

<p>1 Wednesday, 1 July 2020</p> <p>2 (10.30 am)</p> <p>3 THE CHAIR: Welcome, everyone, to Day 3 of this public</p> <p>4 hearing. Ms Langdale?</p> <p>5 MS LANGDALE: Good morning, chair. Today we are due to hear</p> <p>6 from complainant core participants. LA-A309 is unable</p> <p>7 to give oral evidence, so we will start with the</p> <p>8 evidence of LA-A323.</p> <p>9 Chair, this may impact upon our timings and breaks</p> <p>10 through the day, but perhaps we can say something about</p> <p>11 that after the evidence of LA-A323, who I know is</p> <p>12 available to give evidence, and I don't want to keep her</p> <p>13 waiting.</p> <p>14 So, if we can, Mr Hughes, swear in LA-A323.</p> <p>15 WITNESS LA-A323 (Affirmed)</p> <p>16 Examination by MS LANGDALE</p> <p>17 MS LANGDALE: LA-A323, you and I will not be using names</p> <p>18 today. I am obviously using a number to protect your</p> <p>19 identity. We also are not going to refer to people by</p> <p>20 name where they haven't been convicted of a criminal</p> <p>21 offence, and some other family friends as well, so as</p> <p>22 not to identify them and, therefore, you.</p> <p>23 If we make a mistake, either of us, I can ask the</p> <p>24 chair to make a restriction order over the evidence you</p> <p>25 have incorrectly given, so I don't want that to distract</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 1</p>	<p>1 you too much. There is the possibility to do that. We</p> <p>2 are not live streaming. But just to remind you at the</p> <p>3 outset, that is how we are going to be talking.</p> <p>4 We have your statement. Do you have your statement</p> <p>5 in front of you?</p> <p>6 <b>A. Yes.</b></p> <p>7 Q. Dated 26 May 2020. Can you say at the outset, confirm</p> <p>8 for us, that that's true and accurate, so far as you</p> <p>9 remember?</p> <p>10 <b>A. That's true and accurate, yes.</b></p> <p>11 Q. Thank you. You say at the beginning of your statement</p> <p>12 that you, when you were born, from five days old, ended</p> <p>13 up in foster placements. Can you tell us, do you know</p> <p>14 now how many foster placements you were in before you</p> <p>15 went into care?</p> <p>16 <b>A. Three/four.</b></p> <p>17 Q. Different families?</p> <p>18 <b>A. Yes, different families.</b></p> <p>19 Q. One family friend, I think, became significant in your</p> <p>20 life, didn't she, later on? She had you in that period</p> <p>21 and she stayed in touch with you?</p> <p>22 <b>A. She was the first one to have me, yes.</b></p> <p>23 Q. You, when you were about 2 years old, went to</p> <p>24 Shirley Oaks?</p> <p>25 <b>A. Yes.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 2</p>
<p>1 Q. You were obviously very young, a toddler, at that age.</p> <p>2 Do you have any memories -- what are your first memories</p> <p>3 of what the place looked like? Let's deal with what it</p> <p>4 looked like and how it was?</p> <p>5 <b>A. It's really weird, I can only remember one room, and</b></p> <p>6 <b>that's -- well, two rooms, which is the blue room and</b></p> <p>7 <b>the dining room, and the rest of it is kind of a blur.</b></p> <p>8 Q. Do you know roughly how old you were when you left</p> <p>9 Shirley Oaks? I know you went backwards and forwards,</p> <p>10 but overall, how much time did you spend --</p> <p>11 <b>A. About three and a half, I think.</b></p> <p>12 Q. Did you spend most of your life in and out of care, your</p> <p>13 childhood?</p> <p>14 <b>A. Yes.</b></p> <p>15 Q. Where were your other placements? Do you know, roughly?</p> <p>16 Foster care or in different homes?</p> <p>17 <b>A. Family friend, foster care, and then home again, you</b></p> <p>18 <b>know, backwards and forwards, yes.</b></p> <p>19 Q. When you went to Shirley Oaks, you were so young I dare</p> <p>20 say you don't really remember other children there, do</p> <p>21 you? Or do you?</p> <p>22 <b>A. I have no recollection of anybody. It's really weird.</b></p> <p>23 <b>Apart from my sister. Yeah.</b></p> <p>24 Q. You tell us in your statement that you remember a house</p> <p>25 mother particularly at Musk House?</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 3</p>	<p>1 <b>A. Yes, yes.</b></p> <p>2 Q. Tell us about this house mother and how she treated you?</p> <p>3 <b>A. She didn't like me. She liked my sister, but really</b></p> <p>4 <b>didn't like me. She was horrible.</b></p> <p>5 Q. What sort of things do you remember her saying to you,</p> <p>6 or how --</p> <p>7 <b>A. She would tell me that I'm nothing. She would call me</b></p> <p>8 <b>a bastard all the time. I mean, I presume I must have</b></p> <p>9 <b>been really naughty, you know, because she would tell</b></p> <p>10 <b>everybody how naughty I was.</b></p> <p>11 Q. So you remember her humiliating you and telling other</p> <p>12 children about how you were?</p> <p>13 <b>A. Telling other -- a family friend that I was really</b></p> <p>14 <b>naughty, very naughty, yes.</b></p> <p>15 Q. So this family friend, who had been a foster carer</p> <p>16 briefly, did visit you there, did she?</p> <p>17 <b>A. Yes.</b></p> <p>18 Q. So she would get told this about you, that you were</p> <p>19 naughty and you were difficult?</p> <p>20 <b>A. Yes, yeah, because the house mother -- when the family</b></p> <p>21 <b>friend came to visit and I kept playing with my hair,</b></p> <p>22 <b>the house mother cut it all off the following week.</b></p> <p>23 Q. Did you have long hair before she cut it off?</p> <p>24 <b>A. Yes. Yeah, enough for bunches, you know, for bunches,</b></p> <p>25 <b>yes.</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Page 4</p>

1 Q. What did you used to do with the bunches? When you say  
 2 playing with your hair --  
 3 **A. I still do it now, you know, play with your hair, and**  
 4 **she was very annoyed that I kept playing with my hair,**  
 5 **and she said to the family friend, "That's all she**  
 6 **does", and the family friend said to her, "Well, she has**  
 7 **lovely hair", and then the next week, when the family**  
 8 **friend came, she'd cut it all off and I was dressed in**  
 9 **boys' clothes.**  
 10 Q. How did that make you feel?  
 11 **A. Looking back, it was -- I was just untrustworthy from**  
 12 **a very early age of adults, and still am. Yeah. Yeah.**  
 13 **Because it's just like, "Why treat me differently?" You**  
 14 **know, I still think -- I still look back and think,**  
 15 **"God, was I that naughty?"**  
 16 Q. So you found yourself then, and since, blaming yourself?  
 17 There you were, a little toddler, and you're asking that  
 18 question, are you?  
 19 **A. Yeah, and I still ask it now. I still ask it now. You**  
 20 **know, was I -- what was the difference between myself**  
 21 **and my sister that -- yeah, I don't know what it was.**  
 22 **I just think, I must have been just a really naughty**  
 23 **child, yeah.**  
 24 Q. Tell us about the house father? You say in your  
 25 statement -- it is paragraph 4 -- about something that

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1 **again, two weeks later, it happened again.**  
 2 Q. Did anyone ask you -- anyone -- how you'd got that  
 3 split?  
 4 **A. No, and I've always been quite vocal with the physical**  
 5 **abuse, always, because I always knew that that was**  
 6 **wrong, for some reason. Not the other, I didn't feel**  
 7 **that that was wrong. But with the physical, I was**  
 8 **always very vocal about how it happened. "That's**  
 9 **because he did this", and that's why that stuck in my**  
 10 **mind. And nobody ever took -- nobody ever took any**  
 11 **notice, no.**  
 12 Q. When you say "with the violence", I'm just focusing on  
 13 that for a minute, the violence, you knew it was wrong.  
 14 Explain to us, how did you know that was wrong, even as  
 15 a young child?  
 16 **A. Because, if you smacked somebody else, you got told off**  
 17 **for it. So, you know, if I smacked somebody, it was,**  
 18 **"That's naughty, you don't do that", but it was okay for**  
 19 **them to be doing what they did to me. So that kind**  
 20 **of -- that's how I knew, "Well, that's wrong, because**  
 21 **you tell me that's wrong". And that's kind of why it**  
 22 **stood out.**  
 23 Q. You also talk about having your hands bandaged up  
 24 because you bit your nails?  
 25 **A. Yes.**

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1 happened with the house father. Have a look at  
 2 paragraph 4. They're your words.  
 3 **A. Oh, yes. You see, this I remember very clearly, and he**  
 4 **threw me into the table and my eye split there**  
 5 **(indicating). I was took -- I don't know if I was took**  
 6 **to the doctor on Shirley Oaks or took to the hospital,**  
 7 **but I remember it was stitched up, and then, two weeks**  
 8 **later, it was done again, and it was stitched across**  
 9 **that way again, and they said that I was doing**  
 10 **a handstand and that's how it happened, and in the**  
 11 **second report I don't think it says about how I did it**  
 12 **at all.**  
 13 **Yeah, he was horrible. He was horrible.**  
 14 Q. So the suggestion, at two and a half, is that you were  
 15 doing a handstand, is it?  
 16 **A. Yes, yes. Yes.**  
 17 Q. And you don't remember that? How do you --  
 18 **A. Oh, I know I didn't do that. I remember him picking me**  
 19 **up and throwing me into the table leg. It was a big**  
 20 **table, because this is one of the rooms that sticks out**  
 21 **in my mind, and it was a big table -- well, maybe it**  
 22 **wasn't a big table, because I was little. But, yeah, he**  
 23 **threw me into that table and it split. It split.**  
 24 **I remember it being stitched up and I remember the big**  
 25 **light shining, you know, when they did it, and then,**

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1 Q. Tell us a bit about that? How were you biting your  
 2 nails? What did they look like?  
 3 **A. It was constant biting, and I still do it now. You**  
 4 **know, if I'm nervous, I'm chewing or -- and they didn't**  
 5 **like it, so they would bandage your hands up, literally**  
 6 **like that (indicating). They used to have big cots in**  
 7 **Shirley Oaks, you know, for under a certain age, and**  
 8 **you'd be just put in there and you couldn't touch**  
 9 **anything or do anything. Your hands were bandaged**  
 10 **because you bit your nails.**  
 11 Q. When you say "big cots", can you remember now what the  
 12 accommodation was like? How many cots or beds would be  
 13 in the same room?  
 14 **A. Not really. I know my sister was in the room with me.**  
 15 **But other children, very weirdly, I've completely**  
 16 **blanked out. It's very odd, yeah.**  
 17 Q. Do you remember any sort of learning or  
 18 nursery-type-style stuff at all, or not?  
 19 **A. No.**  
 20 Q. Nothing like that?  
 21 **A. No.**  
 22 Q. Do you remember what you did in your days? How your  
 23 days were filled?  
 24 **A. No. I can remember one thing, and there was a party for**  
 25 **somebody's birthday and I remember that I was made to**

