

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

**June SMITH**

Support person present: No

1. My name is June Smith and my date of birth is [REDACTED] 1965. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Background

2. My mother died from tuberculosis when I was four years old. I had lived with my mum and dad [REDACTED] My dad had a nervous breakdown after my mum died. [REDACTED]
3. My earliest memory is of my mum's funeral. I remember [REDACTED] standing at the side of the grave. I don't remember what my mum looked like. I think I was about four years old at the time.

### Nazareth House

4. Initially [REDACTED] placed into the care of Nazareth House. I'm not sure which one. [REDACTED] My only memory of there was getting medicine from a matron and I didn't like it. [REDACTED] I was transferred to Smyllum in Lanark. I don't know why [REDACTED]

## Smyllum, Lanark

5. Smyllum was run by the nuns from the St.Vincent de Paul order. There were about six or seven different houses with about thirty children in each house. At first I was put into Ogilvie House. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Later on, when I was about nine or ten years old, I was moved to Roncalli House. The nuns used to look after us with the help of civilian staff.

## Routine at Smyllum

### *Mornings and bedtime*

6. Sister [REDACTED] AEG was in charge of our house. We were woken up about seven in the morning. We had to go down to breakfast for eight. Anyone who had wet their beds the previous night had to strip their beds and have a bath before breakfast.
7. Sister [REDACTED] AEG would make our breakfast. It was mostly cereal for breakfast. Once we had breakfast we would do the dishes and we would get ready for school. We all walked up to school together. We would come back to our house for lunch then back up to the school.
8. Primary school finished about 3pm. We came back and did our homework. We then changed into our own clothes. We had to hang up our school uniform. If you had wet the bed the night before, you had to get your sheets and make up your bed. Then we had playtime until about 9pm. There were no baths at night.

### *Bedwetting*

9. I used to wet the bed regularly during my time at Smyllum. Sister [REDACTED] AEG would come into the room in the morning. She would ask if anyone had wet the bed.

There was no need for her to ask as she could smell it when she walked into the room. She used to pull me out my bed. She would dig her knuckles in the top of my head. She made me strip the bed. Sister [REDACTED] AEG would then run me a bath. The water tended to be always cold. She would then throw liquid disinfectant over me. It used to sting. My skin would be all red where the disinfectant had hit my skin. Sister [REDACTED] AEG told me to put talcum powder on it. She would stand over me the whole time I was in the bath. I wet the bed up until I was about fifteen years of age.

10. She would then make me wash the sheets. Then, just before nine o'clock when all the other kids were walking up to school, she would make me hang my sheets out so that everyone knew I had wet the bed.
11. I felt victimised. I think she thought I was wetting the bed deliberately. This would happen about three or four times a week. I also felt embarrassed as I got older when Sister [REDACTED] AEG stood over me when I was in the bath.
12. Sister [REDACTED] AEG did not treat all the bed-wetters the same. [REDACTED] another girl in the home, used to wet the bed too. She did not have to take the cold baths that I used to have to take. Sister [REDACTED] AEG would run her a warm bath.
13. When I wet the bed was the only time that I got a bath. The baths were restricted. I think the older kids got a bath at night.
14. Once when we were on a trip to Holy Island I wet the bed. Sister [REDACTED] AEG threw me into the shower. She made the civilian staff stand and watch over me. I was naked. She turned away and laughed as she walked out.

### *School*

15. My earliest memory of Smyllum was my first day at school. I was provided with my uniform by the nuns. The primary school was within the grounds of Smyllum. It was a big building with a long corridor. The classes were separated by partitions. When you moved up a year, you went into the next classroom. We were not given a

specific teacher for each class. You would get specific teachers on certain days that taught you different subjects.

