



Truth Project Experiences Shared

Victims and Survivors Speak Out

June 2018



 INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

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They stole so much from me that cannot be fixed when they abused me. But with this Inquiry comes renewed hope; hope that whilst we cannot stop child sexual abuse, we can learn how to limit it, and how to support those affected by it when it does happen. This will undoubtedly save lives.

Truth Project participant

This is a set of personal experiences that have been shared with the Inquiry. These represent a range of the experiences shared. All names and identifying details have been changed. Victims and survivors can share as little or as much as they want on any aspect of their experience.

If you would like to share your experience of child sexual abuse, and/or institutional failure, you can contact the Inquiry Information Line 0800 917 1000. Full details on services and support can be found on our website: <https://www.truthproject.org.uk/help-and-support>.

Contents

Introduction	1
Juliet.....	3
Angus	5
Mary	7
Kevin	9
Zoe	10
Freddie	12
Gina.....	13
Clive	15
Katie	17
Henry.....	19
Jennie.....	22
Chris.....	24
Denise	26
Harry	28
Kirsty.....	30
Tony.....	32
Emma.....	33
Jack.....	35
Carol.....	37
Jim	39
Chloe.....	41
Sonny	43
Angie	45
Oliver	47
Abbie.....	49
Dennis	51
Jackie.....	52
William.....	54

Diane	55
Eddie	57
Nancy	59
Fin	61
Amanda.....	62
Marcus	64
Haley	66
Alan	68
Jill	70
Joshua.....	72
Dawn	74
Dylan	76
Aalia	78
Richard.....	80
Joanne	81
Ethan	83
Lucy	85
Michael.....	87
Cathy	89
Douglas	91
Karen.....	93
Colin.....	95

Introduction

As an Inquiry, we have always recognised the importance of the Truth Project. Giving victims and survivors the opportunity to share their experiences with the Inquiry in a safe environment is critical to delivering our Terms of Reference.

The valuable contribution made by many courageous victims and survivors has given us insights which would have been difficult to obtain in other ways. The information we receive is helping us understand more fully in what circumstances sexual abuse of children can occur, whether it is locations, patterns or frequency.

And the Truth Project is growing. Since we published our last experiences shared publication we have had over 1,000 people come forward to share their experiences with us. We have increased opportunities to hold

Truth sessions to cover five fixed locations and 12 flexible locations across different towns and cities in England and Wales.

I know how hard it can be for victims and survivors to speak about the abuse they suffered. The courage they display is remarkable. Many who have come forward have said they felt motivated to share their experiences in order to help others. We hope that people will continue to do so, both for themselves and for the better protection of children now and in the future.



Professor Alexis Jay OBE,

Chair of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse

A succession of abusive encounters in the care system led to Juliet being sexualised at a young age, then disbelieved and blamed for the immoral behaviour of adults.

Juliet's father left the family home when she was a baby and her mother was an alcoholic and a drug-user. At 18 months old, Juliet was placed in foster care with a family.

One of her earliest memories is the foster father touching her inappropriately while pretending to tickle her. He was also physically abusive to her and her sibling, forcing them to sit naked at the table to make sure they finished their food and didn't try and hide anything they didn't like.

Although she feels unhappy about the way her foster carers treated her, she says she doesn't want them to get into trouble as they still feel like her 'real parents'. As abusive as it might have been, she says it was better than her situation with her mother.

At some stage, Juliet asked to be moved from the foster family and was given different placements in care. With one family who had children of their own and adopted children – all older than her – Juliet became aware that the children would partner up to have sex with each other. They took to sexually abusing her as well.

She was moved to another children's home where she remembers the owners being physically abusive and the boys trapping the girls to grope them. Juliet says she

didn't care. By this time, she was getting into trouble and felt she just wanted to make people happy. Looking back, she says she was seen as a 'Lolita' and was sexualised at an early age. Her behaviour deteriorated and her education suffered.

When she was a young teenager, a man came to the home looking for a babysitter for his family. Juliet went to his house with her friend and found it very exciting. He would let them drink, smoke and watch cartoons and they didn't seem to be required to look after his children. When her friend stopped going, Juliet got all the man's attention. He would touch her, and she believes he started to drug her as well as give her alcohol. He once showed her a video of young girls being abused by him in his flat and she wonders if he filmed her as well. After he tried to have sex with her and she was physically sick, she stopped going to his house.

Juliet began babysitting for another man who was married with children and involved in the local Scouts group and football team. Juliet started a relationship with him which she has struggled to consider abusive, despite her age. Juliet would sometimes stay over while babysitting and he would come downstairs to have sex with her. She suspects the wife was aware – one day she accused Juliet of

making eyes at her husband and she was stopped from going to the house.

When Juliet tried to talk to social services about what had happened she was dismissed for making things up.

In her teenage years Juliet coped with the effects of the sexual abuse by using alcohol and drugs. She is now able to keep on track with the support of therapy and says she remains strong and positive.

Given up by his family at a young age, Angus was left at the mercy of abusive carers. His childhood was so troubled as a result that he describes how being in a police cell felt safer than being at home.

Angus says that when his mother asked for him to be placed for adoption, his father, who was in the forces, agreed this was in his best interests. He comments: 'It wrecked my life, being rejected by my own family.'

Initially he was placed in a residential nursery, then with foster carers, who became his long-term carers. He feels angry that he was not adopted straight away, as this would have been better for him at such a young age. His overwhelming recollections of his childhood experiences with people who were supposed to care for him are a lack of love and warmth, and harsh, abusive punishments.

Angus was not toilet-trained when he was sent to live with the foster family, and his male carer told the social worker he would 'give him a good hiding' for not using the toilet. He recalls that the social worker advised against this, but he cannot understand why this threat did not ring alarm bells.

The physical abuse by the male carer that continued throughout his childhood included being hit with a stick and punched in the face. Angus says he cannot remember one positive person in his young life; just a feeling of coldness and intolerance towards him. He describes how this made him an extremely unhappy and troubled child who developed

a clear sense of having to stick up for himself because no one else would.

During his time with the foster carers, he was sexually abused by a man who was involved with the Scouts. Angus remembered this man taking alcohol into children's tents while they were camping and being touched by him when they were swimming and in the woods. He has reported this sexual abuse to the police but does not believe any action was taken against the man.

Angus was also bullied at school. His treatment led him to behave in ways that he says he knows were not always acceptable, but he does not believe that he deserved the abuse from his carer.

Later, Angus was placed in a boarding school, but he ran away after a few weeks and subsequently began to run away from home. He ended up in a city, with nowhere to stay and vulnerable to further abuse. He was frequently picked up by the police, but he says: 'I preferred to be in a police cell', rather than at home with his carers.

Angus describes how he has done his best to get on with his life. He has managed to find good jobs, he has a settled relationship and loves where he lives. But he has ongoing mental health issues that he works hard to manage.

He feels he was grossly let down by those responsible for his welfare and protection as a child, and he wants social services to be held accountable for their failure in his case.

On behalf of other children in care, Angus wants to speak out and say that social workers should listen to allegations of sexual abuse so that children do not go on suffering.

Mary has made great efforts to deal with the trauma of sexual abuse by her older brother, but it continues to haunt her.

Mary feels her experiences have wrecked her relationships and knows that she is exceptionally protective of her child. She says: 'I feel my life would have taken a totally different path if I hadn't been abused.'

The sexual abuse began when she was ten years old, with her brother claiming: 'This is what big brothers do ... show you how to do it ... explain sex.' Within a short space of time, he was regularly raping her. She describes how at first she trusted him because he was her big brother, but when she started secondary school she realised what he was doing was wrong and challenged him. He became violent towards her and the sexual abuse continued. She told her best friend at school about the sexual abuse, but no one else.

Mary's brother was her regular babysitter, and she recalls that on one occasion her mother went away for the whole of the school holiday, leaving him in charge. The sexual abuse continued for many years, until Mary hit him, and he left the family home.

