

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

KWY

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is KWY and I was known by the same name at school. My date of birth is 1965. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

Life before going into care

2. I was born in where I then lived with my mum, and dad, My parents were born in but moved to got married and had me and then my brother, who is two years younger than me. My dad worked in a and my mum worked a lot too.
3. My mum and dad were both hearing and didn't know anything about being deaf. When they knew I was deaf they asked their GP for advice, who suggested taking the oralist approach. This involved me learning to lip read and use my voice. My parents were seeing and hearing different information saying that the oral route was the best and most appropriate, so that's the route that they decided to take for me. They insisted that I wore hearing aids but they didn't help at all.
4. When I was three we moved back to Scotland because my grandmother and grandfather were very poorly. When we moved back we stayed with them a lot and they relied on us quite a bit. My dad was working in the factory for a .
5. From the age of three, to fifteen and a half, I lived and went to school in Scotland. My mum and my grandmother did a bit of research about where the best school was for

me. Living in [REDACTED], Edinburgh and Glasgow were the closest options. My mum and granny went to Donaldson's School in Edinburgh first to have a look, but they didn't like it as they felt it was too big. They just felt that it wasn't right for me so they decided to go and have a look at St Vincent's in Glasgow.

6. My mum was Protestant and my dad was Catholic. Donaldsons didn't have any religious denomination, but St Vincent's was Catholic. I'm not sure if that was part of the decision but my parents decided to put me to St Vincent's.

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

7. I was at St Vincent's from when I was around five and a half years old until I was around eleven, although I'm not sure of the exact dates. As I was living in [REDACTED] at the time, I went to St Vincent's as a boarder because it was quite far to travel everyday. I travelled by train to the school and I was residential Monday to Friday. I would generally go home from Friday to Sunday. The Sisters picked us up in a minibus from the train station after the weekend. Mum and dad were both working, so sometimes it was difficult getting transport and travelling back and forth from school and home. I would have preferred more time at home as I was so little at the time. At five, I wasn't very confident but my confidence did grow as I got older, made friends and integrated more into the school.
8. There were a lot of pupils at St Vincent's covering a wide age range. The youngest person would have been around three as some of my friends arrived at that age. I think the oldest pupils were about fifteen or sixteen. I don't know exactly but I think there could have been more than fifty pupils in total. There were some people who just came in for schooling and would go home at the end of the day. It depended on where people lived as well, most of us who boarded lived quite far away. The children at St Vincent's were hard of hearing, profoundly deaf, blind and some were deaf and blind.
9. St Vincent's was an old creepy building with long dark corridors. I hated those corridors; it was dark and there were lots of pictures of Jesus on the wall with eyes

that seemed to follow you everywhere. I would put my head down and walk as fast as I could round the corners.

10. Upstairs in the boarding house, there was a long hallway and three dormitories. There was one big dormitory for the girls that had about twelve to fifteen beds and within the dormitories we were separated by age. I was in that dorm and there were five of us who were the same age, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. There was also a [REDACTED] girl, [REDACTED] who was also deaf. She was always really nervous but was a lovely girl. I think she has passed away. I know that [REDACTED] has passed too. There were older girls in there too who were trouble. We were all in the same dorm room.

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED].

11. There was another separate dormitory for the boys and I think the numbers were similar in there. There was also another dormitory behind mine for the blind and disabled children, which was almost like a hospital, with the doors and lights.
12. There were stairs down to the toilet and it was so cold. The floors were marble and it was freezing on my feet. It's giving me a shiver now thinking about it.

Staff

13. The school was run by the nuns, who we called "Sister." There were a lot of them. I couldn't tell you their names, plus there wasn't any sign language used so I didn't know some of their names.
14. The Sisters would sleep in the room just past the toilet, downstairs. I would go for a wander around but if the Sisters caught me they would be right in my face, telling me that I wasn't allowed in there. I was just being curious but I would be sent away. The Sisters were really strict and frightening.

15. The Sisters were on a rota and switched about. The teachers went home but the Sisters were always there. There were also two staff there who were residential staff and they would take turn about looking after us. I liked those two women, they were normal workers, not nuns. They were young women, maybe in their early twenties. I remember one had long brown beautiful hair and the other had blond, ginger hair. They would stay overnight and then leave at about 8:00 am when we went to school. The Sisters stayed overnight in the residential building.
16. The Sisters all had the same nuns' uniform that framed their face and you could only see a small bit of their hair colour under their habit. The older women were different as they had a white cover that came down over their face and they were a bit nicer. I remember a Sister [REDACTED] who was my favourite Sister. When I was about seven or eight I asked her if I could see her hair. I begged to see her hair so she took me into a room and said I wasn't to tell the head Sister and she took off her habit and I got the fright of my life. Her hair was clipped all over, like in a concentration camp. It was short like she'd done it herself; it was horrible. I wasn't allowed to tell anyone about it but I always remember that she did that for me.
17. There was an older woman who would shake your hand quite exuberantly and that always used to make us laugh and we'd queue up to shake this Sister's hand. I remember a Sister LXH [REDACTED] too. She was very strict and very tough. We just used to refer to them as "Sister" and I'm really not sure of names as I missed so much as I couldn't understand them.
18. At St Vincent's there was very little sign language used, it was all oral and lip-reading communication. Some children were allowed to use sign language and that was because their parents wanted them to. My parents wanted me to lip read so that was where part of the problem lay too. I tried my best to understand what they were saying but a lot of the time I was just nodding along as though I knew what they were saying. I would sometimes ask one of the hard of hearing kids what was being said as they were better at picking it up and they would tell me.

