

Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AAT

Support person present: Yes

1. My name is [REDACTED] AAT [REDACTED]. My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1959. I am 57 years old. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.
2. The institutions I want to tell you about are Smyllum Orphanage, Lanark where I was between 1961 and 1976, a boy's hostel run by the Catholic Church in Hamilton Road, Tollcross, Glasgow where I was between 1976 and 1978 and a boy's hostel in Pollokshields Road, Glasgow where I was between 1978 and 1980.

Background

3. I know very little of my background as I was aged two when I was placed in Smyllum Orphanage. I have since learned that I was born in Edinburgh and lived at [REDACTED] Ferry Road Grove, Edinburgh. My mother died when I was very young, giving birth to my younger sister who did not survive. My mother had leukaemia.
4. I was the youngest child in a family of seven children. My brothers were called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] has since passed away. My sisters were called [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] have passed away.
5. I am not very sure of my parents' names but my father was Irish and had a name like [REDACTED]. I think that my mother was called [REDACTED] but I cannot recall meeting her as I was very young when she died.

6. My father was killed by a drunk driver when he was travelling on New Year's day to visit my siblings and I at Smyllum. I cannot remember much about him as I was only two years old.

Life before care

7. I have no real recollection of my life before being put into care as I was only two years old when I was placed into care at Smyllum. I have been told that the reason we were placed into care is that my father was unable to cope with seven of us after our mother died. I learnt this from my siblings.
8. My father was an Irish Catholic and I think that is how I ended up in a Catholic-run orphanage.
9. All my siblings were also put into care at Smyllum and as a result have had terrible, life-long problems with addiction to alcohol and other substances. Three of them have subsequently passed away with illnesses associated to their addictions. I attribute their addictions directly to the way they were treated as children when they were in Smyllum.
10. My siblings and I were orphans and that is the main reason that we were put into care as there was no-one to look after us. Initially when we were placed at Smyllum my father was alive but he couldn't cope with seven of us.

Smyllum Orphanage, Lanark

11. Because I was so young when I was placed in Smyllum, my earliest memories are from age six or seven.
12. I was in a male dormitory for boys of all ages. There were also girls at the home and they had their own dormitories. I think that there were about 12 boys in my dormitory.

The sisters ran the home with an iron fist and you basically had to do what you were told or else you were punished.

13. I had limited or no contact with my siblings and I didn't really know them at all. The only time I had dealings with my sister [REDACTED] was when I was seriously attacked by Sister [REDACTED] AEG and I ended up in hospital. She was brought by the nuns to visit me. I didn't really know my older brothers and sisters.
14. The home was run by the Daughters of Charity. The place was grim. There was no happiness and all the time you were watching which sisters were on duty that day. We called the people that monitored the free time that you had, the "play guard". They would be the ones that would hit you for shouting or for no real reason and you had to avoid them. You could always hear the sisters coming as they had "segs" in their shoes and they made a noise on the bare marble floors.
15. The house itself had big turrets and was an old mansion type house. It was a light grey colour. The home itself was split up into houses. I was in Roncalli House and I remember that there was also St Joseph's House and St Margaret's House. The houses were all named after saints. I can't remember the other houses. Each house had a sister in charge and Sister [REDACTED] AEG was the person in charge of Roncalli. There were also staff that did not wear nuns' habits. I don't know if they were trainees or who they were. Some of them were alright. They helped to look after you.
16. The home was a big place and there must have been about a 100 residents at any one time. The boys seemed to range in all ages up to sixteen. I went there when I was two. My siblings were not in the same house as me. I was always called by my last name "[REDACTED] AAT" as were all the other boys. I attended Smyllum for fourteen years and must have been the longest staying boy at the home.
17. You were required to wear a uniform which consisted of a green shirt and grey shorts or trousers. The girls had to wear a white blouse and grey trousers or a grey

skirt. You were also issued with a pair of pyjamas. All the laundry was done at the home.

18. There was a big yard where you played and a communal kitchen where we all ate every day. There were no real facilities for children to play, although I remember there were a couple of swings. The school classrooms were all contained within the grounds of the home. There was also a chapel for saying mass.
19. The entire time I lived at Smyllum I lived in pure fear of Sister **AEG** and what she was going to do to me next. Apart from Sister **FAM** who was the nurse, I have no recollection at all of the names of other members of staff who were working there.
20. You were being constantly hit for no apparent reason but there was also a formal means of punishment for when you were at school. You would be hit on the knuckles with a metal ruler. There was also a school belt which you got on your hand. The same teacher always gave you the belt. You knew what you did to deserve the belt, whereas at the home there was no rhyme nor reason to why you were punished. I don't know if the school punishments were recorded. The punishment was always given in front of the other pupils at the school and the school belt was heated on a radiator first. I don't know why this was done.