When she was still a teenager, Mary left home and had a child. She says she could just about manage seeing her brother at family events but would never be alone with him. On learning that he was moving to the same town as her, Mary says: 'I had a meltdown. I didn't want him near me or near my child.' She visited her mother and told her about the

sexual abuse, but her mother's response was dismissive. Mary felt this proved no one would believe her.

However, when she told her stepfather and father they both believed her. Mary's father could not understand why she had not told him while the sexual abuse was happening, as she saw him regularly. Mary says: 'I couldn't tell my dad because I didn't want to leave my siblings – my brother had said they would be taken away.'

Mary reported her sexual abuse to the police, who she says took her seriously and began an investigation. Her brother was arrested and her mother was interviewed, but Mary believes she lied to protect her son. She says the police knew her mother was lying but there was insufficient evidence for her brother to be charged. She was disappointed that neither her father nor her stepfather was interviewed.

Reflecting on her childhood, Mary feels there were clear signs something was wrong that should have been picked up in school. She relates how she changed from being a high performer in primary school to being challenging in secondary school, but all the signs she displayed of her distress were put down to hormones. She feels she was labelled a 'naughty kid' and by the time a teacher tried to ask her what was wrong it was too late. Mary is clear that if teaching staff had asked her earlier she would have told them.

The sexual abuse Mary suffered has had a significant impact on her. After reporting the matter to the police, she suffered a breakdown and post-traumatic stress disorder and has received counselling. Although she feels she has dealt with the impact now, she continues to have night terrors. When she looks at her child, she feels incredulous about the sexual abuse she suffered at the same age.

Mary wanted to share her experience through the Truth Project to make recommendations to help others. She is concerned that schools today are no more prepared to recognise and manage the non-verbal indications that children may be suffering sexual abuse than they were when she was at school. She thinks

that school staff need more training in how to respond to allegations of sexual abuse; that clear guidance is needed to manage allegations; that all schools should educate children about sexual abuse; and that fear of making wrong accusations should not prevent teachers from taking action.

She would like the police to take guidance from victims and survivors about the appropriate people to interview and gather evidence from in any investigation. They should not assume parents are protective, and appropriate adults present in child abuse interviews should not be related to the child. She thinks there is a clear role for victims and survivors of sexual abuse to contribute to safeguarding training for professionals.

It was only when Kevin heard a radio programme about sexual abuse that he really understood what had happened to him as a child. The difficulty for him when he was young, he says, is that: 'I didn't always know the words for what was happening to me.'

Following his parents' divorce, Kevin and his mother lived with relatives for a short time. He says it was a relief when they left there, as his uncle had been sexually abusing him.

After moving to a new home, Kevin joined a Christian youth organisation where the leader 'took a shine' to him, offering to pay for a trip that Kevin's mother could not afford. On this trip, the leader sexually abused Kevin and made him witness to sexual abuse of other boys in the dormitory.

Kevin questions how these childhood experiences may have shaped his life. He rebelled as a teenager and was sent to a detention centre for fighting. There, he was subjected to physical assault by the prison officers and violence far worse than that he was sentenced for. On release he spent years of his life misusing drugs and alcohol and acquired a lengthy criminal record.

When he tried to share with both his parents that he had been sexually abused as a child, his mother suggested he may be gay and his father did not seem interested.

Kevin gave a detailed account of the sexual abuse he had experienced to the police. However, after the officers left he never heard from them again. He feels he was fobbed off, and that: 'They probably didn't value the testimony of someone with such a lengthy criminal record.'

In an adult prison, Kevin found religion and sought help from the church regarding the sexual abuse he had been subjected to. After a couple of false starts, he received counselling that he says was life-changing and enabled him to forgive 'the demons from my past'.

He tells the Inquiry: 'I now consider myself to be a survivor. I haven't had a fight in many years as I now have exemplary self-control. This is thanks to finding my faith, which is very dear to me. However, I would like to play a part in ending today the abuse of other suffering children.'

Kevin makes several recommendations he believes would help keep children safer in the future.

From a young age Zoe took on caring responsibilities beyond her years. With a school and family life that was erratic at times, she was left vulnerable to grooming by older men.

Zoe's father had mental health issues. Her mother struggled to cope with the changes in her relationship with her husband and began to use alcohol. Zoe remembers feeling the need to protect her parents. She had a sibling, but she says they preferred to 'do their own thing and didn't take on caring responsibilities'. Zoe feels she did not have much support – although services were working with her father there was no provision for the rest of the family. Other than an older relative, Zoe had no one she felt able to talk to.

At primary school Zoe had health issues and was under the care of the hospital. She recalls her attendance was poor as she wanted to stay at home to care for her father. She believes this was not questioned by the school as they assumed it was due to her own health issues. Zoe remembers being unhappy and finding it hard to maintain school friendships.

At secondary school she managed to distance herself a little from the caring responsibilities as nurses attended to her father daily. During this time, she says she established good friendships and felt close to her family, remembering that they would regularly join other family members for weekends away.

But on occasions her parents would go away for the weekend leaving Zoe and her sibling at

home. They would miss school and go into the city drinking. She also began to stay weekends with the relative of a friend, who would buy the girls alcohol. She describes how they began mixing with older men and staying over at their places, each saying they were at the other's home.

The older men would pick Zoe and her friend up from school at lunchtime, returning them for afternoon lessons. She is surprised that no one at school questioned who these men were or where they were going. On reflection she feels that her behaviour and drinking was normalised by adults in her life who viewed it as typical teenage behaviour.

Zoe's friend began to form a friendship with a man, Al, who was aged around 30. One night when the two girls were both at Al's home he invited a friend, Lucas, to join them for a drink. Zoe was left alone downstairs with Lucas, who sexually assaulted and raped her. It was the first time she had had sex.

She describes being terrified of Lucas, and how she met him on three further occasions because she was so frightened of him. He showed her videos on his phone of other girls cowering and crying as he held a weapon. Once he chased Zoe down the street and pinned her against a wall, causing bruising, as he tried to kiss her.

Shortly after this Lucas was arrested and sentenced to prison. Zoe says: 'If he hadn't been arrested I don't know how I would have escaped it. I don't know how I would have got out of it. I was terrified.'

Zoe has learnt subsequently that Lucas and Al were imprisoned for committing serious crimes.

The sexual abuse had a significant impact on Zoe's mental health. She has suffered

depression and anxiety, requiring medication and counselling. It has also impacted on her ability to form relationships; she is frightened to be on her own yet scared to start a new relationship.

Zoe has attained a career she loves, and although she has been unable to tell her parents about being raped, she has told some work colleagues who are very supportive, offering her guidance and reassurance.

Freddie

Freddie's abuser was a teacher whose power and influence extended into the church, a business and a sports team in the local area. He feels this network of control made it easier for the man to abuse many young people.

After his parents divorced, Freddie did not see his mum for a long time and his dad worked long hours to provide for him and his siblings. The church was a big influence on the family and Freddie attended a faith school.

A teacher named Pat, who had taught there for many years, was known as a bully who would throw classroom equipment at the children. He was also a sports coach who had close links to a local priest. At sports practice, Pat compared Freddie unfavourably with his relatives who were better at the game.

Freddie now knows he has a specific learning difficulty but was not diagnosed at that time. Pat made him read aloud on a one-to-one basis at his angled desk. Out of view of anyone entering the classroom, Pat would touch Freddie on his penis and backside while he was reading. This became more frequent as months went on. Pat could get tickets to local sports matches and continued the sexual abuse when he took Freddie to matches.

Freddie did not tell his father as he was still working long hours and trying to bring up his children. He did tell a girl in his class about the sexual abuse, and social services

visited, but he said he was scared to speak out as he felt Pat had such control over his family.

At the time Freddie thought he was the only victim but has since found out there were many more, male and female. Pat was arrested in the late 1980s following someone else's disclosure.

Freddie remembers social services visiting and later being interviewed at his relative's house. But he was not asked to give evidence at the trial, where Pat was sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

Freddie says the sexual abuse has affected him for over 30 years and he has only recently started talking about it. Freddie says he still struggles with authority and does not like his penis being touched in intimate moments. He has been taking antidepressants and has had counselling.