Routine at St Vincent's

First day

19. I remember my first day at St Vincent's and saying bye to mum and dad. I was expecting it but I remember the Sister taking my bag in and looking back and mum and dad were just gone. I was crying, wondering where my mum and dad were. I was a bit confused too as at that time there was really limited communication, there was no signing and everything was done through oral communication. My parents were just suddenly gone, I'd said goodbye but it felt awful. It was an awful first day.
20. I can't remember much else about my first day but I do remember the other children in the playground. The staff were around too, the teachers and Sisters.

Mornings and bedtime

21. A Sister would wake us up in the morning. I think they just turned the lights on. We were in one of the big vast rooms with high ceilings and big windows. There were maybe curtains but I'm not sure if they were opened or not but it was the Sisters' job to get us up in the morning. I found it difficult to get up in the morning as I just wanted to sleep.
22. We would get up, brush our teeth and put clothes on. We would all head to breakfast, we all just followed each other. When we were younger, the Sisters did help us get ready in the mornings. By the age of seven, I'd learned more and had become more independent and would get dressed myself. I always struggled with my tie though.
23. In the evenings, we'd have our dinner and then dessert and that was it. We could watch TV but before 8:00 pm we were sent to bed. It was still light outside but the Sisters would tell us to get to bed. It was such a short time, we never really had any free time. You just got used to tossing and turning in bed. It was too bright and too early sleep.

Mealtimes/Food

24. Our breakfasts were like a buffet, there was a breakfast station. The staff would hand food out to the younger kids but the older kids, from about age seven or eight, could self-serve.
25. All of the boys and girls were all together in the dining room for meals. We would all say, "Hi", to each other, some would use sign language and some would speak. The food in general was horrible. It was really plain and had no flavour. I liked the custard as it was sweet and better than what else was offered.
26. I can't remember if we had allocated seats or not. I just followed the crowd and came in and sat down. It was almost like a military operation, we all just filed in and sat down, there weren't name places or anything like that.
27. The blind children were in the dining room too and there was a bit of mocking and bullying going on. Some of the older deaf kids would mock the blind kids by doing things like taking food off of the blind kids' plates or adding salt to their food and then mouthing 'Sshhh' to us all. I didn't do anything like that but I saw it going on. The older kids were very cheeky.
28. There would be staff in the dining room but the Sisters would sit all together on a bench at the top of the dining room. I'm not sure if they would've seen what was going on but we didn't want to say anything either as we didn't want to get into bother.
29. I think that the Sisters ate the same food as us. We got things like fish fingers or mince and mash. The food was really poor quality and we got a set portion and there wasn't much of it.
30. You had to finish what was on your plate. The Sisters told you that you had to finish it and we were forced to sit there until we'd eaten it. I was hungry and I was thin at the time so I ate it, but if you did leave your food, they weren't happy. They were really strict and I was frightened, so I would finish my plate. They would tell us off and I didn't

want to be in trouble. There was a real feeling of being scared and having to eat what was on your plate.

31. There wasn't enough food served though, I was always hungry and looking for sweet things. I remember once there were two older girls who had made tablet and I asked for some. I got a tiny bit and it was so good. The older kids got to do some baking but I never did.

Washing/bathing

32. The toilet was down a set of stairs from our dormitory and it was freezing. I remember the toilet paper was like card, it was sore when you wiped yourself. At home we had nice soft toilet roll and when I arrived and went to the toilet for the first time I was shocked. The pee was running off of the toilet paper, it was horrible.
33. We had a bath there but you had to share it with other people. We would sit there naked opposite each other, and a Sister was in the room too. We would take turns bathing, but I'm not sure how often they changed the water.

Clothing/uniform

34. We had a uniform that was provided by the school, my parents didn't have to buy it. We wore a pinafore with a pleated skirt and a white shirt underneath. We had a tie too that was white and yellow striped and we wore a cardigan over the top. We had socks in the summertime and tights in the wintertime. We got school shoes too.

Leisure time

35. We didn't have much time in the evenings but sometimes we would play hide and seek.
36. We weren't allowed out of the school as it was in a rough area and there were a lot of drugs in the area. I didn't know anything about that at the time as I was young.

37. When I was about six or seven years old, I used to draw and I took part in a competition and won money as my prize. I was really excited about that and that was a happy memory for me. That was one off.

Schooling

38. The schooling was really bad, especially my reading and writing in English. My parents were actually really shocked at how bad my English was throughout my school career. My reading and writing were really poor and I could only really draw.
39. There were teachers in the school but the Sisters also took classes. We would talk to our friends under the tables in sign language but all lessons were spoken by the teachers. If it was a special occasion, sometimes we would watch a film but it was pointless because there were no subtitles.
40. The blind children were in a different class and the deaf children were all in the same class. The focus was on oral communication at school but there were a few children there who used sign language and it was their right to use sign language because their parents had said they could, but most of it was finger spelling rather than full on sign language.
41. I was jealous of the kids that were allowed to sign and I didn't think that was very fair. My parents got to pick the way I would learn, either oral or signing. My parents decided to put me on the oral route and I tried to convince my parents to let me sign but they thought I should carry on the oral route. I really did try but ended up giving up. I missed a lot of communication so didn't understand a lot and would just lie and say I did understand. I didn't want any trouble or to be a bother. I could write down simple, small words, but nothing too complex and got by on basic body language and gestures.
42. The chopping and changing of Sisters and teachers made it difficult. Some of the teachers did use sign language, like the residential staff, for example, so it could be

confusing as some would let you sign and others wouldn't. I would rather have used sign language as using the oral method made me very stressed and nervous.