Routine

Mornings and bedtime

21. You would have to get up at 6am every morning and then do your chores. If you had wet the bed you would be forced to lie for an hour with the wet bed sheets covering your body. The chores consisted of cleaning the home. Every resident was given a job to do. I recall my job was to clean the laundrette and help get the breakfast ready.

22. Breakfast was just after 7am and then you would head to the school for about 8am. There would be a break at school. Then you would eat your pack lunch at lunchtime. It was then back to school which would finish about 3pm. You then had some down-time between 3pm and 5pm where you could play or go back to your bed for a nap. Tea would be at 5pm.
23. At 6pm you would be put to bed and the big wooden shutters in the bedroom would be closed, meaning that there was no light. It didn't matter what age you were, bedtime was always 6pm in summer and winter. There were no checks on you to see if you had washed before bed. It was very much up to yourself. This routine went on seven days a week.
24. After fourteen years of the same routine, I became totally institutionalised and still to this day have to get up at 6am. I hate joining queues as it brings back the memories. I don't know what the other houses in the home did but this was the routine of Roncalli House run by Sister [REDACTED] AEG
25. I was always kept apart from the rest of my siblings. I am sure that the reason for this was so that there was no challenge to the behaviour of the nuns from my siblings who could have caused them problems. We were all split up in different houses and had little or no contact with each other.
26. We had no personal belongings .

Hygiene

27. Monday was the night that Sister [REDACTED] AEG checked you over for head lice. She would take a steel comb and run it through your hair. She would do it so roughly that it would cause your head to bleed. She would then apply a white powder to your head. I must have had nits all the time I was there.
28. Tuesdays were the night for a bath. Sister [REDACTED] AEG would bath the whole Roncalli House in the same tub of bathwater. If you were at the head of the queue the water

would be scalding hot, and if you were at the back of the queue it would be cold and filthy. She would sit on a wooden seat beside the bath to make sure everyone was bathed. You had to use the carbolic soap. Boys who had been there for a while learned to join the middle of the queue.

29. Thursday was the day when they used to check your underpants for any stains. If you had any staining you would get hit with a clothes hanger. We learned to clean our underpants on a Wednesday before the inspection.
30. They also cleaned your nails with a cocktail stick. They would do it so hard that it actually caused your nails to bleed.

Bed-wetting

31. I used to wet the bed. The way that it was dealt with was to put the wet sheet over you and make you lie there for about an hour till you got up for breakfast. The sheets were then taken away and laundered onsite at the home. I was wetting the bed till I was about fourteen and then it stopped. You could get up through the night to go to the toilet but it was dark and frightening.
32. I recall the discomfort of the "chapping" on my legs that occurred when I wet the bed. They were badly grazed and it was very painful to put them anywhere near water. You were forced to wash with carbolic soap. When you went to bed that night the bed would have been made up by the staff. On occasions you missed breakfast because there was not enough time.

Food

33. The food was terrible. For breakfast we got porridge that looked like golf balls. You had to chew it to be able to swallow it. If you failed to eat you would be force-fed until you finished it. The only way to eat it was to force it down when it was still hot. You also got a cup of tea that looked like hot milk. The staff had a different breakfast to

us which would have been much better. To this day, I still eat all my food very quickly while it is still hot.

34. You always got a pack lunch which was eaten at school. It was delivered to the school and was usually a sandwich and a banana which was not yet ripe. I also think that we got leftovers from some of the restaurants in Lanark which were delivered to the school in big metal containers.
35. The evening meal was the cheapest of the cheap. It was always boiled cabbage and spam or the like. Again failure to eat it meant that you would be force-fed. I would describe meal times like a scene from "Oliver Twist". You were hungry because lunch was a very small meal and so you would have to eat it. The sisters again had a completely different meal with fresh fruit. The sisters sat at the top table in the communal dining room and you could see the different food that they ate.

Staff

36. The only member of staff that I can recall was Sister [REDACTED] AEG. She was the cruellest person and would regularly hit and slap me. She had a brush which she kept in her sleeve of her uniform. She would hit you with this brush. Sister [REDACTED] FAM was in charge of all medical issues. I have no memories of other staff members although there were plenty of them. I cannot even recall their names.