His key message is that he would like tighter checks on faith schools and their responsibilities made clearer. He feels the local priest almost certainly knew what was going on and if it had not been a faith school the abuse would have been discovered sooner.

Gina was subjected to sexual abuse by a music teacher, and then by a family friend in whom she had confided about the sexual abuse.

Gina says that she was always a quiet child, but she does not know whether this made her appear vulnerable to her abusers, or whether it was the sexual abuse that caused her to retreat.

Her parents hired Miles to come to their home once a week to teach music to Gina and her sibling. The sexual abuse began almost immediately. Gina was primary school age, and she thinks Miles was about the same age as her grandfather. She relates how he would put his hand inside her knickers and penetrate her with his fingers. Gina's parents were in the house, but she had a strong sense that she was not allowed to talk about what was happening. Miles would give her sweets and she thought this was to stop her from disclosing to anyone what was going on.

Gina describes how the shame she felt about accepting the sweets grew so much that she could not communicate to anyone what she was suffering. But after a while she told a male family friend who was a few years older than her and had been taught by the same teacher. His response was to call her a liar.

She describes Miles as 'confident' and thinks it unlikely that she was the first child he sexually abused. She has never discussed this with her sibling and does not know if

they were also sexually abused by their music teacher.

When Gina was nine years old, Miles's wife contacted the family to say that her husband had died suddenly. Gina felt relief that he would not be coming around again and guilt because she was glad he was dead. The confusion and the complex feelings provoked by his death were difficult for her to manage as a young child.

Gina says Miles was not connected to her school and she has no idea if he was registered to teach. When she reached her late teens, she told her parents about the sexual abuse, but her mother never spoke of it again and her father suggested to one of her siblings that she may have been making it up.

Gina started secondary school and says that at first she was happy and thriving there. But not long after starting secondary school, she was raped by the family friend she had previously told about the abuse by Miles. The family friend was 16 or 17 and he continued to rape and abuse Gina until she was in her 20s. She says again, she felt guilty about what was happening to her because she 'never shouted or screamed'. It did not occur to her that she could go to someone at school and disclose what was happening.

By her second year of secondary school Gina's academic record was declining; she was acting up and behaving badly. She became more promiscuous, engaging in risky behaviour. As a teenager, she says she felt that there was something wrong with her and that she was 'broken'. The school spoke to her parents about her behaviour, but she was never asked if anything was troubling her. There was no pastoral care available and Gina says she had no sense that the school would help her.

As one of a number of children, Gina had always felt that her role in the family was the 'grown-up one' and the carer for her other siblings. Now she was getting attention from her parents for all the wrong reasons. She says she has been known as the 'naughty' child ever since.

The childhood sexual abuse suffered by Gina has impacted significantly on her life. She has struggled to form and maintain trusting relationships. From her teenage years until her 30s, she drank alcohol and took drugs. She has been sober for a long time now and considers that the alcohol and drug abuse were caused by the problems she developed in her younger years.

Gina has told some of her siblings about the later sexual abuse, but not her parents

as they are still closely acquainted with her abuser's family. She has not told the police about the multiple rapes by him because she is frightened about the huge impact her disclosure might have. She has heard stories that make her think it is unlikely there would be a successful prosecution.

Therapy has helped Gina in part to overcome the traumatic sexual abuse she has experienced. But she describes feeling frightened much of the time; she doesn't like going out on her own and she sees danger everywhere. She looks at her young family and worries that something similar could happen to them.

Looking back, Gina believes that her parents could have helped her more and the school could have done more to discover the background reasons for her behaviour. She believes that the problem of child sexual abuse is extremely complex and considers that sexism has some role to play, because girls are taught to be compliant.

She feels very upset by reports in the media about women being questioned when they report sexual abuse and the implication that they must be gaining from it. She sincerely hopes that children today would feel able to report sexual abuse and not internalise it the way she did.

Sexually abused by a stranger when he was a small boy, Clive has struggled with the psychological and emotional effects ever since.

Clive really wants people to understand that for those who have been sexually abused: 'It doesn't need to be stigmatised as some sort of disability, but it does need to be recognised that this will have a lifelong impact.'

Clive grew up in the 1980s and 90s. One day on a trip with his family he persuaded his mum he was big enough to go into the public toilet on his own. He was told to go into a cubicle, lock the door and come straight out when he was finished.

Clive did as he was told but as he was leaving he was grabbed by a man who pushed him back into the cubicle, telling him to be quiet. The man made him touch and rub his penis and forced him to put it in his mouth. He told Clive he would get some sweets if he was a good boy. Clive said he was so young and frightened he did as he was told.

When the abuser left he told Clive to wash his hands, as if looking after him, and to wait a minute before leaving the toilet building. Clive told his mum what had happened. He remembered clearly what the abuser looked like, including the detail of his hands and his clothing; he says the images have plagued him for many years in flashbacks.

Clive's mother took him straight to the local police station. He gave a statement and as they were leaving he saw the abuser across the street from the police station. They went

back inside and told the police. The abuser was eventually convicted of offences against adolescent boys, but Clive feels that he never got his own justice as the sexual abuse perpetrated against him was treated as a 'taken into consideration' offence at court.

After this experience, Clive's behaviour deteriorated, and he was expelled from school. He was labelled disruptive but was never asked what the problem was or if he needed help. His mother didn't say much – he thinks she felt partly to blame – and his father denied for years that the abuse had actually happened.

As an adolescent Clive became confused about sex and his sexuality. He felt worried that he had imagined the sexual abuse, thinking he was mad. He says his self-esteem was low and that he didn't feel like a 'real man'. This prompted him to enter the armed forces, but he couldn't cope with being surrounded by so many men in close proximity. He suffered horrendous flashbacks, couldn't sleep and couldn't face having a shower.

Clive was discharged and went home. He told both his parents what was happening to him, but his father told him he was a failure and an embarrassment and threw him out. He later succeeded in another role in the forces and despite many difficulties managed to make a success of his career.

After hearing about the Inquiry, Clive went to the police trying to get information about his case, but he says this has been a difficult and frustrating experience and he has found the police force to be dismissive.

Clive explains he tried many destructive ways to deal with the pain and consequences of the sexual abuse, including alcohol and drugs. He has considered suicide three times.

He has now found a better way, through extensive therapy, which he realises he is going to need for the rest of his life. He feels fortunate that he can access this because he has private healthcare through his employment.

Clive would like to see a more considerate and helpful process for victims and survivors who are trying to access information from the police or other organisations. He thinks social services should provide support for child victims and survivors, helping them to build resilience to cope with the trauma and lifelong impact of their experiences. They should also provide support to parents of victims and survivors, so they can understand the impact the abuse might have on the child's behaviour and how best to support them.

He adds: 'Socially, sexual abuse still seems such a taboo subject; there needs to be more public and open discussion about it.'

Katie was taken into care at a young age but is not sure exactly why. She says she felt well-loved by her family but remembers her mother forgetting to pick her up from school a couple of times, having been drinking.

Katie describes the next six years of her life in children's homes as 'hell on earth'. She was subjected to sexual abuse, violent assault, emotional abuse and neglect. On one occasion she believes she nearly died – she had a serious illness, but care staff did not believe she was ill and would not seek medical help.

She recalls being strip searched, having her underwear removed and a male member of staff coming into the shower with her, claiming it was to wash her back. She fought back and as he chased her she fell, causing a scar on her body. In another children's home Katie says she fought back against an abusive member of staff and as a consequence she received a juvenile conviction. She says: 'The judge said I was a violent out-of-control child, whose parents didn't even want her. That was not true ... I was trying to defend myself.'

Katie describes one children's home: 'It was like a whore house, we were encouraged to dress skimpily.' She says she was controlled by two men and was put on the contraceptive pill at a young age.

She regularly ran away to escape the sexual abuse, only to be returned, but was never asked why she had run away. She says: 'I was running away, trying not to get raped. I had a

single room; the night staff would come in and I would scream and shout.' She recalls some of the other children tried to protect her.

Katie had no trust in the police. On one occasion, when she had run away, she says she was put in a dog kennel by police officers. She adds: 'One police officer said if I didn't shut up I would end up in the Thames like X [another missing child in care].'