16. For high school, we took the bus to St Aidan's High School in Wishaw. We were given a bus pass. I preferred the high school to the primary school. Some of the other kids were not nice to us when they found out we were in care. They treated us differently. The teachers were kind to us, they seemed sympathetic. I left school at the end of my 4<sup>th</sup> year.
17. I got the belt in high school, everyone did at that time. [REDACTED] I would [REDACTED] and I got the belt for that. I also got the belt when the teacher thought I had been smoking. I have never smoked. [REDACTED] had been smoking and she dropped her cigarette. I bent down to pick it up and the teacher thought it was me that had been smoking. I didn't get the belt that often.
18. Sister Margaret was a nun at the high school. She would keep an eye on us. I kept out of her way. I didn't get involved with her.

#### *Food*

19. A lot of the kids in the home didn't like vegetables. If you didn't eat the vegetables, you would get served them in the morning. By that time, the food was cold. We learned how to hide the food so that the nuns would think we had eaten it. We would hide the food in hankies. The nuns would also force-feed you food. They would hold your nose and use a spoon to shove the food in your mouth. I can't remember the food being very good to start with. As time went on the food did get better. It just depended what staff were on at the time. I also probably got used to the food as I got older.

#### *Leisure time*

20. We would watch television when we had any free time. I occasionally remember getting to play with toys, it depended on how good you were. We only got books or

comics to read when we were at school. I remember [REDACTED] gave me a book for my Christmas. I was reading it in bed. There were shutters in the room but some light came in. Sister [REDACTED] AEG dragged me out my bed and she hit me for reading.

21. We were given pocket money. My pocket money was always restricted as I was always getting in trouble. When I was about six or seven years old, I got about 25p. Then it was increased to 50p; then it went up to 75p.
22. When you misbehaved, the nuns made you give some of your pocket money for the "black babies". I think this was a charity. There was a box like a bank with a wee hand on it. They would make you place your money on the hand and it would go into the box.

#### *Holidays/trips*

23. We were taken to Girvan in Ayrshire for our holidays. We stayed in a hotel-type place called St Anne's. There was a school there where we used to go and have our meals. We didn't do any activities. We were taken to the beach and that was about it.
24. At the weekends, some of the staff would take us to the shops. That was only if they could be bothered taking us out. If they didn't want to take us out, we stayed in and watched television or films.
25. Sometimes, a couple of us would be taken to this lady's house. It was nice there. She would take us out for the day and we would go shopping. I enjoyed that. I don't know who this lady was.

#### *Chores*

26. There were staff in the house that would do most of the cleaning. They were around all the weekdays but didn't work the weekends. If you misbehaved, you had to help out with the household chores. The younger ones didn't have to do the chores. The

nuns would make you do the dishes, make the beds, tidy up, wash the floors and mop the floors. Sometimes if you were really bad, the nuns would make you scrub the floors with a scrubbing brush. I had to do this when I was cheeky to one of the staff. It depended what age you were, what kind of chores you were given.

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

27. I remember that the nuns did celebrate the kids' birthdays and there would be parties. If you were friends with kids from the other houses, you could invite them over for your birthday. I remember one year, Sister AEG forgot my birthday. ABZ who was in the same house as me, had his birthday just before mine. I asked him what he got for his birthday and he told me what he got. He then asked me what I got and I told him that Sister AEG had forgotten so I didn't get anything. Sister AEG heard me say this to ABZ and I got battered for saying that she forgot. She told me that I wasn't to talk about her.
28. When I was younger, I spent Christmas within Smyllum. There were big parties organised for all the care homes and I remember being taken by bus to these parties.
29. Sister AEG would put up some sort of decorations for Christmas. She would put up trees and some sort of manger. That was about it.
30. We did get presents for Christmas. One year I got a Tiny Tears doll. got a cradle. I kept playing with the cradle. I put my Tiny Tears doll in the cradle and got upset. I told that I kept playing with it because that was what I really wanted. I was about eight years old at the time.
31. Once I reached high school, I went home for the Christmas holidays. I would go back to my dad's house. On the last day of school before Christmas, I would pack my bag and I would leave straight from school to my dad's house. I didn't go back to Smyllum until the start of school again in the new year.

