

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

PFU

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is PFU. My date of birth is 1987. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Background Information

2. I am providing a statement to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry on behalf of my nana, PFX or PFX or PFX who was born on 1936 and my papa, PFW who was born on 1922. My nana died in 2017 and my papa died in 1981.
3. Some of the information I have learned has come from family research we have carried out over recent years, but a significant amount has come from my nana and what she has told me, or what I have learned from conversations she has had with me and her friends at the St. Vincent's Deaf Club in Calton, Glasgow.
4. St. Vincent's Deaf Club has been going for a long time and serves the deaf community that were at St. Vincent's School. The club is still going. When I was growing up I would go there with my nana and papa. It was all my nana and papa's generation that would be at the club. It was great. They held events we would go to and we always went there to see Santa. It was all just part of that deaf community and I know a lot of that community because of my nana and papa. There was a big crowd of friends and they have all stayed friends.

5. Both my grandparents were deaf and attended St. Vincent's School for the Deaf in Tollcross, Glasgow. My papa was fourteen years older than my nana so he was at St. Vincent's a good bit before my nana. He had left St. Vincent's when my nana went there. He was there from age four until fifteen, which was from 1926 to 1937. My nana attended St. Vincent's from the age of six until the age of fifteen, so 1942 until 1951.
6. My nana was [REDACTED] and was very ladylike. She could hear when she wore a hearing aid and she could speak as well, but a lot of the time she would just say she couldn't hear what people were saying. I think she was in her twenties when she first started wearing a hearing aid. She was a lovely signer and she could subtle sign really well too. She was also very good at lip reading.
7. My papa was always of the belief that he was dropped at the door of St. Vincent's anonymously in a basket and then raised by the nuns of St. Vincent's all his life. That's what he was told by the nuns and is what he always believed. He believed his family wanted nothing to do with him. However, through our own family research, which we started in 2014, we have obtained and checked records, and established that he was actually taken to the nuns when he was four, and then raised by them at St. Vincent's.
8. Our research also showed that my papa had four or five brothers and one of them was also taken to St. Vincent's, aged two. My papa was never aware of that brother, no one ever told him he had any brothers. My papa's brother died at St. Vincent's when he was only two, that's actually on his death certificate, that he died at St. Vincent's when under their care. I think it was something to do with a respiratory condition but I don't really know much about the circumstances of his death.
9. It was actually archdiocese records that we found out about my papa's family. They were about my great grandmother, my papa's mother. We established she was very poor and had borrowed money from the archdiocese but there was no proof, nothing evident to say why it was my papa was taken to St. Vincent's. The conclusion we came to was that it was because she was poor, she had quite a few children and my papa was deaf. There was nothing in any of those records about anyone else in the family being deaf other than my papa and his brother, who also went to St. Vincent's.

10. My nana was six when she went to St. Vincent's. Her mother came from quite an affluent background and none of her family were deaf. The story we heard at first was that my great grandmother told people my nana had been stung in the ear by a bee or a wasp and had become deaf. We discovered from family, that was not the case and that my nana was actually profoundly deaf. We think that because of the affluent background, our great grandmother, just couldn't face that my nana was deaf. It was something that was kind of frowned upon back then and I just don't think my nana's mum could bear the embarrassment. So, when she was six my nana was taken to St. Vincent's.
11. My nana had been in a hearing school at first but she wasn't taking anything in and wasn't learning anything because she was deaf.

### **St. Vincent's School for the Deaf, Tollcross, Glasgow**

#### *General Information*

12. My papa didn't share much with me about his time at St. Vincent's. He could only ever go on what the nuns communicated with him. He didn't know much about his life or his family. He didn't ever know he had any brothers and thought he was an only child.

#### *Life in care at St. Vincent's*

13. Nuns predominantly ran St. Vincent's. The nuns all wore uniforms and big hats with what looked like horns. I've seen them in photographs my nana has shown me of her and the nuns when she was at St. Vincent's.
14. I think most, if not all, of the children who attended St. Vincent's School resided there. It was boys and girls but I don't know how many. My nana described it as an old dark building, but it was more the culture and the abuse that I spoke about with my nana

than the layout of the building or anything like that, but I do know a bit about the old building from my nana.