To stop her trying to run to her parents' home, Katie was moved to a children's home many miles away and had no contact with her family. The cruel and abusive conditions continued until her father died, when Katie's mother collected her from care and she did not return.

Katie is aware that some of the people who sexually abused her have been investigated for other child abuse offences, one receiving a 20-year sentence.

Looking back, Katie identifies many people she knew in care who have died due to suicide, drug and alcohol abuse, or have gone missing, and she believes this is a direct consequence of the abuse they suffered.

She asks how the local police could not have questioned the number of children repeatedly running away. She says that 90% of what police say is believed and she does not

think that the police have changed since she was young. Katie says that inaccurate labels about her in her care file, such as 'promiscuous', stigmatised her and identified her as vulnerable, so everyone 'tried it on with me'.

She says the sexual abuse she suffered pushed her into self-destruct mode, abusing alcohol and drugs for a couple of years. She expresses how much she hates 'lying and bullshit', has no respect for the police and has a quick temper on occasions.

Katie has never had counselling and feels she has not dealt with what happened to her. She describes herself as a solitary person, saying: 'I work long hours ... I don't give myself time to think ... I exist, I don't live.'

Katie is still considering how to take forward the abusive experiences she had in childhood; she is angry about what happened to her and that she was not protected.

She says: 'I want a "sorry" and for someone to take responsibility. I don't do good "victim" ... I want to unburden myself.'

For the future, Katie says that records should be accurate and transparent and there should be recognition that labels follow you around and alter perceptions of you. She has applied for her care records many times but has been ignored. Because she works she cannot access legal funding to take this further, and she feels this is not right and should be changed.

Henry

Henry says it was difficult for him to come forward to the Truth Project; in 60 years he has never spoken about his sexual abuse to anyone other than his partner.

Henry hopes that talking about the sexual abuse he suffered will form a small but important part of the Inquiry 'jigsaw' and may in some way help to protect others from similar experiences.

An only child, Henry says he was lucky to have wonderful parents but the security and care he enjoyed at home only made it more difficult when he was sent to a preparatory boarding school for boys.

Like the other children separated from their parents at such a young age, Henry would often cry, but he did his best to settle in and do well.

Not long after he started at the school one of the masters, Mr Ply, began summoning Henry to his office at the end of the school day. The teacher would stroke, kiss and fondle Henry and say he loved him. Henry says he was scared and was so young that he didn't understand what was happening to him. He never told anyone, and the sexual abuse carried on regularly for more than a year.

One day when he was back at home, Henry noticed a police car arrive at his house. When he asked his mother why it was there she was evasive. Later he thought that someone at the school must have complained about Mr Ply because soon after the police visit the teacher disappeared and was never seen there again.

Henry was simply relieved that he didn't have to experience the sexual abuse anymore.

But many years later when Henry was in his 20s, Mr Ply discovered his address and began writing to him, telling Henry he still loved him. Henry destroyed all the letters. A few years ago, Henry was shocked to receive a letter informing him Mr Ply had died and had left an inheritance for him and another man Henry did not know.

After his time at the preparatory boarding school, Henry moved to an exclusive and expensive private boarding school and thought he had left the sexual abuse of his childhood behind him. But within a year or so, Henry suffered further sexual abuse from another predatory teacher.

He had always enjoyed and performed well in music and he began receiving one-to-one lessons from a music teacher, Mr Chambers. Mr Chambers would tell Henry that in order to play better he needed to relax and loosen up. The teacher would put his hands on Henry's stomach, encouraging him to perform breathing exercises. This always led to Mr Chambers putting his hand down Henry's trousers and fondling his genitals. Henry came to dread the lessons, knowing what would happen each time, but says he felt he had to keep a 'stiff upper lip' and put up with it.

He was sexually abused for over a year until he snapped and slapped Mr Chambers in the face and told him never to touch him again. Nothing was said but Henry was moved to lessons with another music teacher.

Henry says: 'You didn't want to spoil your chances. I wanted to do well musically and academically. It didn't occur to me that I could talk to anyone about it.'

Around the same time Mr Chambers was abusing him, Henry was also sexually abused by three fellow pupils at the school. One was about three years older, and Henry was his 'fag' (a public school expression, meaning personal servant). He would call Henry to his study and kiss and touch him; he also made Henry perform oral sex on him. The sexual abuse only ended when Henry left the school.

Another of his abusers was in the same year group as Henry and would encourage him to have late study sessions with him – all the boys were expected to get ready for bed before these sessions. The boy would turn up in his pyjamas and dressing gown and incite Henry into sexual touching and masturbation.

Henry relates that the abuse from the third boy was the worst he experienced. Looking back now he wonders how no one did anything about it – this boy used to climb into Henry's bed in the middle of the night and rape him. Henry told us it was so painful that he would have to bite his lip and the pillow to stop from crying out. The pupils' beds in the dormitory were so close together that he is sure some of the others must have known what was happening, particularly as the sexual abuse happened once or twice a week for about a year.

Again, he felt he had to be resilient. He says: 'I said to myself, this is something you need to go through. Don't be deflected from the primary purpose of doing well at school.'

Henry felt unable to tell anyone about the catalogue of sexual abuse he endured. He says it would have been unthinkable for him to tell the matron about the physical consequences he suffered as a result of the rapes. He thinks that by telling someone he would likely have ended up being physically bullied and called a 'snitch'. Henry also suspects it would have been swept under the carpet back then. Although he had loving and supportive parents he couldn't tell them. He says: 'I didn't want to hurt them or have them disappointed in me. I was an only child, I wanted to do well.'

His experiences of abuse from such a young age and throughout his adolescence had a profound impact on his life as a young man and his adulthood. He had a couple of long-term partnerships with girls while in his 20s but had difficulty experiencing satisfactory sexual relationships.

He was unable to tell his parents he was gay and instead of trying to find a suitable relationship, decided to put all his energies into succeeding in his career, taking care of his ailing parents and enjoying his hobbies. Finally, several years ago, Henry met his partner. He says he is so happy to finally be in a loving relationship with someone he shares so many interests with.

Henry says he is unsure what can be done to better protect children who receive one-to-one teaching from adults and he fears it may be particularly difficult to instigate protection

measures in private schools. However, he thinks that education and publicity about sexual abuse, and ensuring avenues and

services are accessible to children to enable them to disclose issues, are important in helping to deal with child sexual abuse.

With her parents overseas, Jennie was left in a boarding school during the 1980s, with no respite from a regime of harsh punishments and a predatory headteacher.

The severe sexual abuse Jennie suffered has left her with many difficult issues she struggles to resolve, and a conviction that boarding schools should be banned.

The headmaster was a strict disciplinarian, who ran a draconian punishment system that Jennie says made the school like a prison – and a breeding ground for sexual abuse of anyone who was vulnerable or alone. Movement around and out of the school was tightly controlled, telephone calls were listened to, letters read, and clothing rules strictly applied.

The headmaster would produce letters from parents giving him permission to act on their behalf and would use these to justify the physical punishments he carried out. Jennie recalls being beaten with a shoe.

She says that looking back, she can see she was institutionalised. She realises the school was a closed system full of vulnerable young people isolated from their families, and the headmaster asserted permission to act as he wished. Punishments were handed out for minor infringements of the rules with pupils taught that this helped them understand why the rules were necessary.

Jennie was very successful at academic studies and at sports. The school encouraged a competitive environment and she was

determined to be best. She thinks the headmaster used her eagerness to please and succeed to groom her. He started calling her to his office and she says this made her feel special. He began touching her, softly at first, on the head and arms, then on her legs and body. One summer, when she was ten years old, he raped her.

The sexual abuse continued into the following year. The headmaster would visit the girls' dormitory and touch Jennie under the bedding. There were periods when nothing happened, and she found this confusing; she wanted to be special. At the same time, she wanted to tell someone what was happening to her, but worried that if she told her parents and they didn't believe her, things would be worse when she returned to school.

She became rebellious, getting into fights and standing up to teachers. She resisted the headmaster, who responded by hitting her. Worried that people would notice the bruising, he told her to fall down. She was taken to the doctor and he never touched her again.