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1 **sit on the floor for that, and I asked why I had to sit**  
 2 **on the floor, and there was another girl that had to sit**  
 3 **on the floor, and I remember this, and it was because we**  
 4 **were bastards that we had to sit on the floor.**  
 5 Q. So the house mother, then, was it the situation that the  
 6 house mother and the house father had a big influence on  
 7 the home, they were key figures for how the children --  
 8 **A. Oh, yeah, yeah. They were meant to be parents.**  
 9 Q. What did you have to call them? Did you say "house  
 10 mother"? I don't want their names, but were you asked  
 11 to say "house mother"?  
 12 **A. I can't tell you that for certain. I've always referred**  
 13 **to them, even as an adult, as "house mother", "house**  
 14 **father", so I can only assume that that's what I did,**  
 15 **yeah.**  
 16 Q. You tell us in your statement, in paragraph 6, about the  
 17 blue room and what that was like. Can you tell the  
 18 chair what the blue room was and how that was?  
 19 **A. It was a room that you were put in and locked in, and it**  
 20 **was dark, and you would be left there for hours and**  
 21 **hours and hours and hours in that room.**  
 22 Q. You tell us in your statement there was a time when your  
 23 family friend came to the home and she knew you'd been  
 24 in the blue room because --  
 25 **A. What had happened is that she had -- she brought me --**

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1 **were a nightmare.**  
 2 Q. Rice pudding, and you cannot bear the thought of it or  
 3 even looking at it and you were made to keep eating it?  
 4 **A. Yes.**  
 5 Q. Family meal times, of course, in a home environment is  
 6 something people should be enjoying together and having  
 7 conversation with each other. That was far from reality  
 8 for you, from what you are saying?  
 9 **A. Yes, far from reality. A chore. I think as well,**  
 10 **because I remember distinctly hiding biscuits in my**  
 11 **knickers to sneak to my sister, and I do remember being**  
 12 **sat at the table on my own, but I don't know if I really**  
 13 **was on my own or there were other children there.**  
 14 **I don't know if I'm just focusing on me. But**  
 15 **I remember, you know, having to sneak food for my**  
 16 **sister.**  
 17 Q. You then begin, at paragraph 10, to tell us in your  
 18 statement about an uncle, who was a house father but  
 19 referred to as an uncle, who came into your room at  
 20 night --  
 21 **A. Yes.**  
 22 Q. -- in Musk House.  
 23 **A. Yes.**  
 24 Q. Can you tell us how that started and what happened?  
 25 **A. I would wet myself a lot, so he would come in and he**

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1 **she took me out for the day and she brought me back, and**  
 2 **she said that I was screaming and she knew something was**  
 3 **wrong, and so she left me and she went and parked around**  
 4 **the corner, and she waited for a while and then came**  
 5 **back into the house and found me locked in the cupboard,**  
 6 **and I was screaming in the cupboard, and the house**  
 7 **mother said to her, "Oh, she must have done it when she**  
 8 **was hanging up her coat".**  
 9 Q. Do you think -- did the family friend accept that as an  
 10 explanation?  
 11 **A. No. She knew -- she knew that that wasn't right, but,**  
 12 **again, I don't think anything was done about it. She**  
 13 **told them, you know, "This isn't right", but it didn't**  
 14 **stop it. So I don't think, you know, anything happened**  
 15 **because of it.**  
 16 Q. You tell us about meal times and how they were.  
 17 **A. Meal times. I have an eating disorder, which I have now**  
 18 **had for most of my life, due to the same food being**  
 19 **served over and over and over until you ate it, and**  
 20 **there's one particular thing -- I can't even say the**  
 21 **word, but it's on my file, that I literally cannot face**  
 22 **because -- I just couldn't eat it, and I think it was**  
 23 **about day 4 or day 5 -- I could be wrong, it could be**  
 24 **a bit longer or a bit shorter, but eventually I had to**  
 25 **eat that, and obviously I was sick, yeah. Meal times**

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1 **said that he was checking that we hadn't wet ourselves,**  
 2 **and it would start from there.**  
 3 Q. So when he came in and said, "I'm checking you haven't  
 4 wet yourself", what would he do?  
 5 **A. He would pull the cover back -- it was them older**  
 6 **blankets in them days, you know the --**  
 7 Q. Yes.  
 8 **A. And he would pull that back, and it was nighties as**  
 9 **well, that would be lifted and then he would -- yeah.**  
 10 Q. Touch you and say that he was checking that?  
 11 **A. Yes, yes.**  
 12 Q. You say these memories are embedded in your brain and  
 13 you know it happened more than a couple of times?  
 14 **A. Oh, God, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.**  
 15 Q. How did that feel at the time? Did you know -- you say  
 16 with the violence that you knew the violence was wrong.  
 17 When he was doing this, what did you make of that, as  
 18 such a young child?  
 19 **A. This is going to sound really weird, but it just felt**  
 20 **normal because I didn't know it was wrong. It just felt**  
 21 **that that's what happened. It didn't feel -- it didn't**  
 22 **feel wrong because I didn't know it was wrong, yes.**  
 23 Q. So you didn't know what sexual abuse was?  
 24 **A. No.**  
 25 Q. You were a very young child.

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1 **A. Yes.**  
 2 Q. In terms of being touched, and what children now might  
 3 be protected against by "good touching", "bad touching",  
 4 "red flag", "green flag", nothing like that, no-one had  
 5 ever discussed with you what touching was permissible or  
 6 not permissible?  
 7 **A. No, no.**  
 8 Q. You had no idea?  
 9 **A. No, none whatsoever. I knew I didn't like it, but**  
 10 **I didn't think it was wrong.**  
 11 Q. Was this uncle, as far as you were concerned, an  
 12 authority figure, somebody who came in and had control  
 13 of the situation and you were a young child, you think  
 14 he's in charge. How was it?  
 15 **A. He's a big adult and he was in the home a lot. He was**  
 16 **there a lot. So he was part of the adults. You know,**  
 17 **it wasn't a complete stranger that was coming into the**  
 18 **room that would, you know, make it even more -- this was**  
 19 **a grown man that I saw constantly in the home, yeah.**  
 20 Q. He did this at night? He'd come in at night and do  
 21 this?  
 22 **A. Yes, yes, always at night, yeah.**  
 23 Q. Would you know -- again, you would be too young, but  
 24 looking back, are there likely to have been other adults  
 25 around the home, then, or was this -- wouldn't you know?

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1 **about six, and by this age it just felt that that's what**  
 2 **happens to me, and we lived on an estate where they**  
 3 **had -- you know, like, the concrete windows in the**  
 4 **alleys?**  
 5 Q. Yes.  
 6 **A. He would hold me up there and I would just look out the**  
 7 **window and I would think about all different sorts of**  
 8 **things while he was doing what he was doing, and then he**  
 9 **would give me 5p.**  
 10 Q. As you describe that, you describe a real detachment --  
 11 **A. Yes.**  
 12 Q. -- that you were put up there. Looking back now, how  
 13 did that feel? What did your body feel like to you?  
 14 **A. Not mine. Not mine. My body never felt like it was**  
 15 **mine for a long time. Yeah, for many years.**  
 16 Q. Then, when you shared that with your mum, she slaps you  
 17 and says, "We don't talk about that"?  
 18 **A. Yes.**  
 19 Q. Again, looking back, do you have any sense whether that  
 20 was because she didn't believe you or she believed you  
 21 and wanted to shut it down, didn't want to know or deal  
 22 with that?  
 23 **A. I think, with my mum, she -- I was an issue. She didn't**  
 24 **really ever want me home. So she didn't want any of**  
 25 **the troubles that I might bring and so it was just**

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1 **A. There were other adults about, yeah.**  
 2 Q. You told your mum, you remember telling her, something  
 3 about it at some time when you went home. What were you  
 4 able to say? Can you remember now how you told her or  
 5 what you said about it, given you thought at the time  
 6 this was normal? What kind of things might you have  
 7 said about it?  
 8 **A. When I went home, it was because of what the caretaker**  
 9 **had done on the estate.**  
 10 Q. Right, so that was --  
 11 **A. Yes, and I had gone up and I told her about that in**  
 12 **a very blasé way, and then about, you know, what had**  
 13 **been going on, and then she just smacked me. So it was**  
 14 **kind of like, "We don't talk like that. Just stop".**  
 15 Q. So just to fill the chronology in, you had been in  
 16 Shirley Oaks and this had happened to you. At a period  
 17 a bit later, when you were a little bit older, you were  
 18 at home --  
 19 **A. Yes.**  
 20 Q. -- and that happens to you again, a caretaker or someone  
 21 on the estate abuses you; yes?  
 22 **A. Yes.**  
 23 Q. Tell us about that abuse and how that happened and what  
 24 he did afterwards?  
 25 **A. That, again, felt like -- by this stage, I think I was**

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1 **a case of -- I don't even know if she gave it a thought**  
 2 **as to whether it was true or not. It was just, "Shut**  
 3 **up, I don't want to hear it".**  
 4 Q. You tell us in your statement that you'd wet yourself  
 5 regularly?  
 6 **A. Yes.**  
 7 Q. Looking back as an adult, that's a sign, isn't it, of  
 8 somebody -- how old were you when you were still doing  
 9 that?  
 10 **A. Oh, that went on until I was about 10.**  
 11 Q. So you were wetting yourself, you were biting nails.  
 12 You're still biting your nails up to date, are you?  
 13 **A. Yes, yes.**  
 14 Q. Did anyone, any social worker, any adult at all, really,  
 15 talk to you about how you felt or why you might be so  
 16 nervous or worried?  
 17 **A. No. I remember my parents trying to get me put -- and**  
 18 **they obviously succeeded getting me put on the**  
 19 **medication that -- whatever Shirley Oaks was putting me**  
 20 **on. And I remember that, while they went to get this**  
 21 **medication, I was left in the car. So nobody ever**  
 22 **bothered to say why. You know, it wasn't -- and then**  
 23 **there was another psychiatrist that they took me to see,**  
 24 **I think probably to get more medication, and I remember**  
 25 **trying to talk there and just being shut down. I spoke**

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1 **to a social worker, [redacted] --**  
 2 Q. Don't mention the name.  
 3 **A. Sorry. I spoke to a special worker who was my social**  
 4 **worker when I was pregnant with [redacted].**  
 5 Q. Another name there. Don't worry. I will ask for  
 6 restriction orders over the names.  
 7 **A. Sorry, shall I say it again?**  
 8 Q. Let's slow down slightly. You were talking about, when  
 9 you got medication --  
 10 **A. Yes.**  
 11 Q. -- you were given sedatives, weren't you, both at  
 12 Shirley Oaks and subsequently?  
 13 **A. Yes.**  
 14 Q. You don't remember any doctor letting you talk about  
 15 your situation?  
 16 **A. Never, no.**  
 17 Q. And in the same way, with the social worker not talking  
 18 about what the issues were for you, but you do remember  
 19 being given sedatives?  
 20 **A. Yes. Oh, yes.**  
 21 Q. You describe the disturbances that they caused?  
 22 **A. Yes, visual disturbances. Like, I would be sitting**  
 23 **there and somebody's head would get very, very, very**  
 24 **small or -- and I would go to bed and I would wake up**  
 25 **and I would literally feel like I was fighting in a fog,**