School

37. The school I attended was Smyllum Park Primary School and it was based within the grounds of the home. It was run by the sisters but I don't think that they lived in the home. I loved going to school because it got me away from Sister [REDACTED] AEG. I also did well in the school environment and ended up going to another school in Motherwell which was not the usual practice. I did get some qualifications.

Holidays

38. We used to go to Girvan for a two week holiday. The first week of the holiday was great because Sister [REDACTED] AEG didn't come till the second week. The food was wonderful compared to Smyllum. I think that it was a school we stayed at in Girvan. There were bunk beds and a gym we could play football in. I think that there were kids from other homes and the staff were all very nice. You could stay up till nine o'clock in the evening and were encouraged to play.
39. Sister [REDACTED] AEG arrived the second week and we went back to the Smyllum routine of up early in the morning and in bed at six o'clock at night.

Birthdays and Christmas

40. Birthdays were not celebrated and I could never determine exactly when I was born. Christmas was a different matter as the nuns did celebrate it. You always got the same present which was a "blow away ball". The minute you kicked the ball it would blow away. The whole home got these balls. You went to midnight mass and then you were allowed to open your present of a ball which I got for fourteen successive years.
41. You always had a chicken dinner and would be taken to the circus in double-decker buses. The mobile cinema also called at the home and I remember that we always had to watch the "Sound of Music" or "Oliver". I knew all the words to the songs I saw them that often.
42. During the Christmas period, you also went and spent a day with a local family. You would be taken by bus and dropped off for the day. I remember going to a family called Smith who were very poor. They were very nice to do what they were doing in hosting me for the day. They didn't have a television or a radio. When we were picked up by the bus, some of the boys had got great presents of bikes or the like. I think that I got a packet of marshmallows.

Visits/Inspections

43. Some of the other boys had visitors but I had very few visits. There was a lady who was known to me as "Aunty [REDACTED]". She had been a friend of my mother and used to live beside her in Edinburgh. She came to visit on the odd occasion. She would take us into Lanark and buy us sweeties. I didn't have any other visits.
44. I don't think that the nuns wanted a family meeting with my siblings in case I was to tell them how I was being treated. My siblings might have taken some action as they were a lot older and wouldn't have allowed it to happen. There were, after all, six [REDACTED] AAT children in care at the same time.
45. I don't recall any inspections by the authorities and I had no dealings with the social work department when I was at Smyllum.

Leisure time

46. There was always the period of downtime in the evening before you had the evening meal. There were a couple of swings in the yard. Sometimes one of the boys had a football you could play with. There was a very small black and white television but it was hard to get to see because of the older boys hogging it. I remember hearing Sister [REDACTED] AEG laughing when she was watching the Val Doonican show.
47. There was a library but the only books kept in it were religious books. You were allowed to lie in bed and read during the down-time period. There were no organised activities in the evening down-time period.
48. Roncalli House went to the cinema every Saturday afternoon for the children's matinee performance. Sister [REDACTED] AEG always came with you and she would line you up in twos and march you into Lanark. People would cross the road to avoid you. It made you feel like a leper. You were not allowed to talk or shout out at the cinema or Sister [REDACTED] AEG would punish you. There was no interaction with local children.

Pocket money

49. You were meant to get three pence a week for pocket money to spend on sweets at the cinema. Sister [REDACTED] AEG would only let you spend a penny and would keep the remaining two pence. I don't know what she did with it. You could get a lot for a penny in those days.

Running away

50. I did run away once with a boy called [REDACTED] I remember we got as far as a nearby farmhouse. The family phoned Smyllum and they came and picked us up. What a doing we got from Sister [REDACTED] AEG to teach us never to run away again! That was the one and only time I ran away, although other boys did.

Medical care

51. Sister [REDACTED] FAM dealt with all medical matters. I remember I had to go and see Sister [REDACTED] FAM for one of the worst beatings I ever got. I was taken to the Law Hospital in Carluke where they took out my adenoids.
52. There was also an isolation ward where you would be put if you had something infectious. I was injured once when I had an accident on the swing. I was in a coma for two days and stayed in the isolation ward. You wanted to go to the isolation ward as you were very well treated by the sisters that worked there. I don't think that Sister [REDACTED] FAM was a trained medic.

Religious Instruction

53. Religious instruction was compulsory at school and I remember that it was drummed into us that Protestants were the children of the Devil and were bad people. We did attend mass on a Sunday and I was an altar boy. We also attended benediction on a Friday night. There was a priest came to the home to say mass. The chapel was part of the home. I recall that the Sisters would encourage the boys to enter the priesthood.