By the time Jennie was 12 or 13 her parents had returned to the UK, so she was able to go home at weekends. When she left the school at 13, she says she felt 'broken' and struggled to fit back into family life. She spent time alone in her room and tried to kill herself. No one

asked her why. She began harming herself and drinking excessively.

She was placed in therapy in early adulthood but was not asked why she was acting the way she was. It was only when she reached her mid-20s, after countless hours of therapy, that she was able to talk to her therapist about the sexual abuse. Her therapist's response was that she had wondered about the reasons for Jennie's behaviour.

Jennie describes the impact of sexual abuse as a lifetime of damage to herself and others, with relationship problems, underachievement, suicidal thoughts, nightmares, flashbacks and lifelong hurt. She still needs to lock her bedroom door before she can sleep and has a mirror positioned so she would see if anyone approached from behind. She can't go to the dentist as she can't stand the physical

closeness and invasiveness of having things put in her mouth.

Jennie's father left the family many years ago, but she has managed to rebuild her relationship with her mother. She now lives with her family and remains very close to her sibling. She has a good job and is studying for a degree.

She thinks that boarding schools should be banned – the environment makes it too easy for abusers, she says. She would like there to be someone always available for young people to talk to in schools; education for young people about sexual abuse; and training for professionals such as teachers and doctors to spot signs of abuse. She feels someone should have recognised what was happening at the school. She wonders what life would have been like for her if the signs of sexual abuse had been spotted by someone at an earlier time.

Chris has a dual heritage. As a baby he was placed in a Christian children's home where he says the perception of staff was that the children came from parents with poor morals and needed 'saving'. In fact, the environment the home provided caused him enormous harm.

Chris' mother's parents were furious when she became pregnant and sent their daughter away to give birth. Chris's father had returned to Africa and his mother felt that it was in Chris's best interest to place him in care.

Until he was three years old Chris was in the nursery, then transferred to another home under the care of the same housemother. Chris describes her as a devout Christian who had no warmth and did not show the children any affection.

The sexual abuse began when Chris was about eight years old. An older teenage boy who said he was 'in charge of punishment' would take him out of bed, touch him and masturbate over him. This went on for two to three years, with the older boy using coercion, threats and grooming, and then the abuse became more serious, involving penetration.

Chris did not understand what was going on at the time. He believes that the housemother knew; on one occasion she saw him leave the bedroom of the other boy and gave him a look of what he saw as disappointment. The sexual abuse stopped when the boy left to go to college.

Chris describes how he became disengaged and isolated. He started to urinate in his room, to the point that it stank, but no one did or said anything. He was having nightmares but was told to go back to bed when he went to the housemother.

A social worker was assigned to the home, but Chris says he was ineffectual and he advised the housemother to punish Chris. She would hit him with her shoe and threaten him with being taken away. He found this terrifying as he had been with her since he was born.

On two occasions, when the vicar of the local church visited, he invited Chris to sit on his lap and molested him, while the carers and other children were present. The housemother's only reaction was to comment to Chris: 'That's the second time you have done that.'

Chris also recalls a new male carer came to the home. He would visit Chris's room at night and touch him sexually. After the carer left the home, Chris reported the sexual abuse to his social worker but was simply told: 'You are not the first.'

About a year later, he suffered further sexual abuse, this time by a teenage girl who came to the home. He says she was disturbed

and feels she must have had some sort of personality disorder. She would go into his room and sit on him and try to get him aroused and she once forced Chris's hand inside her. He found this the most distressing of all the abuse he had endured.

When the housemother retired a few years after, Chris says he could not cope and became disturbed. The new house parents seemed eccentric and unstable; the housemother was psychologically abusive towards Chris, embarrassing and humiliating him. He started to run away but was inevitably brought back by the police, who on one occasion pushed him around with their truncheons and threatened him with prison.

During puberty Chris realised he was gay. The scene was less open than today, and he met contacts in toilets. He says he went with a lot of undesirable people; something that he now regrets. He recalls parties where up to ten older men would queue to have sex with the young men, including him. He said it was difficult and confusing, as he enjoyed the attention and the contact, but he was brought up with the message that being gay is wrong and he carried this message with him.

Chris began charging for sex which led to a threatening situation when a knife was pulled on him and a demand made for money. On another occasion he was brutally raped but did not report it. At this stage he says, he 'disappeared into madness' and became psychotic.

When he left the home, his life began to improve. He joined a youth training scheme,

got a job and was encouraged to apply for specialist training, which he did.

Chris says that he feels positive about the awareness raising of sexual abuse that has taken place over the past decade or so, but for him the lifelong impact has been exhausting.

He has a criminal conviction and has been in rehab due to substance abuse. He has never managed to settle or own his own home. He says he has had two relationships with wonderful men, but they did not last. When he split with his last partner, he got back into substance misuse and, he says, his life collapsed. Being admitted to a treatment centre and having therapy has helped him to get back on his feet and made him realise he doesn't want other people to go through similar experiences.

He has tried to make sense of what had happened to him by talking with the people he grew up with and considers his family. About four years ago he went to see the housemother to talk about his experiences in the home, but she shut down and would not acknowledge it.

Chris wants someone to be held accountable for what happened to him. He feels that private care organisations have unhealthy practices and their historical records should be checked. Men who appear disturbed and angry need support and people should not be frightened of engaging with them. Fair access to services is required for all, and more male staff are needed to work with young disengaged males.

Denise's father was a violent man who was physically abusive towards her mother and her siblings. He played no part in her life after he was sent to prison when she was a baby.

After a period in care, Denise was returned home only to be abused by her mother's new partner.

Denise and her siblings were placed in a children's home after their mother had a breakdown. She says she adored her housemother but was aware that her siblings were treated very cruelly. From the age of three, Denise was visited by her mother and her partner Ted. Later Denise was taken home for weekends, but her siblings never accompanied her. During these visits her mother would persuade her to go into the bedroom with Ted, who would touch her inappropriately.

Denise would return to the children's home upset and withdrawn. She told her housemother what was happening and her mother was confronted, but she denied what Denise had said. Subsequently her mother made a complaint and she remembers that she wasn't allowed to have cuddles with her housemother any more.

The sexual abuse continued, and Denise remembers going away on a trip with her mother and Ted, where the touching became more intrusive. Shortly afterwards, Denise and her siblings returned to live with her mother and Ted.

She says: 'Life frankly was absolute hell. Ted used to walk around with his trousers open and his bits hanging out.'

He began to commit regular anal rape on Denise, threatening her that if she told anyone it would 'kill' her mother and he would ensure she would be put back into care in an awful place.

Ted also seemed to take pleasure in physically assaulting her, creating excuses to chastise her. Later in life an X-ray identified significant damage for which she had to undergo surgery. She remains on painkilling medication and has mobility issues.

Her mother became aware of Ted's behaviour towards Denise when one of her school friends told her. Denise's mother initially said that she would leave Ted, but then said to Denise: 'Please don't tell, it will kill me not to have him.'

At school, Denise became very disruptive, labelled 'a disgrace' by teaching staff who gave up on her. She now knows she is dyslexic, but this was not picked up when she was young. She loved sports but refused to take showers because she was so ashamed of the marks on her body. Even when she wasn't injured she was ashamed of her body

and had a sense that people would be able to tell what was happening to her. She says that none of her teachers questioned why she was behaving as she did, instead she was regularly excluded and finally expelled, missing out on her education. She left school illiterate.

By her mid-teens Denise's siblings had both formed an incestuous relationship with her. She began to self-harm. To escape the sexual abuse she ran away to another part of the country and because she was hungry, stole something. She was arrested and taken to court. Denise told her probation officer about the sexual abuse she had been subjected to but was told to forget about it and get on with her life.

Denise says of herself at this time: 'I was quite mad.' She was sent to a psychiatric hospital where she did not have therapy but was prescribed medication which left her 'almost comatose' and electroconvulsive therapy was forcibly applied. On one occasion a male member of staff took her back to his home where she was gang raped. Denise told her mother and the hospital, but no action was taken.