*Religion*

32. Religion was part of our everyday in Smyllum. We were actually brainwashed. We got religious instruction every day. Even in the primary school they would go on about religion. We had to say our prayers every morning. One night, Sister [REDACTED] AEG made me say twenty rosaries to try and stop me from bed-wetting. It was her form of punishment. It didn't work. I still wet the bed that night.
33. We were taken to mass every Sunday. During Lent, we went to mass every day. There was a chapel in the big house at Smyllum.
34. Religion was not such a big deal when we got to high school. It was really only when we were within Smyllum itself.

*Visits/Inspections*

35. My dad and [REDACTED] would come to visit me. It had to be a pre-arranged visit. They would come on a Saturday. They didn't visit very often. I remember one time they came to visit and they were not allowed to see [REDACTED] they had not booked a visit. My family were told that the nuns had already made plans for [REDACTED] to be someplace else. They had travelled from Paisley and were not allowed to see [REDACTED]. Sometimes, the nuns would tell me that I was getting a visit and no one would show up. I found out later that my family were told not to come. They were told that I was ill or was not up to getting a visit. This was simply not true. When we did get a visit, my family would take [REDACTED] out to a café. They didn't bring us any presents.
36. The nuns would also listen into our conversations on the telephone. One time, my [REDACTED] phoned me. [REDACTED] She said that she was sending me a postal order with a £1 in it. I never received it. I think Sister [REDACTED] AEG took it before I could get it.

37. Mr O'Brien was one of my social workers. He would visit every six months or so. Sister [REDACTED] AEG always sat with us when we were speaking to him. We were not allowed to see him on our own. I remember one boy tried to tell his social worker what was going on and he got hit later for trying. I think I was about six or seven when I first had a visit from my social worker.
38. Mr O'Brien would ask what I did during the day. He asked if I had any friends. I was never asked about my welfare. We just knew not to say anything about the abuse. Sister [REDACTED] AEG never specifically told us not to say anything but we knew what we would get if we did say something. I remember I once threatened Sister [REDACTED] AEG that I was going to see the social worker and tell him we were getting hit. I got hit by Sister [REDACTED] AEG for that.

#### *Inspections*

39. I have no recollection of the place ever being inspected. I'm not aware of anyone official coming to the place to inspect it.

#### *Medical care*

40. There was a doctor called Dr Allan who would come to the home. We would have medical examinations. He didn't see me that often. I was taken to a clinic because of my bed-wetting. Sister [REDACTED] AEG would come with me. She would stay in the room while I was being examined.
41. I was taken regularly to see the dentist in Lanark. I went about every six months. I remember one time he was drilling a tooth at the front of my mouth, and he drilled into my lip. There was blood everywhere. I have never been to see a dentist since because of this incident.
42. I was never told about my period. When my period came, the staff called me a "clatty bitch" because I never told them. I just dealt with it myself. Sister [REDACTED] AEG found out I had started my periods when she saw the blood on my pants. She got

me into trouble for not telling her. I was not supplied with sanitary towels. When I went home, I would steal some of my sister's sanitary towels and bring them back to the home with me.

### *Personal possessions*

43. Any personal possessions that I had, Sister [AEG] would end up taking them from me. I remember having a double bed when I went to high school. I got this as a staff member had left, and I got the bed. Sister [AEG] ended up taking it from me. I also had a chain. I was sharing a room with [REDACTED] at the time. I had left the chain lying out and when I went back to get it, it was gone. Sister [AEG] took it. She also gave me an alarm clock. She took that off me too.

### **Abuse**

44. My earliest memory of abuse was when I was about six years old. The older kids would wake us up at about one o'clock in the morning. They would balance us on the bannister and give us a tablet. The tablet was to stop us from wetting the bed. It was an orange-tasting tablet. If you didn't take the tablet, the older kids would hit you.
45. The older kids would also bully the younger kids. When I was younger, the older kids would lock the younger kids in a cupboard. Sometimes we were left there for a couple of hours. They would come and get us out when they knew the nuns were coming. I was only six or seven when this happened. When I was moved to another house, this kind of bullying stopped. I think that Sister [AEG] was aware of the bullying.
46. There was an older girl called either [REDACTED] [FBK]. She used to try and get the younger girls into bed with her. I was only about six at the time and she was about fourteen or fifteen. She would try and get us to touch her all over her body. Sometimes I would go into her bed with her and I would get hit by Sister [AEG] for

going into the bed. She would get hit as well for getting me into her bed. I told Sister [AEG] about what I was being asked to do. She must have believed me as [FBK] was moved to another house.