43. We would have lessons where we had to follow a book and it was like an assessment of sorts. It would be one to one with Sister LXH or another Sister, and I just remember feeling so nervous having to do this because I wasn't allowed to sign and had to use my voice. I can't remember exactly what I had to say and whether I had a good voice or not, but she would just sit and listen to me and say, "Very good, you can go". I wouldn't say we had to do that everyday but we had that special book and they just wanted us to perfect our voices. I felt like it was something I had to pass and I was always glad when it was over. I was worried that if I got something wrong, I'd be punished.
44. We had these big headphones too and that was to help with speech. They were like music headphones and the idea behind it was to encourage us to pick up and use speech. There was sound coming through the headphones and it would say letter sounds and we had to try and pick them up and repeat them. I had to do that a lot and that was my number one bugbear, it gave me a pain in my head and it was a relief to take them off.
45. The teacher would have a feather in front of our mouth and we would have to pronounce the sounds coming from the headphones. The teacher's breath was awful and they were right in front of your face up close. I could hear sounds but I couldn't determine what was being said. I couldn't identify the word and found it really difficult so would just nod along. I remember being sat at a round table that had a partition and the Sister would be on the other side saying the letter through the headphone and I couldn't see them. The frequency and volume would change but I found that really difficult. Sometimes the teachers would cover their mouths with their hands and I couldn't understand them at all. To me that was abuse, I would prefer to at least be able to watch lip reading.
46. We had to be in music class too and just sat with these big headphones on. We had to use a tambourine and bop that off our hands along to the music and I didn't have a

clue, I just followed everyone else. I didn't mind sitting and banging the tambourine as I could feel the vibrations but obviously I couldn't hear it so I just went through the motions. It was the same for all the deaf kids, we just got on with it. Sometimes there would be a lot of singing and I wouldn't use my voice because I didn't really want to say the words. I would turn my voice off and mouth along with everyone and not use my own voice because I didn't want to.

47. I remember going to PE too and the smell of the wood and the atmosphere in the hall. When I was at PE the Sisters told me to sit down. I was just young and I wanted to play but the Sisters or teachers forced me to sit down. Maybe it was too risky because I had been taking tablets that the Sisters were giving me, which made me sleepy, and they were worried that something would happen to me.
48. We also went swimming and I hated it. It was awful and always freezing cold and I was forced to swim. We had to walk to the pool from the school as it was separate to St Vincent's. A group of us would have to walk with staff, it wasn't the Sisters so I think it must have been the boarding staff. We'd arrive at the pool and I just remember not wanting to swim and it being freezing. I told them that I didn't want to swim but I was forced to, I had no choice. I'd end up with a cold afterwards as my hair was wet and I'd have to walk back to St Vincent's.
49. We had school theatre too and I took part in that, I think I was a fairy once. I was disappointed because my mum and dad couldn't come and watch the show. There were a lot of the children's parents who were there and I was looking for my mum and dad but it was too far for them to come and it was through the week so they were working. The Sisters hadn't explained to me that my parents weren't coming so I saw all the other children waving to their parents and was looking for mine but they weren't there.

Healthcare

50. We had a doctor and dentist who came into St Vincent's and we had checks for hearing aids and radio aids that we had to wear round our necks and would plug into our ears.

I think we had new moulds made every two years or so. At that time, we all wore those. Some children had one radio aid and others had it in two parts. Some children would wear the radio aid like a woven harness strapped around their abdomen like an apron. Some children didn't have to use the radio aids but that could be because their parents didn't want them to but that was very few.

51. I remember there was a lice epidemic during my time there and all the children ended up catching headlice. We all had to have our hair combed out and the stuff they used smelled awful.
52. Whilst I was there, the Sisters regularly gave me tablets but I don't know what they were or what they were for. I was otherwise a healthy girl, my parents would have told you that, but there it was a different story. I spent a lot of time in bed as a result of the tablets that were given to me by the Sisters. I didn't have any sort of support network there either so didn't know what was going on. It was never explained to me.
53. I also remember being given a spoon full of a horrible tasting paste. I think it was a malt paste. I'm not sure how often we were given that but I remember standing up and being tapped on the shoulder and given a spoonful. I didn't ever see the bottle or a label and don't remember being told what it was or what it was for.

Religious instruction

54. There was a big religious element to St Vincent's. Most of the children were Catholic, although there were some Protestants. There was mass on a Sunday when I got back to school from being home for the weekend that I had to go to and sometimes on special occasions too. Mass was in a big room with the Priest at the front. We had prayers and communion and there was a lot of talking going on far away that I couldn't follow.
55. I think that's why, when I was about six years old, I fell asleep in mass. Afterwards, the Sisters said that I had to go and I got taken out and taken to the Priest. He said that I needed to confess my sins. He kept saying to me, "Confess". The Priest could sign a

little bit but I didn't understand what the sign meant and it had never been explained to me so I said nothing. I could tell that I was in trouble but I didn't know what I was supposed to do so he sent me away. I was really frightened at being alone with the Priest as I'd always had the sisters around and had never been alone in a room with a man. I was really shocked that the Priest could sign. He was more involved with the boys at St Vincent's and they were allowed to sign.

56. We also had to say prayers before food, all of the time. I used to just mouth the prayer as I couldn't really remember it and I'd just keep my head down and hope that no one noticed as they wandered past us.