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1 **with, and then, from 13, I had no education whatsoever.**  
 2 **So it was various different schools. I think there was**  
 3 **at least four secondary schools, and I think about the**  
 4 **same for primary, four or five primary schools.**  
 5 Q. So for lots of children, of course, they can make  
 6 friendships at school, and they're a huge source of  
 7 support for children in terms of talking about other  
 8 things. But for you, you weren't making trusting  
 9 friendships with others of your own age, really?  
 10 **A. No. No.**  
 11 Q. In terms of your own education, you tell us, I think, as  
 12 an adult, you went back, at 22, and did some  
 13 qualifications, didn't you?  
 14 **A. Yes.**  
 15 Q. But until then, no-one had even given you the chance or  
 16 you hadn't done any formal education?  
 17 **A. Well, there was -- when I was in the mother and baby**  
 18 **unit, Doreen, who was the lady who ran it, spoke to**  
 19 **Social Services because she was very keen for me to get**  
 20 **some education, and she spoke to Social Services about**  
 21 **it, but nothing was ever done about that.**  
 22 Q. Before I come to your having babies yourself, can I just  
 23 ask you without you naming your sister or telling us  
 24 much about her life --  
 25 **A. Yes.**

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1 **and I can remember walking around trying to shake that**  
 2 **feeling off, and it was awful. I remember crying but**  
 3 **not being able to shake that feeling of this absolute**  
 4 **walking-through-fog feeling.**  
 5 Q. You tell us in your statement at paragraph 17 that you  
 6 do remember telling a social worker that the house was  
 7 awful but nothing was done?  
 8 **A. Yes.**  
 9 Q. You didn't remember saying much about the sexual abuse.  
 10 Was that difficult to say after what you'd said to your  
 11 mother? What was it about not telling people about the  
 12 touching?  
 13 **A. Again, I didn't really realise it was an issue until**  
 14 **I was a lot older, and I mean a lot older. I was in my**  
 15 **teens before I kind of realised, actually, that's wrong.**  
 16 **So it wasn't something that I really spoke about. The**  
 17 **violence I would speak about, but not so much the abuse.**  
 18 Q. Throughout your childhood, how did your education  
 19 suffer? You have told us you were moving backwards and  
 20 forwards. Tell us what school life looked like for you  
 21 across your whole period, really, both young and teenage  
 22 period?  
 23 **A. It was moved from school to school. Not having**  
 24 **a chance -- I made one friend in all the time, in all**  
 25 **the different schools, that I still keep in contact**

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1 Q. -- one of the things that the chair is looking at is how  
 2 children like yourself in care were separated from  
 3 siblings and how that made them feel long term.  
 4 So you had a sister, and you both, you say, went to  
 5 Shirley Oaks at the same time. Did you stay in touch  
 6 through your childhood? What happened subsequently in  
 7 terms of your relationship with her and how do you feel  
 8 about that?  
 9 **A. I didn't find her until -- I think it's maybe four or**  
 10 **five years, now, ago, and I searched for her religiously**  
 11 **for years because I hoped that, when I found her, she**  
 12 **would have had the perfect life. I don't know why**  
 13 **I thought that, but I really thought she'd got away.**  
 14 **That's how I felt.**  
 15 **And then I found her and I went to see her, and her**  
 16 **life really was --**  
 17 Q. Pause there. I'm not going to ask you about her life.  
 18 But in terms of how you felt, another relationship that  
 19 you may have had, a sister, through childhood, you  
 20 didn't have it?  
 21 **A. No, I still don't have it now, really. We speak on the**  
 22 **phone now and again, but there's no bond.**  
 23 Q. You didn't grow up together with each other, to rely on  
 24 each other?  
 25 **A. Yes, yeah.**

Page 20

1 Q. You say in your statement -- paragraph 22 is where I am  
 2 now if that helps you -- you were asked to comment on  
 3 how the abuse impacted on your life, and you tell us,  
 4 first of all, when you became pregnant, and, again,  
 5 without discussing your children in detail, can you tell  
 6 us when you had your children and what life was like for  
 7 you and your children when they were very young?  
 8 **A. I fell pregnant with my daughter at 13, and that's when**  
 9 **life begun, really, for me. From the day that she was**  
 10 **born and she looked at me, it was the first human that**  
 11 **I felt love from, and she looked at me and I looked at**  
 12 **her and it was amazing, absolutely amazing, because she**  
 13 **loved me, there was no judging, and I loved her and**  
 14 **I had to fight to keep her, and I did.**  
 15 Q. You went into a mother and baby placement?  
 16 **A. I did. Yes, I did, which was good. That was a good**  
 17 **place, the mother and baby unit. And they taught me how**  
 18 **to look after her. All the things that I didn't know,**  
 19 **they taught me.**  
 20 Q. Your own education stopped at that point, didn't it?  
 21 **A. (Overspeaking) had all stopped, yes.**  
 22 Q. So you became a mother to her at 13?  
 23 **A. At 14, I gave birth, yes.**  
 24 Q. Yes, 14, sorry. How old were you when you had your son?  
 25 **A. Just coming up to 17, I think.**

Page 21

1 **and I exist for my children. I am 51 and I sleep with**  
 2 **the light on. I cannot have a relationship, a proper**  
 3 **relationship, because I am scared that they might do**  
 4 **something to my children. I have no trust, I have very**  
 5 **few friends, I am on medication, I suffer with**  
 6 **flashbacks. If it wasn't for my children, I wouldn't be**  
 7 **here. Because my whole life -- you know, people talk**  
 8 **about what they did at school and what fun they had and**  
 9 **how they snuck out, you know, from home and had a party;**  
 10 **I had none of that to offer anybody, you know. Even as**  
 11 **a friend, I'm hard work. You know, I suffer with**  
 12 **anxiety and, yeah, I don't have nothing to offer anybody**  
 13 **still.**  
 14 Q. When you were a child, did you ever feel there was  
 15 a safe place for you? Did you feel any homely  
 16 environments or that you had any sense of security?  
 17 **A. I knew from the family friend what a home was meant to**  
 18 **feel like, and I knew how it was meant to be, but**  
 19 **I never, ever felt safe there, because I knew that at**  
 20 **any point I could be picked up by my parents and either**  
 21 **taken home or put back in care.**  
 22 Q. In terms of the future for children in care in the  
 23 future and all the experience you have had, what do you  
 24 think could be done, or should be done, to make the  
 25 lives of children in care better in the future? You

Page 23

1 Q. You have managed your -- again, I don't want to ask much  
 2 about him, but you're still friends with their father?  
 3 **A. Yes, yes.**  
 4 Q. Tell us about the support you got from Social Services  
 5 when you had your children? So you say the mother and  
 6 baby placement was good. What about later on when you  
 7 were a bit older? Because, of course, children are  
 8 a long-term commitment, aren't they? It is not just  
 9 straight away. What help and support did you get with  
 10 aftercare services from --  
 11 **A. I got some carpet for my flat.**  
 12 Q. So you got some help with a flat, with the carpet in the  
 13 flat.  
 14 **A. Yes.**  
 15 Q. What about emotional support or --  
 16 **A. Nothing.**  
 17 Q. -- advice?  
 18 **A. No.**  
 19 Q. So no aftercare provision for you?  
 20 **A. No, none.**  
 21 Q. You go on in your statement, in paragraphs 24 and 26 and  
 22 onwards, to say how that early abuse has haunted you and  
 23 how you were told you were nothing has affected you.  
 24 Can you tell us how those events have impacted upon you?  
 25 **A. Well, if people ask me, I don't live a life, I exist,**

Page 22

1 deal with this at paragraph 33, if it helps you, but you  
 2 may --  
 3 **A. Yeah --**  
 4 Q. What things do you think would have made it different  
 5 for you and would make it different now?  
 6 **A. I think for somebody to listen and for somebody to watch**  
 7 **the signs. Because once the damage is done, it is there**  
 8 **for life. It doesn't matter if you put somebody away**  
 9 **forever who has done it, it's too late, the damage is**  
 10 **done. It's done. And I -- you know, and other people**  
 11 **have to live with that forever.**  
 12 **I wanted somebody to listen to me, to notice.**  
 13 **I have two photos of me from Shirley Oaks and I can see**  
 14 **a terrified child in those photographs. I want -- if**  
 15 **a child says to you, "This is going on", you have got to**  
 16 **believe them. Believe them first. Don't assume.**  
 17 **Believe first. Believe them first. If it is wrong,**  
 18 **then it is wrong, but take the side of the child first**  
 19 **and remove them from the situation as quickly as**  
 20 **possible. Because, sometimes, the damage is being done**  
 21 **while it's being investigated. Yeah.**  
 22 Q. You also say you think for foster carers there should be  
 23 stringent background checks of everyone in the house;  
 24 yes?  
 25 **A. Yes, absolutely. Yes. Checked and checked and checked**

Page 24

1 **again. Absolutely.**  
 2 Q. You say -- there's a line that nearly concludes your  
 3 statement where you say:  
 4 "Every smile Lambeth took from me, I have made sure  
 5 I have given a smile to someone else."  
 6 **A. Yes.**  
 7 Q. What do you mean by that?  
 8 **A. Because the money that I got off of Lambeth Council,**  
 9 **I haven't kept for myself. Because it was never about**  
 10 **the money for me. I'm quite happy being skint, to be**  
 11 **honest. For me, that was dirty money. But from that**  
 12 **dirty money, I could turn it into positivity by helping**  
 13 **other people and, if they needed something, and it**  
 14 **bought them a smile, that was a smile back, and that is**  
 15 **literally what I did with that money: whoever needed,**  
 16 **I gave, and they have been able to smile or they have**  
 17 **been relieved and it's made them happy, and that's made**  
 18 **me, in turn, smile, and that's what I mean. It's them**  
 19 **smiles that I never had I have now put out there, yeah,**  
 20 **and that's it. I have. Yes. I feel proud of that and**  
 21 **happy, yeah.**  
 22 MS LANGDALE: Thank you. There are no further questions  
 23 from me. I don't know if the chair has any for you.  
 24 **A. Thank you.**  
 25 THE CHAIR: Thank you. We have no questions for the

Page 25

1 questions, for the purposes of you giving evidence,  
 2 neither of us will be saying names of anyone, to protect  
 3 your identity.  
 4 **A. Understood.**  
 5 Q. We know, LA-A321, from your statement -- and just at  
 6 that point, can you confirm for us that the statement  
 7 that you have prepared is true and accurate, as far as  
 8 you're concerned?  
 9 **A. Yes.**  
 10 Q. We know that you were taken -- and it is dated, I should  
 11 say, 26 May 2020.  
 12 You came into care when you were 9?  
 13 **A. I was; correct.**  
 14 Q. Can you tell us something about your life before then;  
 15 in particular, how close you were to your mum?  
 16 **A. I was very close to my mother, but my mother was having,**  
 17 **as I know now, a very difficult time with my father, and**  
 18 **left home sometimes and had affairs with different men,**  
 19 **I believe. But, as a child, to answer your question,**  
 20 **I was very close to my mother, yes.**  
 21 Q. What happened to your mother when you were nine?  
 22 **A. She committed suicide.**  
 23 Q. It may seem obvious, but how was that for you?  
 24 **A. How was that for me? Terrible, and my siblings. We**  
 25 **went into a children's home. I was going into hospital**