Eventually Denise returned home. She was not visited by the probation service or a social worker. She married young to escape

her situation and had children but later had a breakdown and began to self-harm again.

She was admitted to a hospital which ran a social rehabilitation unit and for the first time Denise says she met professionals who seemed to care. She spent a substantial period of her early adult life in therapy. Despite her husband being told that she would never recover, Denise went on to obtain professional qualifications.

Looking back Denise finds it hard to understand why professionals were so blind to her predicament. She says: 'I told people in actions and as I got older I told them verbally, but it still didn't make a difference.'

She thinks that professionals working with children should receive better training to equip them to pick up on behaviour that indicates sexual abuse. When a child talks about being sexually abused, professionals should always take action, and children identified as having issues should be better supported and given timely access to quality therapy. Therapies and specialist units should be available to adult survivors of child sexual abuse.

Denise also believes that institutions should be legally required to retain records, which should then be readily available so that they can be accessed by individuals in later life.

Harry

Harry was prompted to speak about the sexual abuse he suffered as a child by recent reports of sex offences by football coaches against young players. He says he wishes he could have spoken about it earlier.

The sexual abuse occurred at a residential primary school, where he was sent because of previous non-attendance at school. Some of the other lads were nice, he says, but others horrible, and some teachers 'had it in for him'.

A skinny boy, Harry was picked on by a bigger pupil, Mick, who slept in the bed next to him. Mick was about five years older and would make Harry 'do things to him'. Mick sexually abused other boys in the dormitory too, but mainly Harry. Harry didn't feel able to tell anyone as he was concerned what they would say. He became too frightened to shower because Mick would follow him in and sexually abuse him. Mick threatened to punch him if he did not comply with his demands. This went on every day at the school until Harry left; he was too scared to run away.

Harry recalls that he used to wet the bed every day and would be caned for this. He would put newspaper in his bed to soak it up and put his pyjamas on the radiator to dry because he didn't want to get punished. He remembers he started to sleepwalk.

He also reports that he was sexually assaulted by a teacher. Harry told his father what had happened and he in turn beat up the teacher and reported it to the police. The teacher was sent to jail.

On one occasion he recalls that a teacher hit a boy and broke the bones in the boy's hand. The victim was sent to hospital and told to say he had fallen. Harry says that the headteacher picked on him all the time.

He believes all the teachers must have known what was going on at the school, but he didn't dare report it – he felt he did not want to cause trouble. Sometimes he would lie awake all night petrified, with the blankets wrapped tightly about him.

Harry had no one to talk to at the school. No one in authority, such as a social worker, came to see him in five years, and he had only occasional visits from his family.

Years later, Harry wrote an account of what happened in his childhood and gave the note to his GP. Harry then passed it to a solicitor and the police became involved, trying to find Mick.

Harry says his experiences still haunt him all the time; he can't stop thinking about what went on, and that if there had been someone to tell, it could have been stopped. For a long time, he was petrified of the reaction that he would get. He didn't tell his wife until recently; he says he felt dirty. He has not dared tell his child but says he would want his child to tell him if something happened to him.

Harry feels strongly that children need someone they trust to talk to and should be educated to speak out. He adds that

adults who have been sexually abused need somewhere confidential and independent to speak about their experiences.

Kirsty experienced violence and deprivation at home with her mother. She says that during her time in care, the kindness of one key worker provided her with some of the happiest memories she has of her childhood. However, she was sexually abused by two workers in children's homes and this experience inflicted lasting pain and damage on her.

Most of her young life, along with that of her siblings, was spent in and out of a children's home. Kirsty had a very close relationship with her housemother, who she says was like a mother to her.

But an assistant housemother, Mrs Pottering, sexually abused Kirsty during her bath times. Looking back, Kirsty believes that her abuser took some perverse satisfaction from what she did. She recalls Mrs Pottering saying to her: 'You'll thank me for this one day.' She is not sure how many times the sexual abuse happened, but it began before she was ten years old.

Kirsty knows she was not the only girl at the home who suffered sexual abuse at the hands of Mrs Pottering. Her friend, Jasmine, was also a victim and she would try to protect Kirsty by making herself subject to the sexual abuse.

Once Kirsty told one of her siblings what Mrs Pottering was doing but they refused to believe her. However, when her father came to visit her at the home she told him about the sexual abuse and he spoke to the housemother who Kirsty was close to. Kirsty

feels she acted appropriately and removed Mrs Pottering from her post.

As Kirsty grew older, she went back with her mother in the family home. She relates how much she hated this, as her mother would withhold food, beat her up and expect her to look after her siblings. Kirsty says her mother would put on an act when social services visited but the reality was very different.

When she was a teenager, she was returned to the children's home and was the subject of an attempted sexual assault by a male worker there. She managed to run away, get to a phone box and call the police. He was later dismissed from his employment. Around the same time, Kirsty became aware of another girl who was being abused by her young male social worker. Kirsty says that the adults knew what was going on and eventually the social worker was charged for taking indecent images of children.

When she left care, Kirsty received little practical support – she was homeless while pregnant. As an adult, she made a request to social services for her childhood files. It was three years before they arrived, and she says

they had been extensively edited with large chunks missing. She thinks her former social worker, who she had previously trusted, had deliberately or mistakenly included false information in the files.

Kirsty has suffered both emotionally and physically from her experiences. She has had therapy and has recalled things that she had previously blocked from her memory. She knows that Jasmine also struggled significantly throughout her life and sadly committed suicide.

Kirsty is passionate about protecting children from sexual abuse. She believes that much of the care system needs to change, particularly the support that is given to care leavers. She has a lot of ideas about how things can improve – she wants to see real and lasting change.

She says of her experience in the system: 'I put it in a box ... but I need to say something ... even if it's to protect another child. If I can help change the system in any way, I will.'

When Tony's mother left the family home, he was placed in a religious children's home where he found himself at the mercy of the manager and her relative, a priest who sexually abused him.

Tony is not aware that any checks were made on his welfare by anyone in authority and he felt unable to tell his father, who admired the priest.

There was a large age gap between Tony's mother and father. He describes his father as 'a strange man', but says: 'He loved me, and I loved him.' Tony and his siblings were sent to the children's home after his mother left. He remembers that she only visited them once.

The home was run by Sara, whose relative, Sid, was a priest. Sid showed a particular interest in Tony and he felt flattered by this. One night, Tony was woken by Sara and taken to Sid. He was told to take his clothes off and stand in the corner. Every so often he was told to turn around, before eventually being allowed to go back to bed. 'I wasn't comfortable', Tony remembers.

Not long after this, Sara told Tony that Sid was going to take him to the pictures. Instead, Sid drove him to a house where he stripped him naked and sexually abused him. 'Of course, we never got to the pictures. Sara must have known what was going on. I paid the price for his friendship', Tony says.

He felt that he had no one to talk to about what had happened and so he remained silent. He says: 'My father thought the world of Sid; how could I tell him?'

Shortly after his visit to the house, Tony was moved from the children's home. For several years after, each Christmas he received a card from Sid containing money.

Tony subsequently attended a boarding school. Years later he became aware of other boys coming forward claiming that they were sexually abused there by the schoolmasters, but he says he did not see it at the time. When he was not at boarding school, he was returned to a children's home. He remembers quite a bit of violence among the children, but he does not recall anybody visiting to check on how things were. He says: 'Nobody came and said, "Are you happy? Are you well?"'

Many years after the sexual abuse, Tony visited a church to report what had happened to him. He was given an address to write to, but the response to his letter was that Sid had died and there were no other reports.

'The church has a lot to answer for ... I'm disappointed with their response; they should have done something', he says.

Tony is still living with vivid memories of the sexual abuse perpetrated by Sid. 'I can still taste and smell him', he says. 'But I've survived really ... I've nothing to be ashamed of; it was done to me. I was a child.'

Emma says she has never before disclosed all the information about the sexual abuse that was committed by a doctor.

She describes going through a tough period when her parents divorced. Emma was close to her dad, but she and her mother moved to a new house and she was sent to a different primary school where one of the teachers would ridicule her. One day she had had enough and says she 'went for' this teacher. Emma's mum was called to the school and she was sent to a child psychologist, Dr Young, at the local hospital.

