had no real love for them or most of my brothers and sisters.

### **Records**

98. Everything that happened to me is always in my mind [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] of minutes and records made by staff. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The [REDACTED] book is the one which  
refers to my years in the school and my name is mentioned in it.

99. The three books were given to the St Vincent Deaf Club when the school closed down. There was a fire at the deaf club but somebody rescued the books [REDACTED]  
ended up in possession of them [REDACTED].

100. The books date back to the 1800's and indicate how deaf children were dealt with and explains how some were considered to be imbeciles and were sent to asylums. I believe the information contained in these books is important though I also believe they have covered up some things due to things that other kids who attended the school have told me.

**Lessons to be Learned**

101. One thing that the Inquiry, and the world at large, has to understand is the difficulty those in the deaf community have in trying to communicate with people. There are many, many people who have stories to tell the Inquiry but are unable to do so.
102. The reason for this is they can't hear the adverts on radio and many can't read any of the posters. Even if they could they couldn't contact you by telephone and many of them wouldn't be able to use the website because of their inability to read.
103. One answer to this may be that they could do a video wherein they could tell you by sign language what it is they wish to say but you would then have to get a signer to translate it. I just feel it is very important that you find a way for the deaf community to come forward and say what it is they have to say about their times in these schools.
104. I would also point out that many of them are quite old and perhaps don't have long to live. It would be very sad if they didn't get an opportunity to tell their stories.
105. The most important lesson to be learned is that oralism simply doesn't work for the profoundly deaf. People who are profoundly deaf must be taught with BSL to allow them to get the full education they need and deserve.

106. 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. PYP .....

Dated. 14/11/2017. .....