Trips and holidays

57. I don't remember going on any trips at St Vincent's. Any trips were very few and far between. I think the older children went out a bit more but the younger ones didn't get out much.
58. The only time I remember going out of St Vincents was to go to deaf club. Deaf club was in Glasgow, Tobago Street, Bridgeton Cross. There was a fire there so it's no longer there.
59. A lot of children from St Vincent's went to deaf club. That was a social gathering and an opportunity to integrate with the deaf community. Children would go there for a few hours and then go back to St Vincent's. We didn't go very often, the school was like a prison and we didn't get to do much. I did ask the Sisters if I could go to deaf club but I was told I was too young but the older kids got to go. I was only allowed to go on special occasions like Christmas. I was really disappointed as they were all signing there so it was really enticing for us. There was nothing in the way of activities there but my memories are quite clouded.
60. I don't have much memory of deaf club. I can only really remember one occasion clearly when we went from St Vincent's because Princess Margaret was visiting and

another occasion when my mum and dad took me through to deaf club for a Christmas party.

61. I try to remember the good times but because of the bad experiences, I'm not sure if that's just blocked out all the other times.

Work / Chores

62. We would make our beds in the morning but there weren't really any chores.

Birthdays and Christmas

63. When it was your birthday the Sisters would give you a cake. Everybody got that, there weren't any cards or presents but you got a cake. All the children were excited to get something sweet as it was a real treat.
64. I remember going to deaf club at Christmas as it was a special occasion. We were really excited to go there.

Personal possessions

65. We had a set of drawers where you could keep your own things. You could bring in sweet treats from home but you had to share them out equally. Although it was mine, I couldn't keep it in my drawer for me, I had to share it out with everyone. The Sisters made us do that but I think they maybe kept it for themselves. They took the sweets from me and I didn't see them again. I told my mum not to give me anymore as the Sisters just took them off me. I would ask them where my sweets were and they would just say that they were finished. That always seemed to be the case when I asked.

Bed Wetting

66. Some of the girls wet the bed and the Sisters didn't like it and the girls were punished. Their beds got changed to a rubber or plastic mat over the top their mattresses. The

Sisters would react negatively if someone had wet the bed and the girls would get spanked on the backside. The Sisters would be asking the girls why they had wet the bed but they couldn't help it.

67. I wet the bed when I was at St Vincent's too and I would be smacked on the backside by the Sisters. I had started holding the toilet in as I was so frightened of the dark and to go down to the toilet so I think that's why I wet the bed. When I was back home with my parents, I never wet the bed there, as I felt safe there.

Visitors / Inspections

68. I don't remember having any visitors and because I only boarded through the week, my parents didn't visit me. I don't remember anybody else visiting the school either.

Discipline and punishment

69. The discipline was generally physical punishment from the Sisters. We were punished for signing to each other and I just had this general feeling of fear. You weren't sure what you might get into trouble for. I was a good girl and tried to stay out of trouble but there were others who were in trouble a lot more.

Abuse at St Vincent's

70. It was pretty much straight after I started at St Vincent's that I started getting forced to take tablets by the Sisters. The first time that I took the tablet a Sister came up to me, I can't remember which one, and she said that she had this sheet and I had to take some tablets. She said that I had to, that I must take the tablets and she forced me to take it. Everyone was watching me. I was saying, "No" at the time, mouthing it repeatedly but she kept on at me so I eventually took it with some water. I was just a little girl at that point and I couldn't stand up for myself. I was quiet, mild mannered, soft and weak. My parents were far away too so I just took the tablet.

71. After I took the tablet, I was playing with my friends and then I became really dizzy and really pale. My friends were saying to me that I was pale and then I just blacked out. Someone must've got me upstairs into one of the dorm rooms because when I woke up in bed, I remember feeling confused and wondering where I was. It was just me that was there and it was still bright outside but I don't remember seeing any clock. I don't know how long I was out for.
72. I got out of bed and tried the door but it was locked and I remember questioning why it was locked. I remember needing the toilet and screaming to try and get the attention of a Sister but it's such a big building that no one came right away. I screamed and I screamed and eventually gave up because I was really thirsty but there was nothing to drink either. I got back into bed as I didn't want to get into trouble if the Sister caught me out of bed. I waited and waited and I remember looking out of the window and I remember it being bright and gradually getting darker and darker outside. Then finally the Sister came and she was telling me to put my clothes on as I had my pyjamas on. The last thing I remembered was being awake and in my normal clothes and then when I had woken up I was in pyjamas. Someone had to have changed my clothes. I went downstairs with the Sister and had a small bit of food but I was just so confused. I couldn't communicate so I couldn't ask what was going on.
73. I started getting the tablets regularly generally Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. I wasn't aware of anyone else getting the tablets, just me. Most of the time I'd end up in bed after taking the tablet. I'd wake up in almost like a shock as I didn't know where I was. I didn't ever wake up with any injuries or marks and I just hope nothing was ever done to me but I just don't know.
74. I hated it and no one told the Sisters to stop. I wish I could remember the names of the Sisters who gave me the tablets but I can't. It was only ever the Sisters who made me take the tablets. There were two other residential staff members who I'm sure knew about the Sisters forcing me to take the tablets as they were there.
75. The children would go out for the day on a trip but I couldn't because I'd be in bed. It was like a punishment and I don't know why. I was a good girl and I didn't do anything

wrong but I'd end up in bed and I couldn't remember what had happened. I missed an awful lot of things and opportunities. My friends would ask me why I was in bed and if I was sick but I'd tell them that I was fine. They thought I was ill so it was all very confusing and I can't answer why I was given the tablets.