Emma remembers thinking at first the doctor liked her as he would bring her tea and cake. She describes a big play room in the hospital with lots of toys and places to draw – she loved drawing. Dr Young was nice to her. At the time she felt that he was someone who cared about her. Now she thinks he groomed her.

One day the doctor told Emma that her mum had said she was suffering from worms. He took her to a room saying that he had some ointment for her and looked down her pants. When Emma told her mum about this, her response was: 'He is just looking to see if you are grown up.'

At the next appointment, Dr Young took Emma into a room. He asked her whether she knew the difference between men and women and showed her pictures of naked people. He told Emma that he had the cream for her

worms and told her to stand up and put her hands on the desk. Dr Young pulled Emma's pants down and then started inserting what she says felt like grease in her backside with his fingers.

Emma says she can't remember feeling pain, but she does remember feeling 'so embarrassed'. She didn't know what to do but just wanted it to go away. She was left alone with the doctor and was too young to say that she needed anyone with her.

She saw Dr Young a few more times after this and he would continue to look down her pants. He then told her that he was leaving the hospital and that he would write to her – she remembers getting a letter from him. She says because her mother did not act when she had told her about the sexual abuse, Emma was left partly feeling that what happened 'was alright', and partly questioning whether it had happened, although she knows that it did. Emma feels in a way that her mum gave the doctor permission to sexually abuse her. Much as she wanted to, Emma never told her dad. She says: 'He would have killed my mum and him (the doctor). I know my dad.'

The next doctor that Emma saw, she says was 'amazing, and lovely', but she never felt able to trust him because of what happened with Dr Young.

She describes herself as haunted by the sexual abuse; she has constant flashbacks and has self-harmed. She says her experience has ruined her relationships; she believes she is 'unlovable', doesn't like getting close to anyone and has only recently let people hug her or show her affection.

It wasn't until she got older that Emma realised what Dr Young had done and the mental impact it had on her. She worried that if she spoke about it people would think that she wanted attention. She feels real anger towards her abuser and doesn't want other children to go through what she did.

Placed in care due to a family break-up, Jack's vulnerability was exploited by a worker in the care system. Years later a gesture of kindness from a teacher was a turning point in his chaotic life that helped him reassess his view of the world.

Jack tried to report his abuser, but his experience was frustrating and unsatisfactory.

Jack's mother left home when he was young. Despite his father's best efforts, Jack and his siblings were placed in care when he was about ten years old.

He was initially placed in an assessment centre on his own. His social worker raised his expectations that he would soon go to a foster family, but when this didn't happen he says he concluded: 'I didn't seem to fit anywhere.'

At the centre, Jack slept in a dormitory with other boys. One night shortly after his arrival he was awoken by a night carer, Lee, who sat on his bed and chatted to him. The carer then progressed to fondling Jack and coerced Jack to touch him. From then on, Lee did this several times a week. Once Jack heard Lee talking to another boy in the dormitory and realised that he was sexually abusing others.

Jack describes how much he hated what was happening to him and how powerless he was to stop it. He had no trust in his social worker who he felt had lied to him. He had no contact with any of his family; he felt alone and trapped.

The sexual abuse continued until Jack was moved to a children's home. Even after leaving

the assessment centre he felt unable to talk about what had happened to him. He says he had grown to accept no one was looking out for him and he had to take care of himself: 'You are not going to tell anyone anything that makes you vulnerable.'

By the time Jack had reached his mid-teens, he says: 'I hated everyone, nobody cared and I was abusing solvents and truanting. ... I was screaming out for help and attention.'

On one occasion when he was truanting from school he was found by a teacher who, rather than taking him to the headteacher, took his hand and walked him to his classroom. This simple kindness was a pivotal moment for Jack, who describes how it made him realise that some people did care and led him to reassess the world. He took an apprenticeship and went on to get married and have a family.

It was not until his mid-30s that Jack spoke about the sexual abuse he had suffered as a child. Memories of his experiences in care were triggered during a discussion with one of his siblings about their childhood and he phoned the police to report Lee's actions.

Shortly afterwards he received a letter from the police stating that his abuser had already stood trial for similar offences and

had received a custodial sentence. The letter continued that no further action would be taken regarding the offences that Jack had reported as it was not considered to be in the public interest. Jack did not tell anyone else about the abuse until he spoke with the Truth Project.

Jack wants the Disclosure and Barring Service to be more thorough and consistent and the

police to investigate all allegations of child sexual abuse and not dismiss them on the basis that they are not in the public interest.

He thinks it is important to ensure that children have someone in their lives to whom they can become emotionally attached. He suggests that children in care should have access to an independent person, possibly by phone, whom they can trust and confide in.

Carol was put on the child protection register due to neglect. She was sexually abused by men of two generations in her foster family and subsequently by staff and residents in a care home. She tried to tell social workers about the sexual abuse but was never believed.

Carol's dad had left their family home and her mum used to leave her on her own to go to the pub, often returning drunk with men. One night a neighbour heard Carol's screams, the police and social services were called, and she was made a ward of court.

Being placed with foster carers did not make her life any safer. Carol describes them as terrible; they abused her physically and mentally, although their daughter became her protector. Carol was often locked in a room and went without meals but her social worker refused to believe her account of what was happening.

During one summer holiday, Carol was sent to stay with the parents of one of her foster carers. When she accidentally dropped something, the father told her to go into the shed and take her clothes off. Carol said he got out his penis and made her masturbate him. She recounts what a horrendous experience this was – she was shaking and crying, and she wet herself. Afterwards he slapped her and told her if she said anything she would go back into care. About two weeks later he sexually abused her again, this time rubbing himself between her legs.

Again, Carol tried to report the sexual abuse and was not believed by her social worker; instead she was told that the family was 'lovely'.

One day, the foster carers announced to Carol that as she wasn't their daughter she could no longer live with them. They packed her belongings, dropped her with her bags outside a children's home and drove off. Carol was petrified. She was taken screaming and fighting into her room and strapped into her bed until the following day.

Carol was at the home for many years. She says the manager of the home hated her, she was starved, had no Christmas presents and when she broke a bone she wasn't taken to hospital for days. The hospital staff reported this to her social worker. An older boy at the home pinned her by the throat and made her do what the foster carer's father had done. She says at that point she believed that behaviour must be 'ok'.

During her time in the home she stayed in contact with friends she knew when she was fostered and went to live with them when she was a teenager. She says this went some way to turning her life around, but unfortunately the

husband, Howie, began to sexually abuse her, slap her and threaten her. Carol reported it, then moved out.

An attempt to make contact with her dad was rejected, and he died before they could make up. She says that made her feel guilty, her life spiralled downwards and she tried to commit suicide. She is now married with a child and says her life is much better, although she still has flashbacks and feels guilt.

Having now seen her social services records Carol cannot believe that they did not see what was going on. She feels strongly that if a child says something they must be heard, an investigation must be carried out and social workers should be better trained.

She would also like to see stricter vetting and supervision of foster carers and workers in children's homes.

Such is the lasting damage inflicted on Jim by a rapist and other abusers that, he says: ‘I have the choice to live with what goes on in my head, or to kill myself.’

Jim wants the Inquiry to push for more and better training of professionals involved with child sex abuse.

Jim was brought up in a violent household. A psychiatrist recommended he be sent to a residential school when he was around seven or eight years old. He says he saw his parents about once a fortnight after that. At first, he made friends, but says: ‘Then he arrived, and things went to hell.’

A new staff member named Bill began to sexually abuse him regularly. It began with fondling but then progressed. Jim was locked in a room with the abuser and made to perform oral sex. He was taken to one of the on-site buildings and was abused by multiple men. After this incident, he was told by Bill he had simply had a bad dream.

The sexual abuse escalated as Jim was moved around different rooms in the house which gave the perpetrator greater access to him. Further sexual abuse frequently took place in a strange building, which Bill said he lived in, outside the school grounds.