15. I know there was a bit for boys and a bit for girls, and that the boys and girls were segregated other than when they were in school. I think they might have had some mixed classes at the school but most of the time I think they were segregated. My nana did say the boys and girls weren't allowed to play together in the playground at all.
16. I also know there wasn't really any learning, not like maths and English and things like that.
17. My nana did say the nuns were very strict about what time the children all got up in the morning. They would then have to make their beds. My nana carried that with her all through her life, she always made her bed as soon as she got up in the morning.
18. My nana said everything was always very strict at St. Vincent's, especially when they were having meals and when they were doing all their cleaning duties. They had duties in the kitchen when they did cooking and cleaning, and sometimes they were on their hands and knees scrubbing the floor. My nana was always cleaning and polishing as an adult, she really knew how to get a home clean. I think we've all ended up having that bit of OCD about cleaning. I've seen my mum and myself cleaning non-stop for hours on end.
19. The girls were taught how to clean so they were on the floor scrubbing a lot of the time. They were also taught how to sew so they didn't get normal educational lessons, it was more about learning the skills to be a good housewife. The boys might have had a bit more education than the girls but they were also given labour skills and things like that. It was instilled in all the deaf children, from a very young age, that those were their capabilities because they were deaf. They were never going to get a better education or become educated so they could have skilled jobs like other people.

20. I was actually in St. Vincent's when I was younger, sometime in the late nineties, when I was about eight or nine. It was a summer holiday kind of class and we took part in a lot of activities.

*Impression of establishment*

21. I believe some of the nuns at St. Vincent's picked up some signing when they had been on their travels but it was a whole range of different signing. They knew some American, some French and some British Sign Language (BSL).
22. What is kind of difficult to explain is that there is a full deaf community from St. Vincent's who have their own sign language. Understanding that gives people a better idea or understanding of how much the children that were there were affected by the abuse.
23. You have British Sign Language which is a kind of universal signing across Britain. You then have different signing for different areas within Britain. It's just like people from different areas of Britain having different accents. So you will have Dundee signing, Glasgow signing, Aberdeen signing, that kind of thing. You can also get family signing as well, and then there's a whole community of generations that went through St. Vincent's that all have St. Vincent's signing. St. Vincent's signing is very much one of a kind and you know when you see someone signing that they've been to St. Vincent's. There's a lovely flow to it but there's also a subtleness to it because they weren't allowed to sign at St. Vincent's, the nuns didn't allow it.
24. The children were constantly beaten up by the nuns for signing, it was frowned upon that the children used sign language to communicate with one another. It's because of that, the pupils had to learn and use very subtle signing and a lot of the signing they used was actually made up by the pupils for their own communication.
25. There's a whole generation of this subtle signing, which was developed at St. Vincent's. Sometimes it can be so subtle you could literally blink and miss the signing.

It had to be that way so they didn't get caught communicating because if they did there could be serious consequences.

### *Visiting*

26. I don't think my nana's mum ever visited her when she was in St. Vincent's. It was always her brothers and my nana's uncles, that visited her. My nana's mum just couldn't handle the shame. My nana had that shame of being deaf from her mum and from the school she went to.

### **Abuse at St. Vincent's School**

27. All the women who were at St. Vincent's School were life-long friends and went to St. Vincent's Deaf Club. When they all got together at the club they loved a good drink. It was once the drink started to hit them that you would hear about the abuse they all went through. My nana was very protective of us, her grandchildren, and she didn't really like us knowing anything but they would take us to the Christmas nights and other events at the club and we would hear things once they all had a drink.
28. My nana would often sign to me that the nuns were wicked. That was something she would always say. They even looked evil with their big hats with horns.
29. I know there were a few nuns, and I don't know any of their names, who were particularly bad. From some of the conversations between my nana and her friends I think the nuns didn't actually believe that all the children were fully deaf. Some of the nuns thought the children could still hear and communicate in a hearing way. It was like being deaf was a taboo, it was frowned upon, there was no understanding at all by the nuns.
30. As a result of that the nuns would just beat the children who communicated with one another using sign. I actually got the impression the children were beaten or punished just for existing, for being there, for the least wee thing. From what my nana and her



friends have told me, I think there was a lot of things going on at St. Vincent's but beating the children seemed to be the main thing.