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1 witness, but I would like to thank her very much for her  
 2 evidence, which has been very clearly put to us today.  
 3 Thank you.  
 4 MS LANGDALE: Chair, may I remind -- can I ask for the  
 5 restriction order in relation to the social worker,  
 6 daughter and the sister?  
 7 THE CHAIR: Yes, I will make that order.  
 8 MS LANGDALE: Chair, we probably are in a position where we  
 9 won't be ready to start until 12.00 noon. It is  
 10 important that I speak to the next witness, obviously,  
 11 in advance. So I invite you to stop for a break now and  
 12 begin at around 12.00 o'clock. If there are any  
 13 problems, we will obviously let you know if it is  
 14 difficult to start at that time, but I would hope we  
 15 will be able to.  
 16 THE CHAIR: Yes. We will return at 12.00 noon.  
 17 (11.07 am)  
 18 (A short break)  
 19 (11.59 am)  
 20 MS LANGDALE: Chair, may I call, please, LA-A321 and may  
 21 LA-A321 please be sworn.  
 22 WITNESS LA-A321 (affirmed)  
 23 Examination by MS LANGDALE  
 24 MS LANGDALE: LA-A321, you know I am going to be using that  
 25 number, rather than your name. When I am asking you

Page 26

1 **at the time for some surgery, due to an accident when**  
 2 **I was younger, and I don't think it's easy to describe**  
 3 **how it was for me.**  
 4 **I was only 9 years old, taken away to a children's**  
 5 **home. My father married again to a woman I --**  
 6 Q. Pausing there about your father.  
 7 **A. I'm meandering, sorry.**  
 8 Q. No, not at all. Going into care at nine, we understand,  
 9 first of all, you had to go to a police station, and  
 10 that's how you came to the attention of the authorities,  
 11 and then you were moved into Shirley Oaks. All of that,  
 12 just after your mother had committed suicide?  
 13 **A. We actually went to somewhere called Wandsworth first**  
 14 **for a short time, and then we were moved to**  
 15 **Shirley Oaks.**  
 16 Q. Talking just about you for a moment, when you got to  
 17 Shirley Oaks, you say in your statement you were all  
 18 over the place and crying lots, obviously; yes?  
 19 **A. Yes.**  
 20 Q. Were you treated with any kindness or sympathy or  
 21 understanding around that?  
 22 **A. Not as I remember, no. The way I felt, as I remember,**  
 23 **it was a cold, uncaring kind of place.**  
 24 Q. Did anyone try to help you with the grief you will have  
 25 been suffering?

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1 **A. I was a child of nine. I don't remember any of that**  
 2 **affection, no.**  
 3 Q. Do you remember any warmth and affection in that year at  
 4 Shirley Oaks being shown to you?  
 5 **A. No.**  
 6 Q. No, not from anyone?  
 7 **A. The answer is no. None. No.**  
 8 Q. You, like others, presumably, had a house mother and  
 9 house father. Do you remember any of those people with  
 10 any significance at all?  
 11 **A. I don't. No, I can't now, no. I can't remember their**  
 12 **names or anything like that.**  
 13 Q. When you were in Shirley Oaks, were you still in and out  
 14 of hospital at that time, or had those surgeries  
 15 finished?  
 16 **A. Yes, I was going in -- no, no, it was rather just**  
 17 **beginning. I was in and out of hospital and -- until**  
 18 **I went home. And when I went back home with my**  
 19 **siblings, I was, from then on, and through teenage**  
 20 **years, still in and out of hospital due to surgery.**  
 21 Q. So you were having, when you were -- let's go back to  
 22 when you were nine and ten. You were having surgery in  
 23 a hospital, so in one institutional setting, and then  
 24 going back to Shirley Oaks, another setting?  
 25 **A. Correct.**

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1 just a few?  
 2 **A. No, I think there were maybe two or three that came and**  
 3 **went and helped out. There were maybe.**  
 4 Q. What about any schooling? Did you get any of that in  
 5 that year?  
 6 **A. I can't remember it. I know, when I went to the**  
 7 **hospital, I had some, but I can't remember. I was told**  
 8 **I went to school, but I think, in my mind, I was going**  
 9 **through so much, I couldn't really take in what was**  
 10 **happening.**  
 11 Q. But you --  
 12 **A. (Overspeaking) seven months. Sorry.**  
 13 Q. No, I was going to say, interestingly, you do remember,  
 14 in the hospital, people trying to do some schooling with  
 15 you, or something like that?  
 16 **A. Yes.**  
 17 Q. You just have no memory in Shirley Oaks of that?  
 18 **A. No, but my mother had just died. I was treated with**  
 19 **a -- yeah, I was treated with a lot of affection in**  
 20 **hospital.**  
 21 Q. That was different from how it was in the home, from  
 22 what you're saying?  
 23 **A. Yes. Actually, it sounds a bit of a strange thing to**  
 24 **say, but when I was in hospital, I didn't want to come**  
 25 **out and go back to the home, and when I went home and**

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1 Q. If I said to you the idea behind a home like  
 2 Shirley Oaks is that it should be a homely environment  
 3 for children, how does that sound to you? Is there  
 4 anything about that place that felt homely to you as  
 5 a young child?  
 6 **A. Not in my memory, no. Not as I remember it as a child,**  
 7 **no. I found it quite the opposite. I found it just**  
 8 **people functioning as a -- not as a mother and father**  
 9 **type person, but just doing a job, and we were just part**  
 10 **of the job. But then I was 9 years old. Looking back,**  
 11 **that's how I remember it now.**  
 12 Q. What about meal times, sitting around and eating with  
 13 children or others. Do you remember any of that, or not  
 14 really?  
 15 **A. I can't remember the children. We played some football,**  
 16 **went down to the streams and rivers. In fact, I larked**  
 17 **around and felt more affection, if that's the right**  
 18 **word, with the other children, and more in common,**  
 19 **closer, than to any house mother or house father. But**  
 20 **then we were all in the same situation, for whatever**  
 21 **reason.**  
 22 Q. Were there many adults -- there's the house mother,  
 23 house father. Did you come across many adults -- I'm  
 24 not going to ask you, for a moment, about one of them.  
 25 But did you come across a number of adults or were there

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1 **I was in hospital, I didn't want to go back home**  
 2 **neither. It was like that. That's a bit weird, but --**  
 3 Q. No, obviously. So were the nurses in hospital kind?  
 4 **A. Yes.**  
 5 Q. So you experienced kindness there?  
 6 **A. Absolutely. Yes.**  
 7 Q. Which is not how you're describing what you experienced  
 8 at Shirley Oaks?  
 9 **A. Totally the opposite.**  
 10 Q. What about clothing in Shirley Oaks? What sort of --  
 11 **A. They gave us clothing.**  
 12 Q. They did give you clothing?  
 13 **A. Yes. They once gave me a dressing gown, I really liked**  
 14 **it, a lovely dressing gown. But when I left, I was not**  
 15 **allowed to take it.**  
 16 Q. Really? So when you left at ten, you wanted to be able  
 17 to take that with you, having had it, but they told you  
 18 you couldn't?  
 19 **A. Obviously, I had clothes, but I wanted to take the**  
 20 **dressing gown because it was lovely, but they wouldn't**  
 21 **let me have it. And they used to put "Shirley" whatever**  
 22 **your name was. Our cottage was Daisy Cottage.**  
 23 Q. Yes, I saw that.  
 24 **A. On the clothing. My sister [redacted], my brother --**  
 25 Q. No names, sorry. I'm going to ask for the

Page 32



1 restriction --

2 **A. It's in my statement anyway.**

3 Q. Don't worry. We can deal with that at the end. It was

4 obviously your own dressing gown. That was what was

5 nice. It had your name in it with the home name, and

6 you liked that?

7 **A. Yes.**

8 Q. But it didn't go with you; you didn't have that

9 belonging to keep with you?

10 **A. I wasn't allowed to have the dressing gown.**

11 Q. Let me ask you, if I may, about one of the house fathers

12 and how he would watch you in the bath before drying

13 you.

14 **A. That's right.**

15 Q. Tell us -- we know your age, you've given your age.

16 Tell us what happened, what he would do and how that

17 made you feel at the time?

18 **A. I was 9 years old. I was surprised by his attention.**

19 **Even though I was 9 years old, he would pat me down with**

20 **a towel, that sort of thing, in the bathroom.**

21 Q. At the time you say you thought it was odd because you

22 were old enough to bath and try and dress yourself.

23 Were you able to say to him, "That's odd", or did it

24 just not feel like you could say that? How was it?

25 **A. Probably I did not say that. I just seemed to accept**

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1 **bathroom. I just thought, "It's winter, he's trying to**

2 **keep me warm". It's part of the process.**

3 Q. You accepted it at face value, what he was saying to

4 you, that he was trying to keep you --

5 **A. I accepted it at face value, yes.**

6 Q. Then what started to happen, after he'd been doing that

7 for a bit?

8 **A. Basically, I was abused. I was sexually abused. If you**

9 **would like the main word, I was anally raped.**

10 Q. He used to -- you say he came up, cuddled up to you and

11 would actually do that to you?

12 **A. From behind, yes, hold my shoulders and with the**

13 **pretence that he's keeping me warm. I was too young**

14 **to -- and then, during the day, life would go on as if**

15 **nothing had happened to me. You just got on and played**

16 **football, or whatever.**

17 Q. How was he in the day? Did he just come and talk to

18 you?

19 **A. When he was there, he just carried on as if everything**

20 **was normal, and spoke to other people and -- you know,**

21 **nothing happened before, it was as if nothing -- you**

22 **know, "This is the way it is, this is the process, we**

23 **keep you warm, we help you, we give you meals" and, at**

24 **9 years old, you -- I suppose you just accept it and**

25 **don't think about it. You don't think about it, because**

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1 **what was going on as part of the procedure. I don't**

2 **know. As I say, I was 9 years old and not capable of**

3 **really putting into thoughts, or even think, what was**

4 **going on, because I couldn't formulate the thoughts or**

5 **say the words because I was too young and without**

6 **a mother, not at home, with the family, and in this**

7 **strange place, and you tended -- I tended to just accept**

8 **what was going on, without any recourse, any -- there**

9 **was not really any thought process going on.**

10 Q. He was a figure in authority, one of the people looking

11 after you?

12 **A. Not the house father, I don't think. If I had to look**

13 **back, I'd say he was about 40 years old, maybe, with**

14 **a moustache.**

15 Q. Don't worry about that. We don't need to go to that.

16 But you remember him being about that age?

17 **A. Yes.**

18 Q. From bathing, it progressed, didn't it, to when you woke

19 up at night? Tell us what was happening.

20 **A. I'd wake up at night and he would be in my bed; telling**

21 **me -- it was winter, and he was just keeping me warm.**

22 Q. You say "He'd always say he was trying to keep me warm".

23 What was he trying to say to you with that, trying to

24 suggest?

25 **A. I don't know. I just said like I said about the**

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1 **you don't think about it at 9 years old. You just carry**

2 **on with whatever, life.**

3 Q. When you say you wouldn't think about it at 9 years old,

4 at that age, it's not something that you said anything

5 to anybody about?

6 **A. No. Couldn't. As I got older, no.**

7 Q. No.

8 **A. Rather, to answer your question, I'd rather just forget**

9 **about it and carry on with life and learning at school**

10 **and, in my case, going to hospital, and trying to get**

11 **the whole thing as if it never happened, I suppose.**

12 **I don't know how 9-year-olds are supposed to think.**

13 Q. Did you ever have a social worker that had tried to make

14 a trusting relationship with you so that you could talk

15 to them about daily life in the home? Nothing like

16 that?

