

## Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry

Witness Statement of

AAN

Support person present: Yes.

1. My name is [REDACTED] AAN [REDACTED] My date of birth is [REDACTED] 1964. My contact details are known to the Inquiry.

### Life before going into care

2. I was the youngest of seven children. I was 3 or 4 when I went into care and I have no memory of my life before care. My sister, [REDACTED] told me things subsequently. As far as I'm lead to believe, my dad was an alcoholic and my mum couldn't cope. We lived in Springburn in Glasgow. My brother [REDACTED] was taken into care as well, but I'm not sure if we went in together. My sister, [REDACTED] was also in Smyllum but she was in a different part.

### Smyllum, Lanark

3. I think there were a couple of hundred children in Smyllum. It had its own primary school. It was mixed, boys and girls, but the dormitories were segregated. The ages ranged from my age to sixteen.

## **Routine at Smyllum**

### *Mornings and bedtime*

4. We were told when to get up. It was like a regime. They woke us up about seven o'clock. We made our beds, had our breakfast, brushed our teeth, combed our hair, put our school uniform on and then we walked to the bus for school.
5. We were told when to go to bed. I remember getting to stay up to watch the A-Team. At the weekend, I think we went to bed at about 8 o'clock. It was earlier on a school night. There were dormitories with about 6 to 8 beds on one side and rooms with 4 beds on the other side. They'd come in and check we were sleeping. It was just like that every day.

### *Food*

6. The food wasn't bad. It was actually better than when I was on holiday three weeks ago. The nuns used to make it themselves, in the big kitchen downstairs. If you didn't eat your food, it'd be sitting there in the morning for you to eat. You had no choice but to eat it and you didn't get any other breakfast.

### *School*

7. There was a primary school in Smyllum itself. It was ran by nuns. I hated it. The regime was the same as in the home. It was part of their land and they could do whatever they wanted. I think it was just one big classroom with seats going right to the back. I recall that Sister FBE was one of the teachers. I remember there was a box called the black samba baby box being passed around to collect money for charity.
8. When we reached secondary school age, we had to go to Motherwell to the nearest Catholic school. We got the number 240 bus. There was a school in Carluke and there was a school in Lanark, but because they weren't Catholic we weren't allowed

to go to those schools. We went to Our Lady's High School. We wore a purple school uniform. I got the belt a lot there too, except there it was big, strapping men belting me. The staff and pupils knew we were from Smyllum. People would know where we got on the bus. We were the poor relations and we were treated differently. I did quite well at school.

### *Clothes*

9. We wore a uniform for school. I don't remember a uniform at Smyllum. I do remember that our other clothes were always hand-me-downs.

### *Laundry*

10. We had a laundry and we washed the clothes ourselves. I remember using the big wrangler.

### *Washing*

11. I think we had a bath about three times a week. I remember the oldest or tallest would go first in the bath first. We would share the water so it was always dirty by the time it got to me.

### *Leisure time*

12. After dinner, we could watch TV or go outside. We had a black and white TV. I remember some Protestants moved into another part of the home. I don't think the nuns were in charge of them. It was as though the nuns had rented out a part of the home to them. I remember they had a colour TV. I couldn't understand why they could afford a colour TV and we had to put up with the black and white one.
13. The grounds were huge. The orphanage had its own land. I remember there were swings. We had our own football pitch and I played football. I'm sure we used to play

matches at the weekends. When I was older, about 11 or 12, I was allowed to walk into Lanark itself, as long as I told the nuns and let them know when I'd be back.

### *Holidays*

14. We went on the 'Sunshine Bus' with the Variety Club. We went to Girvan for a week. The nuns ran a place close to Girvan shore. I think that happened a few times.

### *Religious instruction*

15. It was all about religion. We had to say our prayers in the morning and say our prayers at night. We had to kneel by our beds and the nuns would walk by and check we were doing it. We had to say the rosary. We had to make our first confession, our first communion and get confirmed. We had no choice in the matter. We had to be dying before we didn't go to the chapel on a Sunday. I was an altar boy. It was, "God's this, God's that, God's great." I don't believe in any of it. I haven't been to the chapel since I left.

### *Chores*

16. I remember helping the handy man out, doing some of the gardening. I think we did washing in the kitchens and scrubbing the floors with a brown brush. We got pocket money for doing that.

### *Birthdays and Christmas*

17. I remember being given a second hand bike by my social worker, Mrs Henry. I think it was for my birthday. I can remember somebody saying, "Happy birthday," but that's as far as I can remember.
18. I remember spending Christmas at Smyllum. It was just a normal day. The presents weren't up to much. You got a tangerine in a sock, but back then half the world got

that. I remember there being a Christmas tree, but I don't remember it being decorated.

### *Visits/Inspections*

19. I didn't get any visits at all. I remember an old bag lady turning up at the home, pushing a pram. Somebody said, "That's your Mum." I never thought anything of it. Years later, my sister told me that my Mum had actually turned up but the nuns wouldn't let her see us. My oldest brother, [REDACTED] had also turned up but the nuns wouldn't let him see us either.
20. Mrs Henry, my social worker would turn up once a year.