31. My nana did describe the beating as being hit by the nuns with their hands but they used to hit the children quite a lot with a belt as well. They would hit them on the hands with a belt if they were caught signing, that happened to them all, getting severely beaten with a belt for signing. The beatings weren't any secret, the nuns did it all the time and quite openly, in front of other children. Children went to that school through no choice of their own and were basically abused on a daily basis.
32. My nana did tell me about an incident when she was fourteen and she and a couple of friends had gone into the boys' playground. There was segregation but they were all young and just having a bit of fun, interacting and playing around. The nuns caught them, beat them and gave them all punishments. Then a priest actually sent my nana and the other girls for internal examinations to confirm whether or not they'd had sex with the boys. Nothing like that had been going on at all, they'd just been playing in the playground.
33. If memory serves me right, the examinations were an in-house arrangement, so a local doctor was called in to do the examinations and they all took place at St. Vincent's. I only know that all those girls were subjected to an internal examination as a result of that. That's what my nana and her friends said.
34. Another story my nana told me was when all the children were sitting in class and a wee boy was really needing the toilet. The nuns wouldn't let him go to the toilet and eventually he just got up and ran out. He wet himself when he was running out the class and he slid on the wet urine and banged his head cracking his skull. He ended up dying as a result of that, he was a very young wee boy. That whole class, including my nana, all saw that.
35. There was also a good friend of my nana's, [REDACTED], who would make these wee comments about my nana when they were all telling their stories at St. Vincent's Club. She would mention my nana being [REDACTED] which was a holy Catholic thing

where they are made up and kind of looked like a bride. [REDACTED] would say my nana was a favourite of the priests. She would say it wasn't fair that my nana was made the [REDACTED] when she didn't believe in God.

36. Another friend of my nana's, [REDACTED], made a comment just after my papa died in 2014, about my nana being sexually abused by a priest. My nana got very upset and pointed out that I was there, her granddaughter, and that [REDACTED] shouldn't be talking about those things. I would have been 27 then. My nana didn't want any of her grandchildren to be exposed to that at all, but I could tell from my nana's reaction and the way they were all talking about it, that they had probably all experienced some kind of sexual abuse by a priest. I believe it was the same priest that sent my nana and two of her friends for the internal examination I told you about.
37. I know my nana and [REDACTED], and some others, had been witness to an incident where [REDACTED] was beaten by the nuns and then taken into a cupboard with a priest. [REDACTED] was forced to give oral sex to the priest in that cupboard. Those girls all knew about that, they all knew about the sexual abuse that was going on at St. Vincent's and I'm sure they were all subjected to very similar things. From the way they were talking about it, I feel [REDACTED] and my nana were both taken into that same cupboard after [REDACTED] had been in it.
38. Being put in this cupboard seemed to be a thing at St. Vincent's, they mentioned that happening a lot. I don't know the layout or where this cupboard is, but they described a specific cupboard that they would be taken into and a lot seemed to take place in it involving a priest. As far as I know there were several priests involved in that kind of abuse but the one that sent the girls for the internal examinations was the most prolific.
39. It wasn't just the priests who were sexually abusive. [REDACTED] made comments that the nuns sexually abused the girls as well. I know my nana suffered sexual abuse from the nuns. She was beaten but the nuns sometimes went on to sexually abuse her with instruments. That happened to her and to other girls. I know it was sexually abusive, I don't know any more than that.