Abuse at Smyllum

54. Sister [REDACTED] AEG would inspect the cleaning you did in the morning. My job was to clean the laundrette floor. If she discovered even a spot of dirt you would get hit by her as a punishment.
55. The way you would think about it was that if someone else was being beaten by Sister [REDACTED] AEG it meant that you weren't. It almost made you feel happy that it was someone else and not you. The sisters loved the fact that you were scared of them and living in fear.
56. On holiday in Girvan I was badly sunburnt as we were not given any sun cream. I had water blisters on my skin from the sunburn. I must have done something wrong as Sister [REDACTED] AEG set about me and I remember the beating she gave me burst all the water blisters. I can't understand how a woman of God can treat a young child like that.
57. The worst beating I ever got from Sister [REDACTED] AEG was when I was about eleven years old. I had thrown a pillow at my mate and missed. The pillow broke a light. I could hear Sister [REDACTED] AEG on her way to me. I was crying before she even entered the room. She took me to the laundry and made me strip naked. I had to stand there for about three hours. My feet were blue with the cold and she ground her heels into my feet. She then took the brush out of her habit and set about me.
58. She used to have a system of hitting you where she would strike at your elbows then your head and then your body. It was when you tried to defend yourself, she would hit you where you were exposed. On this occasion I pushed her back. She went mad at me and told me that I should never have touched her. She went on a frenzied attack and I had to cover up in a ball on the ground. She was so angry she was sweating with the amount of effort she was using.

59. I had to go and see Sister **FAM** the next day as I was bleeding from my ear. Overnight I had become deaf in one ear as a direct result of the beating. I was taken to Law Hospital in Carluke and was seen by a doctor. I was not allowed to tell the doctor how I came by the injuries. I remember that they removed my adenoids. Sister **FAM** knew what had happened but she never said anything. My sister **[REDACTED]** was brought by the nuns to visit me in the hospital.
60. The abuse was a daily thing until I was about thirteen years old. It was only the younger boys that were picked on. I think that the nuns realised that you were too big to take on. I watched on many occasions as other boys in the home were assaulted and you used to talk about it amongst each other. I never saw what happened in the laundry to other boys as that was where Sister **AEG** took you on her own. The other staff knew what was happening but turned a blind eye.
61. I was totally institutionalised. There was no laughing or smiling, we were living in fear. My only crime was that my mother and father had died.

Leaving Smyllum

62. When I turned sixteen, I was collected in a car one morning and taken to a boys hostel in Hamilton Road, Tollcross, Glasgow. There was no advance warning, it just happened one day. I wasn't able to say goodbye to the other boys. I had spent fourteen years in the same dormitory at Smyllum.
63. I left with very few belongings but I think that they did buy me a pair of jeans.

Boys' hostel, Hamilton Road, Tollcross, Glasgow

64. This was a boys' hostel which was run by the Catholic Church and was situated in Hamilton Road, Tollcross, Glasgow. I was to live here from age sixteen to eighteen.
- [REDACTED]**

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Life after being in care

72. After leaving the boy's hostel in Pollockshields, I went and lived with my sister [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was an alcoholic and I lived with her for ten years, looking after her. I have always worked all my life and have never been out of work.
73. [REDACTED] was an alcoholic and as a result her personality could change very quickly. I was told by my counsellor that 90% of people who were in care had difficulties with addiction. [REDACTED] was a lovely person when she was sober but changed when she was drunk.
74. I had to get away from [REDACTED] and didn't even hear when she died. I learnt this from a friend. My brother [REDACTED] died in a chair with a bottle in his hand. My sister [REDACTED] died in hospital of cirrhosis of the liver. My sister [REDACTED] wants nothing to do with me. She didn't suffer in Smyllum as I did as she was older. I have not seen my sister [REDACTED] since I was in Smyllum.
75. I became a fanatical Hibs fan and I got involved with the "Hibs casuals". I travelled everywhere with Hibs. I went to all the matches. It was one of the best things in my life. We were fighting people that wanted to fight us. I was with the "casuals" for twenty years.
76. I met my partner [REDACTED] 24 years ago and she has been the rock in my life. I have a son, [REDACTED], from a previous relationship and he has three children. [REDACTED] is 37 years old. I just don't have any feelings for him or my grandchildren. My son [REDACTED] used to come to the Hibs games with me but I just can't feel anything for him. My counsellors say that this is related to my time in care.