76. After I'd had the tablets I'd wake up sweating and I remember once I'd bitten my nails off and they were on the floor but I don't remember doing that. I don't know if I'd done that in my sleep.
77. The room wasn't always locked when I woke up. Sometimes I would get up and be able to get out of the room but there was nobody there, the corridors would be empty. I'd go downstairs to the toilet myself and I was frightened. I had to go back to the bedroom and wait for the Sisters to come back, otherwise I'd be in trouble. I would just be in there whiling the hours away, bored waiting and waiting.
78. I felt like it was a waste of my day being stuck in bed and it could be maybe three to five hours that I was there. I was really pale as I was hardly outside. When I finally got outside I was really excited to be out there. I was so bored staying inside and I felt special when I did get out.
79. When I went home at the weekends, I had a lot of problems sleeping without the tablets. My body was confused, I was restless and had lots going round in my head. I couldn't sleep properly and had some sweats and I would be screaming as well and I think it was all linked to the tablets. Mum thought I was having nightmares but it wasn't normal nightmares.
80. I was maybe six or seven when I was home for the weekend and I had a bit more confidence so I told my mum and dad about the tablets I was being given. I was trying to lip read them and have them understand me but I explained that I had these little tablets that I was having to take. I was asking what they were for but my parents just said that I was making it up and telling stories. I can't remember exactly what my mum and dad said but they thought it was just an imagination type thing and I had no power as I was just so young. I wish could go back and even tell a teacher or ask them what

was going on. If I was given any kind of medication the Sisters should have discussed that with my parents but they knew nothing about it. I wish I had asked what the tablets were for but I was so young. As far as I'm aware they didn't ask my parents for permission about it.

81. As I grew up, when I was about seven and older, I became more stubborn and assertive. I was annoyed at having to take the tablets because they were making me ill and dizzy and I didn't like the taste of them so I voiced that. I was saying, "No" but I was still forced to take them. I continued to get the tablets right up until I left around the age of eleven.
82. If they'd given the tablets to everyone, I'd understand more but I just don't know why it was only me. I seemed to be a target and maybe that was because I was weak and a bit vulnerable and had a pretty face. I still want to know why I got these tablets and what they were called. Did I have a health problem that I wasn't told about? I was worried as well because I started thinking about what had happened to me after I had passed out. Did the Sister do something to me or did they have someone else come in and do something to me? I don't know if my clothes were undone while I was sleeping or if anyone was having a look at me. I didn't know anything about sexuality and I think it was a very clever way to make sure that I stayed asleep. I suspect it was sexual, that's my gut instinct. I used to wake up and wish that I'd caught someone or seen something.
83. I wish I had told another staff member and said to them that I didn't want to take the tablets but the Sisters were so strict and they were the ones in charge so I had to keep taking them. I wish that someone had reported it to the police back then.
84. One day my friend, [REDACTED], who boarded at the same time as me, asked one of the Sisters where I was and she was told that I was up in bed not well. [REDACTED] was really curious so her and another friend snuck out and into the dormitories. They said that the door was locked so they couldn't even get into the dormitory which was their bedroom too. They brought a chair up to the door as there was a little window at the

top of the door and they were trying to look through into the bedroom. They were looking for me but they could only see so far and couldn't hear either.

85. The Sister arrived and grabbed poor [REDACTED] by her neck, but I can't remember which Sister it was. [REDACTED] fell onto the floor and banged her head and she had a huge lump on her head as a result of that. She got a real shock and was told off and sent back to the common room and told she wasn't allowed to come back to the dormitory. [REDACTED] was off for two weeks after that. She should have gone to hospital and it should have been recorded as she had this injury on the back of her head but nothing was done, not even an ice pack. She told [REDACTED] what had happened and what the Sisters had done. [REDACTED] was very angry and came into St Vincent's and really wasn't happy. The Sisters were shocked and didn't really say anything and [REDACTED] stayed at home for two weeks. I think we were maybe six or seven at the time as we were a similar age.

86. I didn't know about any of this at the time. It was only three months ago that [REDACTED] [REDACTED] told me about this. She also told me that she was abused at St Vincent's and was smacked on the bottom and hands regularly, but I don't think she ever had any tablets. I saw the Sisters smacking [REDACTED] on her bottom. I'd see them smacking others too. A lot of my friends say that they experienced abuse as well.

87. I remember another occasion when someone had stolen a blind girl's false eye, which was stored in a glass overnight. The eye went missing, it wasn't me that had taken it, but the Sister came in and was demanding where the eye was and who had stolen it. We all just stood there and took it because we didn't know what to say. The older kids were telling us not to say anything and to keep our mouths shut. We weren't physically punished by the Sister for that situation because there was no proof of who had taken it. We had to stand in a line and the Sister went down the line asking who was responsible and then we were all sent to bed. It was still daylight but we were sent to bed. I don't think the eye was ever found.

88. The Sisters didn't seem to care about what people thought of them either. When I was around seven years old, there was an occasion when the trains were on strike in

Glasgow so my dad had to drive me back to St Vincent's. I arrived at the school with my mum and dad and of course the Sisters were there waiting. We had let them know that we were going to be late because of the train strike so you would think that they would've been understanding of that as it was out with our control, but they were angry. There was an argument over it between my mum and the head Sister, I can't remember her name, but although I was little I could see that Sister was really angry. My mum went mad about that as she wasn't happy and was saying to the younger Sister who was there, "What's wrong with her [referring to the head Sister], she has a terrible attitude," and the young Sister was agreeing but was saying to just leave it. It was awful.

Sister LXH

89. At St Vincent's we would try and sign to each other and keep it hidden. While I was there, I learned some sign language from the kids who knew sign language. I didn't understand a lot of it because I was on this oral route and I found it hard to change to learn the signs and use the oral method. As I got older, about eight or nine, I got a bit more confident in using sign language. I only learned sign language to become fluent when I was fifteen and went to College.
90. If I was trying to use sign language with my other deaf friends and not use speech, Sister LXH would come and punish us. Sister LXH was SNR. If she caught us signing, I would get my hands slapped. That happened quite a lot because we were just trying to communicate with each other. We were made to put our hands behind our backs so we couldn't sign as the school put a real emphasis on using speech. We would always try to sign to each other slyly, hiding it from the Sisters.
91. For the teachers I would grin and bear it and I would try and lip read in the classes but at nighttime, when we were having dinner, we would try and sign to each other. We were constantly getting caught and getting slapped on our hands and it was so frustrating. I missed a lot of information because it was oralist communication.