40. [REDACTED] was profoundly deaf and wouldn't wear a hearing aid but she could still speak, which a lot of deaf people do. Especially if they've been to St. Vincent's because it was something that was instilled in them from a young age. We call it 'speaky deaf' where they speak but they are deaf.
41. I learned from listening to that group of my nana's friends that a lot of them had experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse, some more than others. I know [REDACTED] had all her hair shaved off, was badly beaten and badly sexually abused. I heard of a lot of disturbing things that happened to [REDACTED] from my nana and others in the group. [REDACTED] had additional learning needs and was very small and I think that because of that, the nuns treated her worse. I do feel it's not my place to speak about any of that though, that's [REDACTED]'s story to tell.
42. A lot of what my nana and the group said was about how wicked the nuns were and how the children never had any education. They just had to survive and none of the women had anything good to say about St. Vincent's School at all. My nana never told me anything positive that happened at St. Vincent's.
43. Basically all those women were abused as children at St. Vincent's School, they all went through many different things at the hands of the nuns and priests and they all witnessed each other being abused in different ways. I think that's why they have the trauma bonding thing they now have at St. Vincent's Deaf Club.
44. I don't know so much about my papa's experiences at St. Vincent's but I would say he was probably gaslighted quite a lot of the time. He was very devout and had a big belief in God. He said the nuns looked after him but from our own research I wouldn't say that was strictly correct. He wasn't told about his family and he wasn't told about a brother that he had who was in the school at the same time as him. He was a lot less forthcoming than my nana but he would say there was abuse and there were beatings by the nuns and things like that, he just never spoke much about it.
45. I do think that with my papa it was more about the nuns not communicating with him properly, not giving him truthful information and not giving him a proper education. He

grew up, had his own children and passed away thinking his own mother didn't want him and he had no other family. I think he was made to feel that because he was deaf that's the way he could be treated, that his family didn't want him and it was only the nuns who wanted him. Of course we have since learned that wasn't true and that he did have a mum who wanted him and he did have this whole other life that he never knew about. That's such a sad thing for my papa.

46. If my mum gives a statement to the Inquiry she will be able to talk more about my papa, her dad, as I only have wee snippets of information about him. My mum knows more detail about my papa and his time at St. Vincent's. I knew more about my nana.

#### **Reporting of abuse at St. Vincent's School**

47. My nana and papa didn't report any of the abuse they suffered when they were at St. Vincent's. None of the children ever did as far as I'm aware. They had no one to communicate it to other than the people who were abusing them.

#### **Leaving St. Vincent's School**

48. My nana left St. Vincent's when she was fifteen. She then went back to live with her mum and dad in [REDACTED]. Her dad was a very quiet man and was the same as her mum in that I don't think he had much to do with her when she was at St. Vincent's.
49. My papa always told family that the nuns told him his mother and family were going to come and take him home when he was fifteen but that didn't happen. There was then a belief that his family wanted nothing to do with him but I don't think my papa ever knew what the truth was surrounding his family.
50. My papa left St. Vincent's when he was fifteen, that must have been arranged by St. Vincent's. He went to live with a family in [REDACTED] for a few years but I don't think he ever knew why he went to that particular family. They were probably a Catholic

family linked to St. Vincent's in some way and must have said they were willing to take him. My papa lived with that family until he was seventeen or eighteen.

51. That family were a hearing family, none of them could sign, so my papa didn't have much communication with them. He said they were all a bit mad and that the children in the family were a bit wild and up to no good.
52. Through further family research, in 2023, with Ancestry.com, we found relatives of my papa who live in [REDACTED]. It was my papa's brother [REDACTED]'s children that we found and we established from them that my papa's mum had passed away around the time she would have been going to get him from St. Vincent's. She was living in [REDACTED] at the time and had [REDACTED] died.
53. [REDACTED] In a newspaper article about her death it was reported that she was going to get her son, aged 14, from St. Vincent's School when she died. That would have been my papa and the nuns would have been aware of all of that, they would have known his mum had passed away, but they never told my papa. When he died in 1981 he would still have been unaware of that and unaware that he had any other family.

#### **Life after being in care**

54. When my nana went back to live with her parents they were living in an old tenement building with just one bedroom so she had to share a bed with her mum and dad. All my nana's siblings had moved out by then.
55. My nana went on to get a job [REDACTED] and she worked at that until she moved out and married my papa. My papa was a good bit older than my nana so they were never at St. Vincent's at the same time. He had been away a while, so it was through socialising at the St. Vincent's Deaf Club that they got to know one another. When that generation left St. Vincent's School that's where they all went, St Vincent's Deaf Club, that was their social club.

56. I think my nana was about twenty when she married my papa and they lived in [REDACTED] to start with before moving to [REDACTED].
57. When my papa left the family he was living with, he went on to work in the [REDACTED]. He had great life skills but he was never going to go out and do a skilled job. I don't mean this in a horrible way, but most deaf people then would never go on to become doctors, nurses, or lawyers, they just didn't get the education that other people would take for granted.
58. I used to take my nana to St. Vincent's Deaf Club on a Saturday and Sunday night for her social nights when she would have a drink. I also took her to another deaf club at [REDACTED] on a Thursday for bingo. A lot of the St. Vincent's generation would go to the [REDACTED] club but they were still their own small community within the bigger deaf community in Glasgow. The St. Vincent's community kept their own community going, it was as if they were the only ones who knew what they had all experienced together and were the only ones who understood.