### *Healthcare*

21. I think the nuns did the healthcare. I remember falling and getting a plaster put on. The nuns just yanked it off. There was no, "One, two, three," or anything like that. I don't remember seeing a doctor when I was younger.

### *Siblings*

22. I remember my brother [REDACTED] being there at the same time as me. He was in the same building but he wasn't in the same room as me. He's older than me by two years. I would see him every other day. I remember getting into fights and he would stick up for me. My sister, [REDACTED] was also there. I don't think we had any contact within the home. I just knew she was there.

### *Foster care*

23. When I was about 10 or 11, they tried to foster me out a couple of times, but it never worked. One of the foster carers was in Uddingston. He was a scout leader and he took me to Peebles for a scouting trip. It lasted about two weeks. Then they tried to foster me to somebody else and it lasted about the same length of time. [REDACTED]

came with me to one of the foster carers. You didn't have a choice. I think people would turn up and say they wanted to foster a child and the nuns would tell them to pick. I remember being told I was going to stay with these people and I remember being back in the home. I didn't know why because nobody told me anything. One day, I was with the foster carers and the next day, I wasn't.

### **Abuse at Smyllum**

24. If we didn't do what the nuns wanted, then it wasn't a nice regime. The first time I was leathered I was about six years old, but I didn't know it was going to continue. The way it felt was that I couldn't do anything right. I had a stutter for quite a few years. I couldn't pronounce one of the nun's names, so I got hit by a belt. The nun whose name I couldn't pronounce was called [REDACTED] FBE [REDACTED] She was quite old, but it was another nun who belted me. It was a two pronged, big leather one. When we got leathered, it wasn't just a hit, it was a proper beating. They hit us all over our bodies, but 99% of the time it wouldn't be on our faces. It wasn't just a wee skelp, we would be red raw.
25. If we didn't make our beds properly every day, we got leathered. The bed had to be made like an army bed. The four corners had to be folded down at an angle, almost like you could bounce a coin off it. I had to learn how to do it.
26. There were old radiators with the pipes running along the side of the wall. If we wet the bed, we had to put the sheet over our heads and stand next to the radiator until we dried. That was a regular occurrence. Basically, they would react violently to everything we did. Because I started when I was young, I wet the bed a lot.
27. I lost my slippers one day. Being a good Catholic boy, I kneeled and prayed to God, saying I'd lost my slippers. I got absolutely leathered. Then I found them the next day and I got leathered for finding them, because I shouldn't have lost them. Everything was just a leathering, no matter what we did. It was either by a belt, a stick or whatever they had to hand.

28. The nuns used to put books on us when they belted us. If the books fell, they belted us again.
29. Back then, they wore the old habits. If we saw a nun's hair, it resulted in the worst leathering we ever got. If we went to a nun's door because we needed help, we would get leathered if she answered the door and we saw her hair. That happened to me about three times. I keep telling myself there must have been some good nuns. There must have been. I just never met any of them.
30. We went to the pictures to watch Herbie. I cracked my teeth. My two front teeth were chipped and knocked out. Because I missed the picture and one of the nuns missed it as well, I got leathered for that. It took me years to get my teeth fixed.
31. We had to go to Motherwell for secondary school because it was the nearest Catholic secondary school. It was a forty minute bus journey. One day, I missed the bus. I got a proper leathering. That's why I'm never late for anything. I don't remember any good times. There must have been good times, but I don't remember the good times. The bad times just outweigh them.
32. There was a [REDACTED] called [REDACTED] BAC I don't know his last name. He'd ask me to look at his hand and then skelp me with the other one.
33. They had to discipline people, but what they did wasn't discipline, it was putting the fear of God into you. And the fear of God did go into you. It was a regular occurrence. Physical abuse happened to me 3, 4, 5 times a month and I saw it happen to others as well. It was quite sad, because I'd be grateful if I saw somebody else getting hit because it wasn't me. If we didn't do as we were told, we got skelped by whatever was to hand. Just as somebody might have milk in their coffee, that was what they did. It was as routine as that. By the end of it, I just did as I was told to stop that happening.

34. I think the beatings stopped when I got older. I think they laid off and started on the younger ones. Maybe it was because I was bigger or because I could talk back. They'd start to leave you alone and move onto the next lot. The overall emotion I remember feeling was hatred.
35. When I was 6 or 7, older girls started having sex with me. They were about 14 or 15 years old. It didn't happen every night, but it happened regularly until I left Smyllum. I just thought it was normal and everybody did it. I don't remember the girls' names. We would have sex in the dormitories and in the cupboards.
36. I remember a female member of staff also started having sex with me. I'm not sure when that started but it continued until I left. I don't remember her name. She was between 25 and 35 and she worked [REDACTED] within the home.
37. I started having sex with another girl in Smyllum when I was about fourteen. She was a similar age to me. I just thought it was normal and didn't realise there was anything wrong until I was an adult.
38. I don't remember any of the nuns coming across anybody having sex. However, it was going on so much that the nuns must have known about it.