92. Gestures were punished as well, it was just all about lip reading. Your hands had to be down. If your hands were up at all when they shouldn't be, you were punished. I didn't know British Sign Language at that time so for me a lot of my communication was gestural and even with my deaf friends it was gestural. I got punished for that as I had to have my hands behind my back. It was so abusive. When I got home I felt free, like I could allow myself to relax.
93. Not all of the Sisters were abusive, some of them I got used to and they were ok, like Sister ^{KTA} [REDACTED]

Reporting of abuse at St Vincent's

94. When I was six or seven I told my mum and dad about the tablets I was being given. I think they thought that I was just making it up and that it was my imagination. They didn't ever speak to the school about it.

Leaving St Vincent's

95. I left St Vincent's when I was eleven as the travel was getting a bit too much for my family. I convinced my parents to let me leave and I gave them the idea of the travel being too much. I wanted the tablets to stop and saw this as my way out. I went to both [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] High School as they were linked. [REDACTED] had a deaf unit where I went for oral education, whereas [REDACTED] High School was the mainstream school where I went for classes. It was a hearing environment and that was really difficult as I didn't understand the teachers. The headteacher believed quite strongly in the oralist method so that was a big problem for me. There were three teachers who supported sign language but there was conflict between them and the head teacher, Miss Wood.
96. At [REDACTED] there weren't many deaf people. The other children were hard of hearing so they had a bit of speech, but being profoundly deaf I had no chance of

understanding the oralist method. The head teacher believed that the only way for me to be successful was through speaking. Thank goodness for one of the teachers, Miss Kent, who was great and wanted to learn sign. She would sign to me and if the head teacher was talking, she would feed that back to me through sign.

97. Miss Wood left after two years and that was a huge relief for me. At [REDACTED] High School everyone was hearing, apart from one other who was hard of hearing. If the teachers were facing the board, I couldn't hear anything or pick anything up so I found it really boring. The other pupils were all just chatting to each other and I couldn't join in. For the teachers they brought in a microphone and I had to wear a radio aid on my chest and plugs in my ears and it was so frustrating. It didn't help me at all and I felt very stressed and anxious. It was almost worse than St Vincent's. The oppression and discrimination that went on just frustrated me. I actually developed lumps all over my body and I went to the doctor and they thought it might be related to stress.

Life after being in care

98. When I was fifteen I left [REDACTED] High School. My parents weren't happy as they wanted me to do one more year but I wanted a new life.
99. I decided to go to [REDACTED] College because I wanted to see what it was like and make some new friends and that was my motivation for going there. They used sign language there which I was looking forward to. I had a job in [REDACTED] because I needed to save money for college. I worked as [REDACTED] in a hotel and I really didn't like it. Communication was really hard as they couldn't understand me and we didn't sign but I needed the money so I stuck it out.
100. I saved enough and when I was still fifteen, I went to [REDACTED] College and I was there for a year. There were other deaf people there who used sign language. There wasn't really a deaf community in [REDACTED] and that was why I chose to go to Edinburgh because there was a bigger deaf community. I took a course called 'Upgrade' and it was about learning maths and English and I picked up art too. I studied the three

subjects and all the classes were in the one room with all deaf students. The teachers at college used sign language and that had a huge impact on me. It was so different to my time at school. I was gobsmacked and I could feel my confidence rising. I could understand what they were saying most of the time but I did struggle to understand quite a bit. I'd had all this time up until the age of fifteen when I didn't really use sign language. I'd just been picking up bits and pieces and when I went to college, it made me wish I'd learned sign language much sooner as I was quite late to the game at the age I was.

101. When I was at [REDACTED] College I paid for boarding in a house. My parents paid towards my rent and I met a girl there who was also deaf, [REDACTED]. Her parents wanted someone to board with her so they were quite happy for me to board with them in their flat. It was a big family in Edinburgh and the whole family could communicate with each other through sign. Her mum wasn't deaf but was a sign language user and she was lovely. It really helped my confidence. I stayed there Monday to Friday and went home to my house most weekends.
102. After [REDACTED] College I moved back to [REDACTED] with my parents. My dad lost his job because the factory he was working in shut down.
103. When I got to [REDACTED] I went to [REDACTED] Community College ([REDACTED]) which had a room for deaf people as well. I wanted to learn sign language and I made some new friends there who were all fluent in sign language. They didn't use the oralist method at all, that was amazing. I had to change my sign language as here we use British Sign Language (BSL) but there they use American Sign Language (ASL). ASL use the alphabet differently so it was all new to me again. When I was at [REDACTED] I also did a bit of skiing with my friends who taught me. I later started teaching some deaf children skiing and to this day I still love skiing.
104. After a year at college, I was looking for information about getting a job and putting together a CV. English language was still very difficult for me but the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] gave me some help. It was like a deaf club that included social work, counselling and support for deaf people and I made some friends there too. [REDACTED]

helped me phone different places to find a job but it was still really difficult. You had to tell potential employers that you were deaf and they would just reject you. There was still a lot of discrimination against the deaf community then and they would only offer voluntary work at the library for example.