### **Impact**

59. The abuse that my nana and all her friends at the St. Vincent's Club were subjected to at St. Vincent's School affected them for the rest of their lives. It always became a thing for that community to speak about when they were having a drink or were drunk.
60. On reflection, I feel St. Vincent's Club for the deaf was a place where a lot of trauma bonding went on for people of my nana and papa's generation. There were a lot of friends who had all been at St. Vincent's school and they've all stayed friends growing up.
61. The nuns just didn't like children and they certainly didn't like them being deaf children, that's why they punished them, which is the worst thing. My nana was actually quite embarrassed about being deaf, that's why she became so good at lip reading. One

thing she would do when someone was speaking to her was to nod along looking like she knew what was being said then, when the person left she would ask what they had been saying to her. She didn't want that person to think she couldn't hear them and would never let them know she was deaf and couldn't hear what they were saying. She was never upfront and forthcoming about it. I do think that was something that was instilled in her from the way she was treated by the nuns at St. Vincent's School.

62. My nana remarried after my papa passed away. My second papa [REDACTED] [REDACTED] passed away in 2014. It was after he passed away that I started to hear a whole lot more from my nana at St. Vincent's Deaf Club.
63. Everything that happened to my nana really shook her religious beliefs. She didn't believe in God and didn't have any desire to follow anything to do with God because of what happened to her in a religious institute. I don't really blame her either, she was six years of age and there was nobody providing any care. There was no nurture, they were basically told not to communicate, and told they weren't human because they were deaf and had a different way of communicating.
64. I would say the women at the deaf club went one of two ways. They went the same way as my nana and didn't believe in God or they do believe, are devout and won't speak about anything. It's all very hush hush.
65. Everybody can go to school and it can be quite a hard experience for them but when you have no adults who can nurture you or give you even a basic education it's a completely different thing. The children at St. Vincent's School didn't leave with any qualifications other than knowing how to clean and were just constantly abused for being deaf.
66. My nana wasn't a very nurturing person. When I was younger, my mum and dad would always be out working and my nana was the one who looked after us. She didn't know how to cuddle and wasn't a very cuddly person because she hadn't been shown that. As we grew older we always kind of treated her like a wallflower, we saw her as vulnerable as she couldn't cope with too much.

67. On reflection, she was actually quite a brave woman what with all the abuse she went through at St. Vincent's, plus her own mum and what she went through there as well. There was never really any adult giving her any good kind of show. We never gave her enough credit for how brave and how well composed she was for going through all that.
68. My nana wasn't very good at dealing with traumas and when my papas passed away that triggered her twice. When my first papa died, my mum's dad, my nana went through a really bad time and was drinking a lot. I think all the trauma she had experienced at St. Vincent's reared its ugly head and came back to her. She did have a very difficult time for a while, then my second papa came along and made her life good again. My nana seemed to have a very good life after that.
69. Again though, she just wasn't able to nurture. There was always an element of secrecy with her, she's always seemed to know how to keep things secret. In my experience, I would say that comes from abuse where they learn how to keep secrets and be secretive. I think a lot of that was instilled in my nana at St. Vincent's, that was the kind of culture that existed there because of the children all being deaf and having to communicate in a totally different way.
70. My papa drank quite heavily as well. He also kept secrets, everything to do with St. Vincent's was very hush hush. He did his best with what he'd been given and worked very hard in the [REDACTED]. I think his lifestyle was behind him passing away, [REDACTED] and he was one for drinking and smoking. He was to [REDACTED] but he passed away before the operation.
71. My nana and papa had a lot of parties at their house with their St. Vincent friends and things would get spoken about then. That was the culture, the deaf people had drinks and talked about their time at St. Vincent's. My mum would be the person to speak to about that as she was a child in the house then.