Reporting of abuse

77. There was no-one to report the abuse in Smyllum to. There was no person you could trust that it wouldn't get back to Sister [REDACTED] AEG [REDACTED] You could discuss it with your pals but there was no-one available to speak to about what was happening.
78. I couldn't even speak to my brothers and sisters at the time because I never saw them and I didn't know them anyway. It was because of the fear. I did speak to [REDACTED] in later life about what had happened to me in Smyllum.
79. Fifteen years ago, I reported what had happened to the police at Cambuslang. It all came about because I had seen an article in the News of the World newspaper. The article was so similar to my own experiences. I called the paper and they referred me on to Ross Harper Solicitors. I called the lawyer and was told that there were at least 400 other people who had been in touch with a view to claiming compensation. I was then directed to report the matter to the police. I never heard back from the police.
80. About eight years ago I attended a Criminal Injuries Compensation Board hearing with regards to the abuse and my deafness. Smyllum was represented by a lawyer. The Board found in my favour and I was awarded £2000 compensation. The compensation was for the abuse I suffered but not for the deafness. The lawyers for the local authorities felt that it could have been a result of measles. I knew that this was not the case as I have never contracted measles.. My deafness was a direct result of the assault on me by Sister [REDACTED] AEG [REDACTED] when she caused my ear to bleed.
81. As far as I know, my case is still live with a legal firm called Drummond Miller in Glasgow and they have been waiting on the time-bar ruling from the courts. I am not in it for the money, I would just like Sister [REDACTED] AEG [REDACTED] to be brought before the courts.

Impact

82. I can count on one hand the number of times that I saw or have seen my brothers and sisters. I didn't even attend their funerals. I just didn't feel anything towards them as I didn't know them. When I came out of care, I did stay with [REDACTED] for a long period of time but she was badly affected by her experiences at Smyllum. I also have a son that I have no real feelings for.
83. I have been addicted to cocaine, glue and alcohol which I have since battled when I met my partner. I became involved with "Hibs casuals" and would travel all over Europe to watch them play while fighting with other sets of football fans. It was the belonging to a group that I liked. I was made to feel welcome and accepted by the other members.
84. I still get up at six o'clock every morning. I can't stand in queues. I have to eat food that is piping hot. I eat all my food with a teaspoon because that is what we used in the home.
85. I have received counselling as I have been fighting with addiction all the time. I am currently addicted to the painkiller dihydrocodeine which I was prescribed at one time. I have been addicted for five years. I attend the [REDACTED] in Glasgow. I have mixed reactions to the counselling I receive. Sometimes it is helpful and sometimes I feel no better.
86. I still have thoughts about Smyllum. If I see a nun or a priest on television it all comes back to me and I feel the anger.

Records

87. I have never tried to access my records. I assume when I had my legal case on the go with Ross Harper, the lawyer may well have tried to access my records, and may have some of them on file.

Lessons to be learned

88. There needs to be somewhere children can go to report what has been happening to them. I would have loved to have told someone but I was looking after myself and lived in fear. There should be more inspections and the Catholic Church should be inspected by outside bodies.
89. I wanted to know what the police did when I reported the matter to them. I had bared my soul to them and had no follow up. I would like to know if Sister [REDACTED] AEG was charged with any offences as the police acknowledged that she had featured in their enquiries.
90. In the last few weeks I have since been in touch with the police and learned that a report was submitted to the Procurator Fiscal but it was marked as "no proceedings". No explanation as to why this was the outcome was ever given to me. The Catholic Church needs to acknowledge what happened and should apologise for their actions.

Other information

91. I have been involved with the survivors groups in the past and dealt with Frank Docherty of INCAS. I know that Frank is now dead. Frank had been in Smyllum for two years and he invited me to his house. He was obsessed with Smyllum and had posters and papers all through his house. I felt that he had only been there for two years, yet I was probably the longest serving resident at Smyllum without exception. I took a panic attack at his house and couldn't cope with being involved with him. I stopped going to the meetings and I became depressed.

92. Prior to meeting Frank Docherty, I had also taken my experiences to my local MSP Margaret Curran. I explained what had happened to me and she passed me on to Fergus Ewing who was also a MSP but was looking into child abuse. I told him my story but I didn't hear any more about it.

93. I was interviewed by the Big Issue. The story can be found in the Big Issue dated [REDACTED] and also in edition [REDACTED], dated [REDACTED]

94. 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..... [REDACTED] AAT

Dated..... 25/8/17