17 **A. Not that sort of thing.**

18 Q. Never had one?

19 **A. Not then. I don't know -- not then.**

20 Q. Not then?

21 **A. I don't know what goes on today, but I would imagine**

22 **it's a lot -- people are in the process, whatever it's**

23 **called, is better. I'd like to think that things are,**

24 **what you just said, that there are these people.**

25 Q. But you never had anyone who was talking to you about

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1 how it was in the home?  
 2 **A. No.**  
 3 Q. Anyone from the local authority, or anyone at all,  
 4 checking in with you and seeing what it was like?  
 5 **A. No. Not as I remember it, no.**  
 6 Q. When you went to the hospital for the operations where  
 7 people were kinder, would it have been something that  
 8 had entered your mind to say anything about there, or  
 9 did that not feel right either?  
 10 **A. No, no, no, we were treated very well. I was in**  
 11 **a children's ward at that age, and, no, we -- I was**  
 12 **happy there. I was happy with the hospital treatment.**  
 13 **No, the staff were brilliant. No. Always happy.**  
 14 Q. Did they ever ask you what it was like at Shirley Oaks  
 15 or did they just focus on you --  
 16 **A. I don't think they were very aware of what was going on.**  
 17 **My mother had committed suicide, I was in a children's**  
 18 **home. They just -- there were other people there,**  
 19 **children. They just done their job and they didn't**  
 20 **consider it part of their -- even though it may have**  
 21 **been on the ward sister's notes, but I don't think they**  
 22 **considered it any of their concern about what happened**  
 23 **once I was -- before or after, at home or in**  
 24 **a children's home. I suppose it's quite right.**  
 25 Q. You stayed in Shirley Oaks until you were ten, and then

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1 **that, I left home at about 21 and I worked in factories,**  
 2 **I worked in an office. There were times when I didn't**  
 3 **work and, yeah, I got in arguments with people and --**  
 4 Q. And then, in your 20s, you say it got really severe for  
 5 you, and it was difficult, you were depressed?  
 6 **A. I started getting depression, badly. I was given**  
 7 **antidepressants. There were times when I stayed -- when**  
 8 **I'd moved to another place, I didn't want to get out of**  
 9 **bed in the morning. Eventually, in this place I moved**  
 10 **to, I met a woman [redacted] and we got together as**  
 11 **a couple, and moved eventually to [redacted]. I was**  
 12 **going through a bad spell of depression which she helped**  
 13 **me with.**  
 14 Q. Again, chair, we can perhaps remove the place you moved  
 15 to as well by the restriction order?  
 16 **A. Oh, sorry.**  
 17 Q. No, I'm thinking of you. Let's do that.  
 18 **A. I'm sorry about that.**  
 19 Q. At that point, you had suicidal thoughts as well, as you  
 20 were thinking about what happened to you as a young  
 21 child?  
 22 **A. Yes, I never sort of equated it with being what happened**  
 23 **as a young child. I was depressed, and, therefore, in**  
 24 **deep depression, suicidal. I knew how my mother died**  
 25 **and I suppose the thought process was something like,**

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1 you went to live with your dad, and then your teenage  
 2 life began. How did that unravel for you, given all  
 3 that you'd experienced up until that point?  
 4 **A. I think I became, like, between 12/13 to 16, quite**  
 5 **rebellious, although I went to work at 15. I would**  
 6 **steal things, get in arguments. Yeah, I became quite**  
 7 **rebellious, would not listen to anybody. Anybody who**  
 8 **tried to give me advice, tell me to behave myself,**  
 9 **things like that, I didn't want to know, no.**  
 10 Q. In terms of the sexual abuse, were you able, during any  
 11 of that time, to tell anyone about that or what you had  
 12 experienced?  
 13 **A. No, I weren't able to, and I think I didn't want to.**  
 14 **I didn't even think about it. I knew by then -- I'd**  
 15 **worked out what had happened, you know, I weren't**  
 16 **stupid, but -- and I was getting older, but, no, I did**  
 17 **not want to talk about it and I just wanted to,**  
 18 **I suppose, be just a normal kid and then a normal**  
 19 **teenager, going out and drinking, which I done a lot of,**  
 20 **a hell of a lot of, to forget things, and, no, the last**  
 21 **thing I wanted to do was talk about what happened. No**  
 22 **way.**  
 23 Q. You got a number of jobs, and you said you did them but  
 24 you found it harder to keep a job down?  
 25 **A. Yes, the first job I was in for five years. Then, after**

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1 "Well, if she can do that, I can do that". There were  
 2 times -- I came out of it, I felt better, and I carried  
 3 on drinking heavily and that's it. It's not the sort of  
 4 thing -- things like that, in my head, as far as I'm  
 5 concerned, just in my feelings and thoughts, I could not  
 6 discuss with anybody what happened back when I was  
 7 9 years old. But I could deal with each day if I could  
 8 drink alcohol, and started studying -- I went back and  
 9 studied for O levels and A levels. I wanted to go to  
 10 university.  
 11 Q. Did you have trust issues as a consequence of what  
 12 happened? Did you have problems trusting adults?  
 13 **A. I wouldn't say that I've had problems trusting adults.**  
 14 **I had my own mind. I had my own mind. If somebody --**  
 15 **but being still quite young and immature, if an adult --**  
 16 **if people told me a thing, something, I tended to**  
 17 **believe it, and accept things at face value, until I got**  
 18 **older.**  
 19 Q. When you went back home, again, can you remember being  
 20 given any support going back home from a social worker  
 21 or anybody else when you were around ten, or was that  
 22 it, there was no further involvement?  
 23 **A. No, that was it. We were left to our father looking**  
 24 **after us and, eventually, this woman he married.**  
 25 Q. We have been asking everybody, if you could suggest

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1 recommendations or things that would make it better for  
 2 children in care now not to have suffered as you  
 3 suffered, what do you think it's important to think  
 4 about?  
 5 **A. I answered this in the statement. Well, I think more  
 6 attention should be given to children from homes where  
 7 abuse might have happened, or -- I just think the  
 8 services, the care services, whatever they are called,  
 9 Social Services, should in some cases give more  
 10 attention to certain people and be -- I don't know how,  
 11 make themselves -- make this -- make themselves more  
 12 aware, given the experience of what's happened to other  
 13 children, and take more interest in that family, or  
 14 whatever it is, people, and say to themselves, "Look,  
 15 something is wrong here".**  
 16 Q. When you were in the care home -- when you say "taking  
 17 an interest", do you think anyone took any real interest  
 18 in you as a person or what was happening in your life?  
 19 You have described going through the hospital, home,  
 20 you've lost your mother, you're crying, you're upset,  
 21 you're very obviously, from what you say, an upset  
 22 child.  
 23 **A. No, I don't think -- I've told you before, there was no  
 24 warmth in the children's home. They looked after us,  
 25 they cared for us, as such, but there was no --**

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1 witness on behalf of the panel and myself for all of  
 2 your comments and particularly your views on how things  
 3 could be made better. Thank you.  
 4 MS LANGDALE: Thank you, chair. May I just ask again for  
 5 that restriction order to protect the names and the  
 6 place moved to?  
 7 **A. Yes, okay.**  
 8 THE CHAIR: Yes, Ms Langdale, I make that order. Thank you.  
 9 (The witness withdrew)  
 10 MS LANGDALE: Chair, I see the time. It may well be that by  
 11 1.30 pm we are ready for the final witness who is giving  
 12 oral evidence today.  
 13 THE CHAIR: Yes, we will return at 1.30 pm.  
 14 (12.25 pm)  
 15 (The short adjournment)  
 16 (1.30 pm)  
 17 THE CHAIR: Good afternoon, everyone. Ms Langdale?  
 18 MS LANGDALE: Chair, please may I ask that LA-A299 is sworn.  
 19 WITNESS LA-A299 (affirmed)  
 20 Examination by MS LANGDALE  
 21 MS LANGDALE: LA-A299, as you know, I will be using numbers  
 22 so as not to identify you, and neither of us will be  
 23 saying names, either of your family, relatives or of any  
 24 perpetrators or alleged perpetrators. If either of us  
 25 make a mistake, I will invite the chair to make

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1 **I suppose we're not supposed to expect it. But, no,  
 2 there was no such -- what words can you use? --  
 3 affection, emotion, understanding feelings, you know.**  
 4 Q. If you again look back, do you think there is anything  
 5 that would have made it easier for you to be able to  
 6 speak about that abuse and for somebody to get involved  
 7 in trying to stop that happening?  
 8 **A. No, I wasn't like that, because I didn't want to know.  
 9 I wanted to forget. I didn't literally think to myself,  
 10 "I want to forget", but the way I was living into  
 11 a teenager, and then drinking heavily, it was rather the  
 12 opposite of what you just said. It was -- I wanted to  
 13 get out of my head, I wanted to go to parties, I wanted  
 14 to drink, I'm this age, I can do it, I love music,  
 15 I love bands, all that sort of thing, you know. So, as  
 16 far as the past was concerned, for me, it didn't exist.  
 17 It was just something that's in the past, like yesterday  
 18 is in the past.**  
 19 Q. Yes, living day by day?  
 20 **A. Yes, very much so, yes. Absolutely.**  
 21 MS LANGDALE: Thank you very much. I don't have any further  
 22 questions. I don't know if the chair will have any  
 23 further questions. Thank you.  
 24 **A. Thank you, nice to meet you.**  
 25 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. I'd like to thank the

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1 a restriction order to prevent the publication at the  
 2 end of the day of either those names or the identifying  
 3 material, but I just thought I would remind both of us  
 4 of that before we start.  
 5 **A. Okay.**  
 6 Q. You have helpfully provided two statements to the  
 7 inquiry. One is dated 20 May and the supplementary  
 8 statement, 22 June. Have you had a chance to have  
 9 another look at those and can you confirm whether the  
 10 contents are true and accurate, as far as you're  
 11 concerned?  
 12 **A. I have, and, yes, they are.**  
 13 Q. Thank you. We know from your statement that you were  
 14 taken into care by Lambeth Social Services when you were  
 15 eight?  
 16 **A. I hadn't quite turned eight, I was still seven, seven  
 17 and three-quarters, so -- it's splitting hairs, I know.**  
 18 Q. You were eight when you were in care. Can you tell us  
 19 something about the background that led you to being  
 20 taken into care, focusing more on your own position?  
 21 **A. I was in the home with my siblings. We were -- my  
 22 mother had to travel abroad because my older sibling was  
 23 in trouble and she wanted to bring him back home. She  
 24 had arranged for an adult supervision in the home, it  
 25 was a family friend. They did come in, they were there**

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1 for about two weeks. I don't think it was anything more  
 2 than that -- three weeks at the very most. For whatever  
 3 reason, he left and he never returned. So my older  
 4 sibling in the house at the time, he took care of us.  
 5 We were all children, but we were alone. I think it was  
 6 like that for -- I think it was maybe two months we were  
 7 on our own. My sister -- I know she went to an old  
 8 family friend, who lived not far from us, and she made  
 9 some allegations against my brother and the way she felt  
 10 that she was being treated in the home. She was  
 11 a child --  
 12 Q. You were all children on your own?  
 13 A. All children on our own. So I understand, as an adult,  
 14 I can look back and say, yes, fine, but, yes, she made  
 15 some allegations. Social Services were brought in and  
 16 they saw that we were alone, and then we were taken.  
 17 Q. So you were taken into care. We know, and just dealing  
 18 with the rest of your childhood, you were in care for  
 19 13 months and you were back at home with your mother  
 20 thereafter, weren't you?  
 21 A. Yes.  
 22 Q. So we are looking at a period where you, as a child,  
 23 have been left without an adult and you're taken into  
 24 care, and later on you're back with your mother, when  
 25 she's back here?