47. Sister [AEG] locked me out the house one night. I was left to stand on the porch. I wasn't wearing any socks. She came to get me at 11.30pm. She told me she had forgotten about me. I was all wet. I was about eleven or twelve when this happened.
48. All the abuse was physical. I got hit all the time. If I was cheeky to a member of staff they would hit you. Sister [AEG] would take you upstairs to the staff room. She would use the clothes brush or the belt. The belt was an ordinary belt. She would hit you on the body, on the back or the sides. You would be hit over your clothes. This would happen to me about two or three times a week.
49. It felt like we were being punished all the time. The punishments you got depended on what you did wrong. The least form of punishment was getting shouted at. You would get punished by the nuns and the civilian members of staff. When you were really bad Sister [AEG] would take you up to the staff room and hit you with a large clothes brush. I remember it well. It was burgundy and had no bristles on it.
50. In primary school, the teachers would hit and slap you. They would also pull you by the hair. One teacher hit me and burst my nose. Her name was [FBL]. She was one of my teachers all the way through primary school. The teachers in the primary school all lived outside of Smyllum. I think they all stayed in Lanark.
51. [FBM] was a civilian member of staff. She used to beat me. When I was about eleven or twelve I was cheeky to her. She kicked me on both sides of my body and I got appendicitis. I was in agony. I was sick and couldn't eat my food. Sister [AEG] did not know what was wrong with me. I couldn't tell her. [FBM] had threatened me. She told me that if I told Sister [AEG] what had happened, then she would lose her job. She also told me that she would come back and get me. I

was too frightened to tell Sister [AEG] what was wrong with me. I was never taken to a hospital for treatment.

52. The civilian staff would sit in the kitchen and discuss who they were going to pick on. I heard them. I heard them say things like "Who can we pick on the day? Who haven't we picked on all week".

53. I remember one occasion when I was washing my hair. A member of staff took my glasses and hid them. I looked everywhere for them. Sister [AEG] hit me for losing my glasses. She slapped me and pulled me by the hair. She told me to find my glasses. They were later returned to me. The staff were horrible. I remember some of their names. There was [FBN], [FBO], [AGT], [FBP] and [FBQ]. They would slap you on the face if you were cheeky to them. The civilian staff would abuse us all the time. They would do it in front of other children. They were nice to us when the nuns were there.

54. [AGT] one of the civilian members of staff, once whacked me with a metal strainer on the back of my legs. She nearly burst the veins on the back of my legs. There was a big red mark where she had hit me. She told me to keep putting cold water on it to calm the redness down. She wouldn't let me go back to school that day because you could clearly see the marks on my legs.

55. I also saw other kids getting battered by the staff and Sister [AEG], [AEG], who was also a kid in Smyllum, ran a bath and forgot about it. The bath overflowed and the ceiling came in. I remember seeing Sister [AEG] battering [redacted] with a belt, she pulled her hair. She also kicked her up and down the hall. [redacted] was about twelve or thirteen at the time. Sister [AEG] actually apologised to [redacted] after. Sister [AEG] realised she had gone over the score.

56. Sister [AEG] was the only nun that assaulted me. There were hundreds of nuns about the place. The nuns were all assigned their own house. I don't know what was going on in the other houses. When Sister [AEG] went on holiday, Sister Vincent would look after us. She was really nice. She didn't make a fuss when you

wet your bed. She would run you a warm bath and clean the sheets for you. She did not punish us.

57. I was friendly with Sister Irene. She was nice. She was learning to drive and she was not very good at it. I used to go out in the car with her. None of the other kids would go out with her. When I was about fourteen, she took me out in the car. When I leaned over to put my seatbelt on, she saw bruising on my stomach. She knew what was going on. She said 'I'll make sure that won't happen to you again.' She kept her word. The physical assaults stopped after that.