105. My mum's friend worked for [REDACTED] and they had asked about a job for me. I then got a job working there and I worked there for the next twenty years. I started off doing the filing there and then I moved to being a [REDACTED]. I received cheques that had been paid into the bank and I had to make sure that the balance was right. I was down in the basement with no windows, but upstairs there were stunning views of [REDACTED]. The weather everyday was different. It was a good life there.
106. After twenty years there, I moved back to Scotland because my parents retired and they wanted to come back. It was a hard decision to make and it was more to do with them. I think it was around 2006 that I moved back to [REDACTED].
107. When I came back, it was hard at first. I found a voluntary position doing [REDACTED]. I was looking for a job but there was no social work help that I could find. Then I saw that at [REDACTED] they had a position for [REDACTED] in the [REDACTED] there. I needed the money so I applied for that, got the job, and worked there for the next nine years. I feel like I was clever though and if I'd had the opportunity or been educated well, I could have got a different job. I think if I'd been well educated I'd have been more successful.

108. [REDACTED]

Impact

109. When I was in [REDACTED] the memories of St Vincent's faded a little bit as I had a good life. When I came back to Scotland, I was looking forward to getting back to Edinburgh and connecting with old friends but I had these memories at the back of my mind that kept popping back up, especially when I was living in Glasgow. I was thinking about my time at school and it was still in my mind. I thought that it was time to tell the truth and spoke to my mum and dad about my time at St Vincent's. I was quite direct with them and told them about the abuse I had suffered and the tablets that I was forced to take. They were in denial to start with and were saying that couldn't have happened. I reminded them that I had told them at the time but they had just said that I was imagining it. When I spoke to them about it this time, it affected them and they were really emotional about it.
110. I often think about my time at St Vincent's, its always there. Especially in relation to being forced to take the tablets. That's prominent in my mind as I'm worried that whatever they were giving me has ruined my body. I didn't have any health or behavioural problems that would require medication. I get a lot of sleepless nights thinking about it. When I left St Vincent's it was a relief but the nightmare wasn't over. I felt my body was ruined. I couldn't sleep well and I was really surprised that my parents didn't know. I suffer from tinnitus and again I wonder if it's all related to my time at St Vincent's and the medication I had to take.
111. My education was damaged by my time at St Vincent's. My school reports painted a different story as when my parents read those, it looked like everything was going ok at school. I really struggled with English and I think that being able to lip read and sign would have helped a lot. When I met people who had learned to sign at an early age, I found myself impressed by them as they are very clever and have gone onto be successful. [REDACTED] used Total Communication (TC) which is both oral and sign language and that's a much better method of communication.
112. When I went to [REDACTED] school my attendance was poor and that was after my time at St Vincents. I think because after I'd finished at St Vincent's I became quite

poorly. I think I was stressed from my time at St Vincent's so I stayed home a lot. It was almost like I was having a withdrawal or a medical reaction to what they'd given me at St Vincent's. I was having nightmares, flashbacks, sweats and trouble sleeping. I would wake up and the light at the bottom of the door was almost flashing. My mum would have to come into me quite a bit and they thought I was just having a bad dream or a nightmare but I feel like it was an effect from having stopped the tablets. I felt those effects for three or four years before I got to a normal sleep. I don't think I was sleeping properly and or developing properly and that impacted my education further.

113. It has impacted my religious beliefs as well. I used to go to church on a Sunday with my grandfather but I'm not religious at all now. My time at St Vincent's definitely influenced my decision and I became demotivated because of the abuse I suffered. I realised that the Sisters were bad people and they were religious. I just wish that someone had had a good heart and had reported it. Other staff there knew what was going on.
114. My time at St Vincent's has impacted my relationships. Communication was difficult to develop and it was at a low level to begin with so I had a lot of catching up to do. I didn't even know what I liked or my interests. My life was a bit boring. I have a good relationship with [REDACTED] my husband, but with ex boyfriends I had a lot of problems.
115. I feel that I am soft and weak and have been taken advantage of. I wasn't good with money and wasn't very assertive and I have been used for money. My first husband used drugs. I tried to help him because I have a good heart but then I realised he was using me for money. That wasn't a good relationship or a good life. I lost a lot of my money through that. That marriage was a mistake.
116. I did want to have children but there were an awful lot of negatives going on from my past at St Vincent's that were in my head and I thought that might affect me being a good mum. I was worried about being a deaf mum and if I would be able to take care of a baby. I did want children and I kept changing my mind. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and
I then went our separate ways.

117. I had a hearing boyfriend who was an interpreter and was quite discriminatory and another one again who was using me for money. That damaged me as I felt that I was quite weak, soft and subservient. Going through St Vincent's trying to be this good girl, it damaged me and I just wasn't as strong.

118. I met [REDACTED] again and we got together again and we got married. I had [REDACTED] pregnancy and it was a real surprise as it was a bit later in life. I was really excited to be a mum but I was also scared. When I was full-term [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] sadly my [REDACTED] had died. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I've always blamed myself for it. I was so upset and just asking, "Why me?" I sometimes wonder if it was to do with the pills I was given as a child and have they affected me in some way? I felt like St Vincent's had put a demon in my body. We did try for another baby but we had been through so much that it didn't happen for us, life is cruel.

Treatment / Support

119. After I lost my baby I had some support from the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS). I had some counselling support with my previous marriage but I've never had any counselling in relation to my time at St Vincent's.

Reporting of Abuse

120. I haven't ever reported my abuse to anyone before, the police or otherwise.
121. I think in 2017 there were two people who had been at St Vincent's who reported abuse from their time there but there weren't enough witnesses so it didn't go anywhere. I knew the two people as they were at St Vincent's at the same time as me.