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1 A. I think it was at night when we went in. I remember the  
 2 house parent, the house mother, greeting us. They had  
 3 children, but I don't know where they were, whether or  
 4 not they were in bed. But I just remember being greeted  
 5 by her. I don't remember much else. I can't remember  
 6 that at all.  
 7 Q. What was your accommodation like there? What was your  
 8 impression of that when you arrived and where were you  
 9 sleeping?  
 10 A. I slept in my own bed. One of my brothers was in the  
 11 same room as myself. The older brother was moved --  
 12 I didn't know where he had gone, where they had put him.  
 13 I was in there with just one brother and my sister. But  
 14 we were in the same room. There was somebody else  
 15 there, but I can't remember who it was.  
 16 Q. Don't worry about who it was. But there were four  
 17 people, around four people, in the room?  
 18 A. I think there was four. There was a bunk bed and  
 19 I know -- in that one, there was -- there might have  
 20 been three or four, because I know there were bunk beds.  
 21 Q. How welcoming was the house mother, or not welcoming?  
 22 How was it when you first arrived?  
 23 A. To be honest with you, the thing I remember about the  
 24 house mother -- the overriding thing that I have, or the  
 25 impression I was left with, she was nice. I can't

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1 A. That's right. Yes. It wasn't straight away. She had  
 2 to -- well, she had to go through some hoops, I guess,  
 3 but, yes.  
 4 Q. Let's go back to where you were, then, as this seven and  
 5 three-quarters aged child, and you're taken into care,  
 6 and you're in Southvale, I think, for a night or so  
 7 first?  
 8 A. I think it was for a night.  
 9 Q. Do you remember anything about that night?  
 10 A. Vaguely. It was strange. It was confusing, I'd have to  
 11 say. I didn't know what was happening. One minute we  
 12 were in the home, in our living room, with these  
 13 strangers, and the next thing we were taken and we were  
 14 brought to this place that was alien. I guess I was  
 15 just so confused I didn't process anything until I was  
 16 in the Shirley. By then, it was kind of sinking in that  
 17 we weren't at home. So I would say that I was confused,  
 18 very confused. I couldn't process what was going on.  
 19 Q. You went to Shirley, I think, just after that night and  
 20 you went into a house at Shirley Oaks where there was  
 21 a house mother and father?  
 22 A. Yes.  
 23 Q. Again, we don't need their names. And there were  
 24 aunts and house parents as well, you said, when you  
 25 first went in there?

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1 really say too much about her in a negative way.  
 2 I think she was quite welcoming. I know that there were  
 3 issues during the stay there, but, to be honest with  
 4 you, I didn't really take from that as a negative. It  
 5 was more with the house father. I felt that she helped  
 6 me in -- a couple of times there, which I was grateful  
 7 for, and so I've always liked her for that.  
 8 But, yes, I will say that. You know, apart from  
 9 a few things, I think the time -- I think it went quite  
 10 well, so far as I can recall.  
 11 Q. What about the house father? What was he like?  
 12 A. He was a bit different. Looking back, it's easy to say  
 13 in hindsight what he was. I thought he was quite cruel.  
 14 But, you know, the issue with -- I know I've mentioned  
 15 it, and you may have seen it, we were forced to eat --  
 16 we were Muslims, so we -- there are certain restrictions  
 17 in our diet, but that was never taken into account. He  
 18 certainly liked to watch us and force us to eat certain  
 19 meats -- am I allowed to say?  
 20 Q. It is entirely for you. Yes.  
 21 A. Pork. So we never ate pork. It was never fed to us.  
 22 It was against our religion. I'm areligious now,  
 23 I don't follow any kind of denominations. But there are  
 24 certain things that I will still observe and that comes  
 25 from my childhood conditioning, I guess.

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1 Q. You knew that as a child? You didn't want to eat that.  
 2 You knew that?  
 3 **A. At the time, I wasn't aware of what was -- we were never**  
 4 **exposed to it. I didn't know what pork was. We were**  
 5 **fed it. My sister did, and she would raise the issue,**  
 6 **and I know that it was a bone of contention between us,**  
 7 **I suppose, in the family. But we were told to eat it.**  
 8 **We had nothing else. We had no other choice.**  
 9 **He enjoyed watching us.**  
 10 Q. I'm going to ask you to go a little bit slower as we  
 11 move on now, if that is possible. It is really helpful  
 12 to hear your evidence and people want to appreciate each  
 13 word, so if we can go a bit slower.  
 14 You had two social workers when you were at  
 15 Shirley Oaks. I'm going to ask about the first social  
 16 worker and the second social worker and ask you about  
 17 how they were, what kind of relationship, social work  
 18 relationship, they established with you. What was the  
 19 first one like?  
 20 **A. He was very helpful. He was -- I seem to remember him**  
 21 **being quite -- I don't remember what he looks like, but**  
 22 **I know he had a lot of -- there was a lot of contact**  
 23 **with him. He used to come out to the house on a regular**  
 24 **basis to find out how we were doing, and I know this**  
 25 **because it's in the care records. There was always**

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1 **comfortable or completely free, to be honest, I guess.**  
 2 **I know that later on, as things progressed in the**  
 3 **home -- I don't know how much after that particular**  
 4 **point. I know that it became more difficult to express**  
 5 **myself in the home, especially with the house parent**  
 6 **there. I know I was a little bit difficult, and he**  
 7 **makes a comment of that as well. Yeah, I think it**  
 8 **wasn't easy.**  
 9 Q. What about -- did you get any feedback about any efforts  
 10 to try to contact your mother or keep abreast of what  
 11 was going on in your big family picture, as it were?  
 12 **A. No, not that I recall. No, there was no mention of that**  
 13 **at all.**  
 14 Q. So you weren't getting feedback about when your mother  
 15 planned to come back or what the future might look like  
 16 for you? You didn't really know what it was going to  
 17 look like?  
 18 **A. No, we weren't informed of anything.**  
 19 Q. How did that feel, just not knowing what the future  
 20 held?  
 21 **A. I think, being so young, it -- I don't know that**  
 22 **I thought anything about it, to be honest with you.**  
 23 **After a while, it seemed like I'd forgotten. I don't**  
 24 **know. I can't really answer that. We were taken care**  
 25 **of quite a lot, when we were young, by my aunts, so it**

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1 **a meeting between us. He'd always interview us**  
 2 **separately, just to find out what was happening, how we**  
 3 **felt, how we were inside the home. But it was always**  
 4 **with the house parent [redacted].**  
 5 Q. Don't worry, we have a restriction order. Don't worry,  
 6 it's easy to do. So the first social worker did come  
 7 and visit you and talk to you, separate from your  
 8 siblings, but always with the house parent there?  
 9 **A. Always with the house parent, yes.**  
 10 Q. So if you had a problem, was that the house mother or  
 11 the house father?  
 12 **A. The house mother. Always with the house mother. She**  
 13 **was the one who took notes always, never with the house**  
 14 **father.**  
 15 Q. So she took notes of the meeting between you and your  
 16 social worker?  
 17 **A. She would always take notes and always ask for notes**  
 18 **from him. I know this also to be true because it's in**  
 19 **my care records, I've seen it.**  
 20 Q. But he, at least, came and talked to you and was asking  
 21 you questions about what it was like?  
 22 **A. Yes.**  
 23 Q. Would that have affected you, that the house mother was  
 24 in the room when he was asking questions about the home?  
 25 **A. It would have, I think -- I would never have felt**

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1 **was always quite -- you know, it wasn't unusual for us,**  
 2 **as children, to be taken care of by somebody else. My**  
 3 **mother travelled extensively with my father. During the**  
 4 **time when she was away, my aunts would always take**  
 5 **care of us. So going into a home, it wasn't like that,**  
 6 **but it didn't -- you know, we were told to call them**  
 7 **aunts, we weren't allowed to call them by their names.**  
 8 **So I think that correlation between my own aunts and**  
 9 **this auntie sort of extended family kind of setup --**  
 10 **I don't know.**  
 11 Q. Yes, fair enough. The second social worker who took  
 12 over from the one who did visit you, over the period he  
 13 was your social worker, did you get much of an interest  
 14 shown by him in how you were and what was going on?  
 15 **A. Nothing. He wasn't interested. There was no real**  
 16 **interview, like there was with the first one. He never**  
 17 **sat down with us once that I recall. He'd come in --**  
 18 **I think he was more interested in just doing the admin.**  
 19 **Of course, my mother needed money, needed stuff at the**  
 20 **time, we had nothing after that. He was more interested**  
 21 **in seeing what he could do to arrange that, and that was**  
 22 **it. I think that's what he felt that's all we needed.**  
 23 Q. You say in your statement it felt like he was just  
 24 ticking boxes and wanted to get out of the house as fast  
 25 as possible?

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1 **A. He wanted to get out of his office, I know that. Coming**  
 2 **down to the home was a breather for him. He wanted**  
 3 **to -- he just -- you know, he did spend the time that he**  
 4 **was allocated to spend with my sibling and I, who was**  
 5 **living in the home. He just (interference) and we'd**  
 6 **always hear them laughing, having tea, and then, when he**  
 7 **was leaving, he would just say goodbye, and that was it.**  
 8 **So, yes, he just wanted to get in, do whatever and just**  
 9 **leave.**  
 10 **Q. Was he the social worker for some of the time when you**  
 11 **were in Shirley Oaks as well as when you went home, or**  
 12 **was he just when you went home?**  
 13 **A. So the first social worker, he actually worked under the**  
 14 **second social worker. He was the superior. When we**  
 15 **left the home, even though we had still contact with the**  
 16 **first social worker for the first couple of months,**  
 17 **maybe, he was then -- I don't know what happened. The**  
 18 **other guy, he took over. He was the superior. You**  
 19 **know, looking back, I think I would have expected**  
 20 **a great deal more.**  
 21 **Q. Going back to when you're in the home and you're about**  
 22 **eight years of age, you go to visit the onsite doctor**  
 23 **for treatment of a wart on your hand?**  
 24 **A. That's right.**  
 25 **Q. Can you tell us what happened when you went to see the**

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1 **would develop and he was touching my buttocks when he**  
 2 **was talking about it. I just felt uncomfortable, and he**  
 3 **wanted to show me where they were located. I froze.**  
 4 **I think he felt it. As far as I recall, that was the**  
 5 **end of it.**  
 6 **Q. At the time, that obviously made you feel uncomfortable.**  
 7 **Did you tell anyone about that, the house mother or the**  
 8 **house father?**  
 9 **A. I told the house mother. She sat me down and she made**  
 10 **notes, and afterwards she said that I wouldn't need to**  
 11 **worry, I didn't need to see him again, and I didn't.**  
 12 **For the treatment of the wart, it was the nurse who**  
 13 **finished that. If I had to see a doctor, I would never**  
 14 **be alone. It was either the house mother or one of**  
 15 **the house aunties, but more often than not it was the**  
 16 **house mother that took me.**  
 17 **Q. So the house mother, after you told her about that, she**  
 18 **was the one who made sure you never saw that doctor**  
 19 **alone?**  
 20 **A. Yes, or that doctor or any other doctor there.**  
 21 **Q. Any doctor. Did you tell anyone else, apart from the**  
 22 **house mother?**  
 23 **A. Only the boy, I think his name was [redacted].**  
 24 **Q. Don't worry about the name. It is not a problem,**  
 25 **please.**