### Reporting of abuse

58. I never told anyone about the abuse. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Sister AEG must have been listening in as I got hit for talking about it on the phone. I never spoke about it again.
59. I've never spoken to anyone about my time in Smyllum. I just thought no one would believe me. I thought people would use my words and turn them against me. I find that social workers pretend they are listening and are interested, but they twist your words and use them against you.

### Leaving the institution

60. Smyllum was being closed down. This was about 1980 or 1981. I was about fifteen years old. There was a big meeting with the nuns and it was decided that I would go and stay with [REDACTED]. There were no social workers at this meeting. I think [REDACTED] was about thirty years old at the time. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I had been going to [REDACTED] for the holidays so the nuns probably thought that was the best place for me. I didn't want to go. I felt like I couldn't say that I didn't want to go. It was either go to [REDACTED] or be kept in care.

61. I went to stay with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] I hated it there. I would get the blame for anything that happened in the house. [REDACTED], [REDACTED] broke a window and I got the blame for that. [REDACTED] also used me as a babysitter all the time. She would go out to the bingo all the time, and I would be left looking after her kids.

### **Life after Smyllum**

62. I left school when I went to stay with [REDACTED] and her family. I got a Youth Training Scheme placement for two years. I later moved in with [REDACTED] I was seventeen at the time. I thought [REDACTED] wouldn't let me move out because I was paying her money. I was getting paid £25 per week and I was giving [REDACTED] £10 from that per week.
63. I was seventeen when I moved in with [REDACTED] and life was a lot better. I had been sharing a room in [REDACTED] house with some of her kids. I had had no privacy. I had a boyfriend and [REDACTED] didn't like it. She always wanted to know what I was doing.

### **Impact**

64. I don't trust people and I don't know how to love. I was never shown any love in Smyllum or at home. I find relationships difficult. I got married for all the wrong reasons. My first husband had a house so I moved in with him. I thought that I had found someone who loved me and decided to get married. I was only nineteen years old.
65. The abuse does have an impact on people's lives. I have never been able to develop a normal sleeping pattern as I was constantly being woken up at night to take tablets for the bed-wetting.

66. I suffer from depression and I currently take anti-depressants. I've always suffered from depression. I never sought professional help, I just deal with it. I started to take the anti-depressants in 2009. This was when my two youngest children were taken off me by the social work department.

67. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] My social worker in 2009, Evelyn Ferry, told me that she had been a social worker at Smyllum. I asked her what did she do about the abuse of the children there. She changed towards me shortly after that. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] The social work department gave me various reasons as to why [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] They were all rubbish. I know the real reason. It's because I asked Evelyn Ferry about what she did about the abuse in Smyllum.

68. I have four children. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

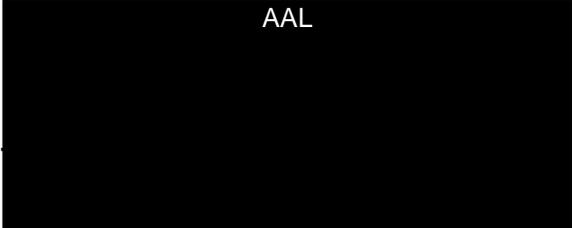
69. I have never received counselling for the abuse I received in Smyllum. I feel down all the time. I think I would benefit from counselling. I've never spoken to a doctor about my time in care.

**Records**

70. I don't think I want to see my records. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] I don't really want to see my records, I don't want reminded. I know how to get them if I want them.

**Hopes for the Inquiry**

- 71. My hopes for the Inquiry are that no one else will have to go through what I went through as a child. I would like to think that adults that are put in charge can be trusted and that they are not there to abuse children.
  
- 72. I came forward to give my evidence to the Inquiry as I saw something on the television about Smyllum. There was a man talking about the abuse he received as a child and there were people denying that the children were abused. I'm coming forward to tell the Inquiry about the abuse. I want to verify the story of others that the nuns and civilian staff did hit us and we were abused.
  
- 73. 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.....  
 AAL

Dated..... 17-6-2017