### **Leaving Smyllum**

39. I left when I was fourteen. My sister, [REDACTED] was staying in Dunoon at the time and I went to stay with her. She had married [REDACTED] [REDACTED] stayed at Smyllum because he was doing things at school. He got out about a year later. [REDACTED] came to fetch me in a car with her husband and we drove to Dunoon. I don't know how it came about, I was just glad. [REDACTED]

### **Reporting of abuse at Smyllum**

40. At the time, I didn't feel I could go to anybody. The nuns were Gods and that was it. My social worker would pop up and say hello once a year, but I didn't say anything to her. I'm sure it was at the back of my mind that she'd tell the nuns and then I'd get left there and I'd definitely get leathered. I didn't tell anybody for years because there was nobody to tell and I didn't think anybody would listen. I told my ex-partner, [REDACTED] years later.
41. I've never reported any of the abuse to the police. I joined a group from Smyllum that tried to take a prosecution against the nuns. There were 450, 500 of us. It was time-barred so I was really annoyed about that. I gave part of a statement to the solicitor, Cameron Fyfe, in Glasgow. Then the case was time-barred so there was no point in going further. I think I prepared the statement myself and sent it in.

### **Life after Smyllum**

42. I started school [REDACTED] I got into two fights in my first forty-eight hours because I was the new guy. One guy came up and punched me, so I just kept on kicking him. The next day his pal did the same, so I kicked him as well. I put both of them in hospital and nobody bothered me again. My best subjects were chemistry and biology, but they couldn't fit me into those classes [REDACTED] so I left school with nothing. After being there for six months, I thought there was no point so I left school.
43. I did odd jobs when I left school. I worked in the amusements in town for a few years. Then I went to college and trained as a chef. I worked in an old folks' home for about eleven years. Then I thought, I'd grown up in a home and worked in a home. I didn't want to die in a home so I packed the job in. I've been a postman for nearly twelve years.
44. I've lived in the same house [REDACTED] for 25, 30 years. I have a son, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] He lives with [REDACTED] but I see him all the time.

## Impact

45. Every day of my life, being in Smyllum impacts upon me. Up until now, I was able to put everything in a box that I didn't want to open. I've forgotten quite a lot and I'm pleased about that. I don't think I want to remember the nuns' names. I could shut the box and I'd be fine, but once the box is open you start realising that it's not a healthy way of thinking. It's taken me years to learn that.
46. I was always violent when I was younger. I think that when you're brought up with violence, you retaliate with violence. Smyllum was a violent place. I think they should have burnt the whole building down, but they turned it into flats.
47. Being in Smyllum affected my health. A few years ago, I drank too much. I also gambled. It took me two years to go to my doctor and ask for help. I saw a psychiatrist about eighteen years ago, but there's not much help out there. Recently, I've been struggling to cope with everything. I've been asking for help from my work [REDACTED] but they've done nothing. I didn't want to go to my GP but I knew I had to ask for help. I asked to get signed off work because I need time to process everything. The GP told me I needed to go to work because that's what I get paid for. I wouldn't leave without getting a sick note and eventually he signed me off for four weeks. When I gave the sick note to my employer, it said that I had "stress related to childhood abuse". Now [REDACTED] managers are aware that I was abused when I did not want it known.
48. I didn't know my parents. I met my Dad, [REDACTED] at his funeral. I met my Mum, [REDACTED] on the same day and by that time she had dementia. She died about two years later. I met my oldest brother, [REDACTED] at my Dad's funeral as well. It was strange at the funeral because people were crying. He was my Dad and I didn't have any feelings at all.
49. My sisters [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] live in [REDACTED] still have contact with [REDACTED] My other sister, [REDACTED] lives in [REDACTED] and my brother, [REDACTED] lives in [REDACTED] I have no

contact with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] or [REDACTED] I'm not even sure if [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] are still alive, but I've not heard otherwise. My brother [REDACTED] lives in [REDACTED]. He's got a lot of issues but he doesn't realise it. He's not very well.

50. I find it very hard to trust people. I'm not very good at communicating. Instead of showing my anger, I'll just go quiet and I don't say anything. That bothers other people but it doesn't bother me because it's my way of dealing with things. I just shut down. It's affected me negatively as I don't think it's a healthy way of dealing with things.
51. Being in Smyllum has had an effect on my relationships. I find it easy to walk away from things. There were things done in the home to me and things I did in the home that I didn't realise were wrong at the time. When I was older and realised what actually happened, I thought that one day the police would chap on the door and I'd go to jail. I'd get into a relationship and then I'd think, "Somebody's going to chap on that door one day: I need to finish this." So I'd end the relationship and move onto the next one. Then the same thing would happen. It's a disaster. It's always at the back of my mind and it'll never go away.

### **Records**

52. I tried to find my Dad through the Salvation Army. They helped me try to obtain my records, but Glasgow City Council told me they didn't have them.

### **Hopes for the Inquiry**

53. I wouldn't want it to happen to anybody else. Children should be asked what they want and what they need. What an adult thinks a child needs is not always what the child wants.

- 54. There was no duty of care of me when I was in the home. For the next generation, please let there be a duty of care.

**Other information**

- 55. 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.....  AAN .....

Dated..... 5/9/2017 .....