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1 doctor about that wart?  
 2 **A. It was the second or third visit. It wasn't the first**  
 3 **one. He was -- because what they did, I remember they**  
 4 **were lancing the wart. I don't know what he was talking**  
 5 **about, whilst he was doing it. I was aware he was**  
 6 **asking me about the physical examination. We had one**  
 7 **when we first went into the care, all of us, my siblings**  
 8 **and I. I think that was standard practice to gauge the**  
 9 **state of our health.**  
 10 **He asked when was the last one that I had, or when**  
 11 **did I have a physical examination, or if I had one.**  
 12 **I explained I did when I first came in. He felt that**  
 13 **was a long time ago and that I needed another one, just**  
 14 **to make sure everything was fine. He was my doctor, he**  
 15 **was the doctor. He told me to undress, and so I did.**  
 16 **Then he asked me to remove my underwear, so I did, and**  
 17 **everything else you have there.**  
 18 **Q. So then you describe what he did, and you say:**  
 19 **"He grabbed my testicles, bare buttocks. He was**  
 20 **asking inappropriate questions of an 8-year-old."**  
 21 **Can you remember what he was sort of asking you?**  
 22 **A. He was asking me if I understood the differences between**  
 23 **the form of an adult and a child, and did I understand**  
 24 **why, you know, certain things were different, namely,**  
 25 **the testicles, the size, and why I had none or when they**

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1 **A. I don't know what his name is. It was one of the other**  
 2 **house boys, boys that was in care.**  
 3 **Q. In your room, one of your roommates, or just someone**  
 4 **else?**  
 5 **A. No, it was just him; also with one of my other siblings.**  
 6 **He was present, but it was never a big discussion, it**  
 7 **was just like, "Oh, this is what happened". I think it**  
 8 **was just laughed off as though it was nothing. I guess**  
 9 **I just forgot about it.**  
 10 **Q. My next question is, did the children discuss that kind**  
 11 **of thing between themselves? You discussed it with two**  
 12 **people. Did they ever say anything like that had**  
 13 **happened to them, or not, or just --**  
 14 **A. Not that I recall.**  
 15 **Q. So you were telling them about your experience?**  
 16 **A. Yes.**  
 17 **Q. You tell us in your statement that you were subjected to**  
 18 **further sexual abuse at the Shirley Oaks School,**  
 19 **child-on-child abuse, and you were bullied by three**  
 20 **people?**  
 21 **A. Like I said, when I first was put into Shirley, soon**  
 22 **after starting at the school, the bullying kind of began**  
 23 **then. It was almost after starting at the school. It**  
 24 **wasn't really like bullying bullying, I think it was**  
 25 **just like -- the same three boys, they would always --**

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1 it would be the same three boys, an older and two  
 2 younger, maybe about my age or a bit younger. They were  
 3 always laughing and would separate me from the others.  
 4 Just the silly stuff in school that you don't really pay  
 5 attention to. But that progressed over time. The  
 6 simple touch or the push became more pronounced. The  
 7 boys would then separate me from whoever I was with to  
 8 get me apart. The older boy would then -- he would  
 9 charge at me, push me or just -- you know, the silly  
 10 little playground things that just kind of intimidated  
 11 me. But it was always done in the presence of an adult,  
 12 another teacher, and they would always speak to this  
 13 particular person.  
 14 I noticed, not to begin with, I only became aware of  
 15 the adult later on, maybe during the spring --  
 16 Q. Just pausing there, when they were pushing you, and this  
 17 was getting more difficult, was an adult around and  
 18 witnessing that or not?  
 19 A. There was always an adult there.  
 20 Q. From the school or from the home or from where?  
 21 A. I always thought it was from the school. I think there  
 22 was a teacher there. He was in the playground, always  
 23 in the playground. That's the only time I remember him  
 24 being there, so there was always -- always in his  
 25 presence.

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1 boys were always there -- I don't know if they were  
 2 a distraction, but they were always there watching him,  
 3 but they were always laughing.  
 4 Q. He simulated sexual acts. Did he do a sexual act?  
 5 A. That was later, when it became -- it was, like, summer,  
 6 summer time, just before summer time. I know the  
 7 weather was warm, I was wearing shorts. That's when  
 8 that happened. It wasn't just him. I was chased. It  
 9 was somewhere by the school, not too far from the  
 10 school. They'd caught me. He --  
 11 Q. Yes.  
 12 A. And then that happened. I mean, he was very aggressive.  
 13 Outside the school, there was no laughter. It was very  
 14 abusive. I remember him being very derogatory. But he  
 15 was very angry. He was a very -- I don't think he  
 16 really liked me at all, for some reason, and I don't  
 17 understand why. He just -- yeah, he wasn't very nice.  
 18 Q. Was there an adult -- that happened slightly away from  
 19 the school. Was an adult nearby then or not?  
 20 A. That was in the playground at first. This boy, he  
 21 yanked my trousers down and penetrated me, it was --  
 22 I don't think, and I've mentioned this already to  
 23 someone, I don't believe it was a sexual act for him.  
 24 It was an act of aggression. He enjoyed how it made me  
 25 feel. I was hysterical. He laughed. He enjoyed it,

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1 Q. So this was happening, whatever was happening was under  
 2 the supervision of an adult in the playground?  
 3 A. Yes, and I believe they took their instructions from  
 4 him. They would always speak to him first before --  
 5 that's when I became aware of it. Whether they did it  
 6 to begin with, I don't know, I can't say, because  
 7 I don't recall. I only recalled it as it became more  
 8 intimidating, as it became more -- as it progressed to  
 9 be more than it was before. Then I recall this guy.  
 10 Q. So, far from it being stopped, the behaviour was being  
 11 encouraged by an adult, as far as you --  
 12 A. That's right, and it was intensifying. It became more  
 13 frightening.  
 14 Q. It intensified very seriously, didn't it?  
 15 A. It did. You know, I was there -- there in the winter.  
 16 By the spring, late spring, it was became more physical,  
 17 more violent, and the boy -- the older boy, I think he  
 18 enjoyed it. I don't know why. He didn't like me. He  
 19 was very aggressive in his manner. It got to a point in  
 20 the playground where he'd push me to the floor -- he'd  
 21 grab hold of me first and then just hold me, pushing  
 22 himself up against me in front of the teacher, the guy.  
 23 It just became more pronounced. At one point, he'd push  
 24 me onto the floor and he'd very quickly simulate  
 25 a sexual act, and then he'd run off laughing. The two

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1 from that point of view. But it was the other -- it was  
 2 the adult. He was -- I thought he was -- I think  
 3 I thought he was coming to help, but there was no -- he  
 4 wasn't that aggressive. He was very conciliatory in his  
 5 tone, in his manner. He was very -- he was a very calm  
 6 and very low tone. He was the complete opposite from  
 7 the boy. But, yeah, I mean -- I don't think I could go  
 8 on with that.  
 9 Q. No, don't worry. Don't worry. You have set that out in  
 10 your statement, and that wasn't a single occasion.  
 11 When you say, looking back at that abuse, you say,  
 12 as children, or as a child, you didn't even know what  
 13 a sexual act was, you didn't know what sex was. For  
 14 you, what was all this about?  
 15 A. We were never exposed to that as children. At home, we  
 16 were never told about anything like that. I didn't know  
 17 what sex was, I guess. We weren't even told how babies  
 18 were born or where they came from. We were sort of  
 19 shielded from anything like that. So for me, the abuse  
 20 that was going on in the playground, the bullying which  
 21 intensified over a period of months, for me, in my mind,  
 22 this was another form of bullying. It was very painful,  
 23 it was different. It was different in that the guy  
 24 had -- was now involved, he was no longer an onlooker,  
 25 he wasn't there looking --

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1 Q. You said at the time it made you feel as though it was  
 2 your fault. You were being bullied and you felt you  
 3 were a victim then, you were blaming yourself for the  
 4 bullying?  
 5 **A. It was made clear from the boy. He said a lot of**  
 6 **things. He was very -- he said it was my own fault and**  
 7 **I deserved it. He used very particular language to**  
 8 **describe me. I guess I felt that maybe that was my**  
 9 **fault. I guess I was very different from my brother.**  
 10 **I had big hair and maybe I was girly, like they**  
 11 **suggested, or something in my mannerism that suggested**  
 12 **I was a poofter or something, I don't know. But, yeah,**  
 13 **I felt that it was my fault. I was terrified that**  
 14 **anybody would find out. I didn't want anybody to know**  
 15 **what I had done. I didn't want anybody to know.**  
 16 Q. Your social worker was seeing you. You have said, as  
 17 you have now, you didn't want anyone to know, you didn't  
 18 expressly tell him, but it would have been obvious,  
 19 wasn't it, you say, that you were withdrawn and you were  
 20 upset this was happening?  
 21 **A. Well, it was obvious because at some point during the**  
 22 **time where, before that incident happened, I was**  
 23 **terrified of school, I was scared. They knew it. They**  
 24 **knew about the bullying. They all knew. Even the**  
 25 **social worker who was with me, he knew about the**

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1 the whole time I was there, 13 months, the only thing  
 2 I remember in this continuous loop are those events.  
 3 I remember seven, kind of -- I can vaguely remember the  
 4 jubilee that was there, the Queen's Jubilee. I remember  
 5 vaguely the bonfire, Bonfire Night, but that was it.  
 6 There's a lot that I've blocked out. There's a lot that  
 7 I don't want to -- I've never really wanted to remember  
 8 anything about Shirley, to be honest with you. I have  
 9 spent a lot of my life trying to push that out.  
 10 Q. I understand. You tried to tell your mum about the  
 11 abuse later, when you left care.  
 12 **A. Yes.**  
 13 Q. How did she receive that?  
 14 **A. My mother is very much a person of sweeping under the**  
 15 **carpet. She never wanted to deal with it. She couldn't**  
 16 **deal with her own --**  
 17 Q. Could I ask you to slow down slightly? Not at all. It  
 18 is so important we hear you. It is just helpful if you  
 19 go a little bit slower.  
 20 **A. My mother wasn't very much a person who could deal with**  
 21 **anything. She couldn't deal with her own problems.**  
 22 **I remember that night I was messing around, dancing, she**  
 23 **was drinking, she was -- I think she had already had**  
 24 **half a bottle of whisky and she had been -- I didn't**  
 25 **know at the time, she was taking her antidepressants,**

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1 **bullying. He makes a note of that in my care records.**  
 2 **And nobody actually did anything. I actually became**  
 3 **very nervous going to school, nervous to the point where**  
 4 **I actually wet my own bed at night. That didn't stop.**  
 5 **That became more pronounced. So they knew all about**  
 6 **that and nothing was ever done.**  
 7 **So I didn't know what else to say, or what else to**  
 8 **do. I mean, you know, they never stopped the bullying.**  
 9 **They never spoke to the boys that were there. They**  
 10 **didn't do anything. So I guess I felt that it was**  
 11 **bullying and I knew they hadn't done anything before.**  
 12 **Whether or not they would do anything now, I'm unable**  
 13 **to -- I didn't think that anything would have happened,**  
 14 **to be honest with you.**  
 15 Q. What about in the classroom? Did you have any teaching  
 16 at school?  
 17 **A. Well, to be honest with you, I don't remember anything**  
 18 **about the school. The only two things I remember about**  
 19 **the school is the playground, the incident outside it**  
 20 **and the time I ran into the -- because after what**  
 21 **happened, I ran back into the -- through the playground,**  
 22 **I fell over, I went straight into the rest room to clean**  
 23 **myself, and that's when I discovered I had (inaudible)**  
 24 **and that's the only thing I remember about the school.**  
 25 **Everything else is blocked out. To be honest with you,**