Contact with St Vincent's since leaving

122. After I left St Vincent's when I was eleven, a friend of mine there, [REDACTED] wrote letters to me but I never received anything. [REDACTED] gave the letters to the Sisters to post to me but I think they had lied to her saying that they would post them. I believe that they just put them in the bin or destroyed them. They were maybe worried that we might get talking about the abuse or someone would report it. Those Sisters had this impression that they were good and holy but they weren't honest at all.
123. I went to a reunion at St Vincent's in 200[REDACTED]. Part of me didn't want to go back but part of me wanted to see what it was like now. I wanted that information that I could never get before. I wanted to know about the Sisters. It had been about forty years by that point and I was nervous but I had a newfound resilience. There were a lot of people there, my friends that I hadn't seen for years, and it was lovely to see them all. I was meeting people there and putting on this smile but when I was inside the school, it reminded me so strongly of the feeling that I'd had when I was there. It hit me, the smells and everything about the school, it gave me shivers. We didn't go into the residential part of the school but the memories came flooding back.
124. [REDACTED], Sister [REDACTED] zKTA, and when I said hello she seemed really shocked to see me. It was a different Sister [REDACTED] zKTA to the one that I liked. I was trying to be direct and asked if she remembered me. She did but it was quite awkward and she didn't quite know what to say. She seemed a bit panicked. I wished I'd been more direct and spoken to her about my time at St Vincent's but it wasn't the right time,

there were too many people there and a lot going on. There was another woman there who had been one of the boarding staff and she remembered me too.

125. I wish I'd asked for the Sisters' names, almost a list of the Sisters who had worked there at the time but I was too frightened. They might have refused me anyway. I have asked friends if they remember any of the Sisters' names or contact details but I've not got any more information.
126. It made me angry to see the Sister there at the reunion and I wanted to talk to her directly. There were other Sisters who I'd hoped would be there. I held a lot of anxiety and inner turmoil at that time, although I think that a lot of the Sisters had passed away by then.
127. The boarding school has closed down now and has been demolished. Some of the boys who had been at St Vincent's actually took a couple of bricks after it had been demolished but I didn't want any kind of reminder. I think the boys had a better experience than the girls. I think the girls got it worse.

Records

128. I have my school reports from my time at St Vincent's from 1971, 1972, 1974, 1975 and 1976. They are signed by various class teachers; Sister Clarke, AM Cole, K Clarence and Crampsey and there were SNR [REDACTED] there during my time who are named on the reports; Sister PQF [REDACTED] and Sister LXH [REDACTED]. I can't really remember them, apart from Sister LXH [REDACTED]
129. The reports speak about my speech, lip reading, language, use of hearing aid, reading, writing, arithmetic, practical work, physical education and games and other subjects. They didn't reflect how I was really doing at school at all. There were no notes about my health either or all of the time I had to spend in bed.
130. Apart from my school reports I don't have any other records.

131. There is [REDACTED], PQA [REDACTED] who has obtained some records from St Vincent's and she had lots of photographs of the school. She was a pupil at St Vincent's for a short time, but not a boarder. She's interested in history so wanted to collate pictures and information about the school. She was showing me a school photograph that I should have been in as it was a special day. I was missing from the photograph so I must've been in the bedroom that day. I missed out on a lot of opportunities at St Vincent's.
132. She has yearbooks and records from St Vincent's and they were given to the deaf club. They detailed who were in the year groups but there was a book missing and it happened to be the years I was there.
133. There were also two girls who set up a history research group, collating information about the school and they got some lottery funding to do it. It was a two-year process of investigation and research.
134. In June last year, the Deaf Club had an exhibit and [REDACTED] and I went to see it. They had photos up on the wall of us wearing the radio aids. The exhibit was in the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] paper. It was interesting to look around but there were missing records. St Vincent's closed down in 2007 and the deaf club started looking into and collating the information from St Vincent's.

Lessons to be learned

135. I wanted to come to the inquiry as I think it's important to get my story down.
136. I think that my experience at St Vincent's could have been better if they had got rid of the Sisters or had either deaf teachers or hearing teachers who were children of deaf adults (CODA) that understood and spoke in sign language. None of the staff members were deaf or blind, they were all hearing and seeing. It would've helped hugely with communication. I don't think any of the staff had any understanding of

what it was like for the deaf and/or blind children. I don't think they had any deaf awareness. They just strongly believed in the oral method and they said that they wanted deaf people to have a successful future, however I think it would've been better if we'd had both lip reading and sign language, especially for education purposes. The teachers were just writing things up on the board that we just had to read, regardless of whether we could or not. It was a long time ago and these Sisters were just saving their jobs, they had no heart about them. I thought the Sisters would be good because they believed in God and are religious people but half of them were not good at all.

137. I just hope that future generations of children have a better experience and are luckier than I was. My time at St Vincent's was a long time ago now but it was terrible. Mainstream at that time was just as awful and there was a lot of bullying from my peers but things seem to have improved now. I think deaf schools are becoming less and less and everyone is going into mainstream. We have teachers that know sign language and the hearing units are becoming more equal which is a positive. I know that there are deaf schools in south England that have very strong sign language and teachers who are deaf which is great. Although in mainstream education, I think one of the issues is that budgets get cut a lot and they aren't able to get interpreters in or deaf teachers in the school. Sadly, its all about money and resources. I want there to be plenty of schools and options for deaf children.
138. I hope that for deaf children in the future, there is no more boarding. I hope there's no more Sisters involved. I hope that the Sisters could go to jail and are either old ladies or dead. I think that they need to be punished and tell the truth. God doesn't like liars and I can't believe the Sisters and the hypocrisy.
139. I have encouraged my friends to get involved with the Inquiry and I have offered to help them as our voices need to be heard. I think that they are frightened to stand up and speak out.
140. 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.

KWY

Signed.....

Dated... Jan 22nd, 2025