72. I think the abuse at St. Vincent's gave my nana and papa trauma and drinking problems but it wouldn't have been spoken about then the way it's being spoken about now. Things are more open now and there's a lot more support for people. I do think it affected them all in more ways than probably many people understand and I do keep saying it, but it was because they were deaf and didn't have the same resources as hearing people. Deaf people don't have the same resources and knowledge.
73. The sexual abuse from the nuns definitely had a long term effect on my nana and all the women who were at St. Vincent's. It all stayed with them, they carried the sexually abusive behaviour with them into adult life. At the St. Vincent's Deaf Club they could all be quite verbally sexually abusive, to one another when they were drinking. I think it was just all that they knew, they didn't know any better. There had never been anyone there to tell them it was wrong and they needed to go and get help about their behaviour and they themselves weren't able to go and speak to anyone about it.

#### **Treatment/support**

74. If hearing children are abused they can eventually vocalise that. It might take them many years, but they can then go for counselling and speak about it. It will be just them and a counsellor and it's confidential.
75. There's not really any support like that for the deaf because if they were to go for counselling an interpreter would probably need to be there and most of the time interpreters are involved in the community. The deaf community is quite small in Glasgow and there's nothing in place that really allows deaf people to offload things confidentially.
76. Within the hearing community there are CODA's, which is a Child Of Deaf Adult and GODA's, a Grandchild Of Deaf Adult. My mum is a CODA, a Child Of Deaf Adult and I am a GODA. It's basically people who are brought up with all the adults who were part of the deaf community and it covers a lot of families and people. Many interpreters who work with the deaf communities are CODA's or GODA's so it can make things

very difficult, like getting counselling for example. Both the counsellor and the interpreter would get to find out all that information about the abuse. That alone makes it very difficult for deaf people.

### **Reporting of Abuse**

- 77. I know my nana and papa didn't report anything about the abuse they suffered at St. Vincent's School. I actually don't think anyone from the St. Vincent's deaf community have ever reported any abuse. It was all kept within their community and it would have been frowned upon to speak out about it.
- 78. I think any deaf person from that community would be very nervous about reporting abuse. I think it would be easier if it could be done online or done anonymously by reporting it to a hub by email or something online.
- 79. A deaf person would be concerned about who was going to be the interpreter if they were coming to give a statement, and who would be finding out about what they had been through. Talking about it at their club, when they're having a drink, is one thing but actually reporting it is totally different.
- 80. I think it will be a very difficult thing for some of the deaf people to come forward and report it. I commend them for it but it will be difficult because so many are so devout and will see speaking out almost as speaking badly against God and going against their religion.

### **Records**

- 81. The family have tried to carry out research into my nana and papa and their families but it has been very difficult. There's not a lot of information about my grandfather from St. Vincent's. We went to the Mitchell Library in 2014 and there was very little information.

82. Last year we obtained more information using Ancestry.com and we had contact with my papa's brother [REDACTED] family. They were a bit wary to start with but as it turned out they had the death certificate of my papa's brother who had died, age two at St. Vincent's. That's when we first realised that my papa had a brother who had been at St. Vincent's with him at the same time.

### **Documents**

83. We have family photographs of my nana at St. Vincent's. There's one of my nana when she was made [REDACTED] and she just looks so sad. Another is of a class of girls, including my nana, where they are all sitting wearing headphones of all things. My nana has told me that although they are smiling in the photo, it wasn't a particularly happy photograph as they were all forced to smile by the nuns. The girls were all very unhappy in the photo, it looks more like a grimace than a natural smile, it's very sad.

### **Lessons to be learned**

84. I think that the politics of deaf people and deaf communities makes it very difficult to get support as there are so many different things deaf people come up against. It's very difficult for deaf people to know where to go with the trauma they have to live through except for when they are in the club getting drunk and talking about it with one another.
85. Sadly that abuse cycle just continues on though because they are never getting out and they aren't getting any support. I think that is developed from a very young age and it's created this trauma bonding lifestyle that they just don't know how to get to grips with.