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1 I think she was on Valium, and she had been taking them.  
 2 She saw me messing around, dancing, like -- I don't know  
 3 what I was doing, dancing around. She asked me to stop  
 4 messing around, and then she called me a sissy, but  
 5 I don't think she was calling me a sissy, she said to  
 6 stop acting like a sissy. I said, "That's what they all  
 7 called me in Shirley". I remember I said, "The boys,  
 8 they used to call me that in school when they hurt me".  
 9 That's when my mother shut me down. She said to sit  
 10 down and be quiet. She just didn't want to engage.  
 11 Q. Do you think it's that she didn't believe what you were  
 12 saying or she didn't want to hear what you were saying?  
 13 **A. She didn't want to hear what I had to say. There was**  
 14 **something -- I always suspected she knew more had**  
 15 **happened. I always felt, over the years, growing up --**  
 16 **I don't know what I thought then. I think if she had**  
 17 **spoken to me, it would have been different, but she**  
 18 **said, no, she didn't want to know, and the next thing**  
 19 **she actually was trying -- she attempted suicide that**  
 20 **night. She had taken all the pills, had all the whisky,**  
 21 **and it was traumatic just to see that. I was the only**  
 22 **one that was up. I called my sister and eventually**  
 23 **I called the ambulance, they came in, they took her to**  
 24 **a hospital.**  
 25 Q. In terms of being in care and these experiences, how

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1 that impacted on your life, how did life go for you?  
 2 **A. It went -- it didn't, is the answer to that. It didn't.**  
 3 **I hated school, I hated being around there. Every time**  
 4 **I'd go there, I'd hear the children laughing. It always**  
 5 **reminded me of Shirley. I kept myself to myself.**  
 6 **I didn't engage with any activities. I played truant**  
 7 **a lot. My mother was an alcoholic. She would be in bed**  
 8 **every morning, so it was easy to begin with, just to**  
 9 **stay at home. When she would wake up and ask what I was**  
 10 **doing there, I'd say she'd asked me to help her clean**  
 11 **the house or whatever. I could get away with it then.**  
 12 **It was unfortunate that Social Services didn't think to**  
 13 **just knock on the door unannounced once or twice when**  
 14 **that happened. You know, they may have seen what it was**  
 15 **like. I'm not blaming my mother, she was -- it was the**  
 16 **only way that she knew how to cope with things, I guess.**  
 17 **It was just -- by not coping with it, not dealing with**  
 18 **it and just drinking herself into oblivion. I think she**  
 19 **was an alcoholic. I have reason to believe --**  
 20 **Q. Pausing there, do you think you got much support from**  
 21 **social workers when you had gone home or thereafter or**  
 22 **no support at all?**  
 23 **A. No. Only the first social worker, when we first moved**  
 24 **into the first sort of temporary accommodation, only**  
 25 **then he asked me how I was at school and I told him**

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1 **spent more time out of the school. And then, by the**  
 2 **time I was legally able to leave it, I did. I thought**  
 3 **that would be the end of the way I felt and the way that**  
 4 **environment made me feel. But it never did because**  
 5 **I think I spent more time trying to be away from**  
 6 **everybody, trying to insulate myself, trying to protect**  
 7 **myself --**  
 8 **Q. How does that make you feel now, looking back at the**  
 9 **education, that you have now got this degree and you**  
 10 **didn't do anything like that when you were younger, how**  
 11 **do you feel that's impacted on your life as well, your**  
 12 **opportunities in life and generally?**  
 13 **A. Well, I didn't have any. Unfortunately, I soon found**  
 14 **out at an early age nobody wants to employ anybody**  
 15 **without any formal qualifications. Back then, there was**  
 16 **lots of unqualified jobs you could get, it wasn't an**  
 17 **issue, but I found out that I was very limited.**  
 18 **Looking back on it now, I mean, I look back on it in**  
 19 **regret. I wish I had somehow tried to force myself. If**  
 20 **I had, it would have been different, because I know that**  
 21 **when I did do my degree, I really enjoyed it. I felt**  
 22 **there was this penchant for learning new things,**  
 23 **information, it was great. Unfortunately, though, when**  
 24 **it ended, even though I had some success from it, it**  
 25 **kind of just went flat. I didn't know what else to do.**

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1 **I didn't like it, didn't like the people. That's when**  
 2 **he noted in the files that I was like that perhaps**  
 3 **because I allowed myself to be bullied in Shirley.**  
 4 **Q. "Allowed"?**  
 5 **A. Yes, which is really unfortunate language to use.**  
 6 **Q. It is.**  
 7 **A. So that's -- but it was a very different time period,**  
 8 **I understand. They were allowed to use -- I mean, they**  
 9 **called us savages anyway, and the house, they said, was**  
 10 **in a filthy, uninhabitable state. So this was all**  
 11 **language that they used.**  
 12 **Q. This was the description of the family home?**  
 13 **A. Yes. Yes.**  
 14 **Q. Can you tell us about your education? You have gone on**  
 15 **to get a degree, have you, or -- as an adult?**  
 16 **A. I got a degree. I passed -- six years ago, in 2014,**  
 17 **I got my degree finished.**  
 18 **Q. In terms of when you were a young child, your education,**  
 19 **what happened to that?**  
 20 **A. Nothing. I didn't. I didn't spend time at school,**  
 21 **I didn't like the environment. Any excuse not to**  
 22 **engage, I didn't engage. I didn't have an education.**  
 23 **I spent more time out of it than in. The**  
 24 **Social Services didn't really do much about that except**  
 25 **write letters to my mother, but I didn't care. I just**

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1 **I wasn't equipped to actually make use of it. Because**  
 2 **of my age, that didn't help either. Opportunities**  
 3 **aren't available to people beyond 30. So, yeah, it's**  
 4 **regrettable that I didn't engage with education in the**  
 5 **way that I should have, and it's regrettable that**  
 6 **I wasn't forced to either. Yes, I kind of look back on**  
 7 **it with regret. I kind of mourn what I don't have, what**  
 8 **I didn't get.**  
 9 **Q. In terms of -- this is going to be a difficult question**  
 10 **to answer without saying a lot about your siblings,**  
 11 **because I don't want you to say much about your**  
 12 **siblings. But you are describing from a family with**  
 13 **siblings and, when you are very young, going into care.**  
 14 **How did the experience -- and you describe being**  
 15 **separated from at least one of them. How did the care**  
 16 **experience impact your lifelong childhood relationships**  
 17 **and into adulthood with your siblings?**  
 18 **A. I think it kind of destroyed any connection that I might**  
 19 **have had with them. I think being separated and then**  
 20 **there was no real -- I don't know why -- what happened,**  
 21 **but I think the whole experience kind of impacted on me**  
 22 **the way I felt towards everybody else. Growing up, when**  
 23 **I was a little older, I wanted to disassociate myself**  
 24 **from that experience. The best way I found was to**  
 25 **disassociate myself from my family, first from my**

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1 **siblings and later, then, from my mother. For a while,**  
2 **it seemed to work. But of course it didn't. I forgot**  
3 **about things for a while and then something happened and**  
4 **suddenly everything came back, and here I am today.**  
5 Q. In terms of -- we have been asking everybody, LA-A299,  
6 to think about in terms of recommendations and how  
7 things might be different now for children in care or  
8 made better for children in care. Is there anything you  
9 would like to say to the chair about your experience and  
10 how it might have been different or could be different  
11 for children now?  
12 **A. Okay. I don't know what it is like today for children.**  
13 **I know that things have changed. I know I've made**  
14 **a number of suggestions. I think that anybody, first of**  
15 **all, going into care or being looked after by anybody,**  
16 **each and every one of those people in charge of**  
17 **a vulnerable person needs to be investigated**  
18 **thoroughly -- not just them, but their associates, their**  
19 **close family members and even maybe friends, their**  
20 **associations, to make sure there is no suggestion of**  
21 **anything untoward.**  
22 **I think if a social worker could be more trained in**  
23 **understanding not just the -- I know -- I understand**  
24 **back then we were vulnerable, we had no adult**  
25 **supervision, so take them out of the home quickly and**

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1 circumstances that lead to a child having to come into  
2 care in the first place, look and see if there are  
3 alternatives within the family, extended family --  
4 **A. Absolutely. Absolutely. There is absolutely no**  
5 **question in my mind it would have been different if they**  
6 **had; not just for myself, but for the whole family as**  
7 **a unit. I think it would have made a complete and utter**  
8 **difference.**  
9 MS LANGDALE: Thank you. I have no further questions.  
10 I don't know if the chair has. She will let you know if  
11 she has.  
12 THE CHAIR: Thank you. I particularly want to thank the  
13 witness: they're clearly painful experiences to recall,  
14 and we very much appreciate you giving evidence to the  
15 inquiry, which will undoubtedly help us. Thank you.  
16 **A. Thank you.**  
17 MS LANGDALE: Chair, I ask again for the restriction order  
18 in respect of the social worker named and the boy in  
19 care. I think that was all. I don't think there was  
20 any sibling reference. Thank you.  
21 THE CHAIR: I'll make that order.  
22 (The witness withdrew)  
23 MS LANGDALE: Chair, that concludes the oral evidence that  
24 we have today.  
25 THE CHAIR: Thank you, Ms Langdale. I take it that

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1 **put them into a supervised position, and that was it.**  
2 **We needed a great deal more than that. I think we would**  
3 **have benefited -- I would have benefited from having**  
4 **maybe -- an auntie who looked after us throughout our**  
5 **lives when my mother used to travel with my father, if**  
6 **they had just made the effort to get in contact with an**  
7 **extended family member, which no effort was made. They**  
8 **could have called. They could have asked somebody. You**  
9 **know, we had the phone numbers. My brothers had the**  
10 **phone numbers, my older brother then. But they never**  
11 **did.**  
12 **So far as I'm aware, no effort was made to contact**  
13 **the extended family. I think that would have been far**  
14 **more beneficial for us, and certainly for me, or even**  
15 **a foster parent to come in to overlook.**  
16 **But I understand now that allegations were made**  
17 **against my older sibling, so they needed to investigate**  
18 **that, but, to my knowledge, no investigation was made.**  
19 **We were just taken out of our environment and placed**  
20 **into an alien environment. It was a complete and utter**  
21 **disruption not just to our lives -- we lost everything,**  
22 **we lost our property and all our possessions. We**  
23 **completely lost everything. Once that place was empty,**  
24 **the bank was able to repossess it.**  
25 Q. So you would say it's really important to look at the

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1 concludes all of our business today?  
2 MS LANGDALE: Yes, it does, yes.  
3 THE CHAIR: Thank you very much. We will reconvene  
4 tomorrow.  
5 MS LANGDALE: Thank you.  
6 (2.08 pm)  
7 (The hearing was adjourned to  
8 Thursday, 2 July 2020 at 10.30 am)  
9  
10  
11 I N D E X  
12  
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