86. My nana and papa were kicked out of St. Vincent's aged fifteen with no skills or education apart from cleaning, sewing and labour. They couldn't deal with even basic things that many of us take for granted.
87. It's really important for the Inquiry to have that awareness as they might be able to give deaf people the chance to get things off their chests and give their own accounts. I think it will also help the next generation; when I went to St. Vincent's in the late 90's I met a girl there who showed me holes that had been punched in the wall by children, in sheer frustration, because they weren't being allowed to sign. So it was still going on then and they were still experiencing it then. Hopefully, the Inquiry can help change things for that generation.
88. Children shouldn't be made to feel ashamed for being deaf, or having a disability but to throw in physical, sexual and mental abuse makes it all such a big messy pot.
89. There's a whole 'deaf and dumb' stigma attached to deaf children and deaf adults, that comes from way back in the day. There's a whole culture of people that don't fully understand what deaf is. I come across it myself where I'm working. There still isn't a proper awareness of the deaf culture. They are not deaf and dumb, there are some very well educated deaf people that have a lot to bring to a table. It's just that they don't hear.
90. Deaf people will virtually always need that third person to translate when you're communicating with them. That is not required when they are within their own community and that makes their community very close.
91. The culture deaf people come through makes them think they are shamed into being deaf so having that disability more accepted would be a significant change. It can't be a hush hush thing anymore, it needs to be open and people need to know what has happened.

92. I think for children in care, on the whole, it's a humanity thing, it's about having patience and empathy. That can go a long way, and it can be a curse or a blessing, but you need an element of empathy.
93. People go through the disclosure process but when you're dealing with the really vulnerable in society such as children with additional needs and/or disabilities I think there should be psychological tests done on staff to see if they can actually cope. Trying to provide good care all the time can be exhausting, it can take its toll on a person with burn out and things like that. The empathy can be taken right out of them when they're in that environment all the time. I think there's a lack of support on the whole for everybody involved in such care.
94. Mental health has become a big thing because so many traumas have happened to so many people. So much more is now coming out, there are so many more additional needs, everyone has their own wants and needs and it's about trying to meet that. I think there needs to be more mental health resources available for people who are working with children, to confirm people are able and can cope working with children.
95. Not having institutes like St. Vincent's any more is a good thing. We can't have boarding schools like that with really bad, toxic cultures that are passed from generation to generation. I hope there's never as toxic a culture as there was at St. Vincent's further down the line.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

96. St. Vincent's School deaf community is a very close community, as I have described with the CODA's and GODA's. Everyone was brought up within that community and that makes it so difficult for deaf people to come forward and speak to the Inquiry.
97. As interpreters are also part of the deaf community, deaf people will find it very difficult to come forward and speak about their experiences. Establishing trust could be difficult and deaf people could be very nervous about that. It would need to be independent

interpreters from England or outside Scotland that would need to sit through counselling. There's a lot of politics in it all. It's like living in a village where everyone knows what everyone else is up to. Deaf people won't listen to what doctors or nurses or experts say, they will only listen to what other deaf people have said at the deaf club.

98. I would say that the abuse all the deaf people suffered at St. Vincent's was actually what created that full culture that now exists within the St. Vincent's Deaf Club community. A lot have passed away now but the club still exists and there is still a whole community within that club.
99. Our family feel the circumstances surrounding the death of my papa's brother are a concern. It all seems to have been kept very hush hush. It's so wrong that information was withheld from my papa about his family. Not knowing he had a brother there who died and other family that were all alive and a mother that was intending to come and get him. That's all just terrible, it's such a sad legacy to leave. My papa said the nuns loved him and were good to him yet it seems he was being gaslighted and wasn't given so much as basic information about his family. He lived a life thinking that nobody wanted him and he had no other family. He did go on to have his own children and family but he wasn't aware of any other family outside of that.

#### **Other information**

100. I learnt about the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry through the online newsfeed in Glasgow Life. I was on holiday checking the newsfeed when it came up that the Inquiry were asking for people who had been at St. Vincent's to come forward.
101. I also now know that [REDACTED] Liz McCluskey, who is the CEO of Deaf Services Lanarkshire put up a video online in BSL asking for the deaf community to come forward to the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry. Even with that I still don't think there is a great awareness within the deaf community of the Inquiry wanting people to come forward. A lot of them are very old school and don't know how to go online and use



laptops and iPads and things like that. There's also the element of challenges with interpreters, as I have highlighted. There are a lot of barriers trying to get members of the deaf community to come forward.

102. 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..........

Dated.....06 November 2024.....