Jim recalls the incredible pain he experienced when he was first raped, and how he bit Bill until he bled. Bill changed the sheets and took Jim’s blood-covered pyjamas away. Jim describes how the sexual abuse went ‘on and on’, and his terrible fear of his abuser.

In a further travesty of his authority, Bill gave Jim presents for being ‘a good boy’. These might be comics and sweets after he had performed oral sex and masturbation, or expensive toys after he had been raped. Once he was given an item of jewellery but told not to wear it home, presumably so his parents wouldn’t ask questions.

Jim says he reported the sexual abuse to a female carer, but she called him a liar, saying Bill cared about him too much to do that to him. He never told his parents for fear they wouldn’t believe him either. Once his mother noticed bruises and scratches on his back, but Jim said he couldn’t remember how they got there, and his father presumed he was being bullied. He tried to tell his mother years later but gave up after he was interrupted by his sibling.

During the period he was sexually abused, Jim experienced crippling abdominal pains that lasted up to 30 minutes and terrified him. This pain would be accompanied by hot and cold sweats, dizziness, sickness and light-headedness. He says he still experiences these symptoms, but to a lesser degree, to this day.

He has nightmares and has self-harmed and nearly attempted suicide before considering the impact on his parents. He has

experienced rage, paranoia, poor mental health and heavy drinking. He avoids public transport and other busy places as they make him feel trapped.

In the 1990s, the police wrote to ex-residents of the home inviting them to come forward as part of an investigation into Bill. Jim gave a statement, but the case was not pursued. He contacted the police again after he saw Bill's picture in a local paper following his conviction for child sexual abuse. Seeing the image of his abuser, was, he says: 'Like being transported back to the corridors [of the institution] again. I went to the toilet and was physically sick.'

Bill was charged with multiple child sexual abuse offences and was found guilty of indecent assault. Jim says that records from his time in the home were reduced to a single piece of paper with no medical records. He says there was a high staff turnover at the school and believes people were forced to leave if they raised concerns.

The court case was extremely traumatic for Jim. He says the defence lawyers raked through every misdemeanour he had ever

committed, including theft of sweets when he was a child. He adds: 'Apart from the actual experience (of sexual abuse), being in court was the worst thing I have ever been through.'

Following Bill's conviction, Jim contacted a solicitor. After two years, the organisation that owned the home admitted liability and Jim was awarded a significant amount of money. He had to sign a confidentiality agreement that prevents him revealing the amount of the compensation.

Jim has seen psychiatrists and counsellors but feels support for survivors is inadequate. But after the guilty verdict he has found living with his experiences slightly easier.

Jim recommends that what is learned by the Inquiry should be applied to train social workers, teachers, the police and charity workers, so they can identify the signs of child sexual abuse and when to offer children support. He would like to see more effective oversight of therapists and support workers, and clear means to complain about poor practice. Survivors of sexual abuse should not have to sign confidentiality clauses as a condition of being awarded compensation.

Publicity about child sex abuse cases prompted Chloe to report incidents that occurred when she was a young teenager. This resulted in a successful prosecution, but the abuse has had a significant effect on her mental health and the court case was very difficult for her.

Chloe has a recollection of sexual abuse by a family friend that occurred when she was between the ages of five and 11 years, but she cannot remember the details.

She was sexually abused again at the age of 13, by Ronnie, a curate at the church that she attended with her family. Ronnie was a regular visitor to their home and was often invited for meals. On these occasions, out of sight of Chloe's parents, Ronnie would regularly kiss and fondle her.

The curate increased his opportunities to sexually abuse Chloe by picking her up from school and arranging trips, when he would drive her to quiet lanes. When she saw him waiting outside the school she would take a different route or walk with a friend to avoid him. She told this friend what Ronnie had been doing.

One day when Chloe was alone at home due to illness, Ronnie came to the house and in the bedroom asked her to undress. She told him to get out and he did leave. Chloe was extremely distressed and told her parents. They spoke to the local church about the sexual abuse and Ronnie was transferred to another area, although this did not happen immediately. Chloe understands the bishop

had to be persuaded to remove the curate. She also believes the local vicar had known something about Ronnie's behaviour.

Chloe describes how the sexual abuse has affected her. She has been on antidepressants since her early 20s, suffers from severe anxiety and sexual issues and is unable to eat in front of people.

As cases of sexual abuse were highlighted in the media, Chloe decided to report Ronnie to the church. An extensive investigation and a prosecution followed, and Ronnie was convicted. The disclosure to her school friend many years ago was a determining and supportive factor in securing a conviction, and Chloe managed to find her friend to provide this evidence.

Chloe is clear that this was an important action for her to take but the process has also had a significant impact on her. Chloe feels that the judicial process can make the victim feel like the criminal. She thinks it is important for the victims to be given as much information as possible about the process, such as what to expect in a court setting.

The case against Ronnie was heard by different judges and she believes the loss of

her usual barrister at a crucial stage in the case affected Ronnie's sentence.

Chloe feels strongly there should be consistency and continuity in the judicial system that ensures judges, police and barristers have an understanding and

knowledge of the case they are dealing with; that support for victims and survivors is crucial and that counselling should be made available to them.

Chloe also wants Ronnie to acknowledge what he has done and apologise to her.

Looking back on his early years, Sonny can see that he was a vulnerable child. His mother was an alcoholic and had mental health issues, he regularly witnessed domestic violence and received no parenting.

At the age of 13 years he joined the cadets and would train with them regularly. An ex-serviceman called Logan would hang around outside the cadet building and talk to some of the boys and the cadet trainers. He began giving some of the boys lifts home.

Sonny says that at first Logan seemed fun and being with him was quite exciting. Logan was married with children and would invite Sonny and some other boys to his home where he would get them drunk. He would also let Sonny drive his car and arranged a job for him.

Sonny recognises now that this special treatment was grooming. Before long Logan started touching him inappropriately, developing into what Sonny describes as groping. Sonny says he was aware that Logan had 'tried it on' with other boys and afterwards they steered clear of him, but Sonny felt trapped in the sexual abuse. When it happened he would freeze, not knowing what to do. 'Telling was something I couldn't do', he says.

He does not know for certain whether the cadet trainers were aware of what Logan was doing but he thinks they must have been. Sonny believes they should have questioned what was going on.

Over the next two or three years Sonny says he was sexually abused 'lots and lots' of times. He describes Logan as 'vile, manipulating everybody'. As well as ingratiating himself with the cadet trainers, Logan befriended Sonny's parents. He continued his grooming of Sonny, taking him on trips and buying him gifts. When Sonny was 16 years old Logan stopped sexually abusing him. Sonny thinks he 'started with another lad' who was younger.

For several years, Sonny says he 'didn't tell a soul' what had happened to him, but in his early 20s he decided to report the sexual abuse to the police. They told Sonny that Logan had served a prison sentence for sexually abusing children and that he had moved to a different area but apparently did not act on Sonny's report. Years later, Sonny told his parents what had happened to him. His mother claimed she knew about the sexual abuse and he no longer speaks to her.

Sonny has had therapy, but he struggles with depression, anxiety, low self-esteem and suicidal thoughts. He has also been diagnosed with a personality disorder. Materially, Sonny says that he is doing well but he adds: 'The emotional side of things is a completely different story.' He isolates himself

and finds it very difficult to form and maintain healthy relationships.

Sonny would like there to be more thorough safeguarding and checks in place for all employers or institutions that may come

into contact with children. He would also like there to be increased awareness about how to recognise signs of grooming and sexual abuse and better access to specialist counselling services for victims and survivors of sexual abuse.

Angie's early experiences of an unstable family life included living abroad, divorce of her parents, hospitalisation of her mother and harsh treatment by her stepmother. These made her vulnerable to a series of incidents of sexual abuse that continued into her adulthood.

On the point of committing suicide, she pulled back, and now continues to work on her recovery with the support of her husband.

Angie's parents were both in the military and were stationed overseas when she and her sibling were young children. After her parents divorced she, her sibling and mother moved back to England. Angie had been born with a medical condition that meant she needed additional care and she thinks this may have placed extra pressure on her mother. Soon after their return, Angie's mother was hospitalised and the siblings were placed in care.

Angie was one of the youngest in the children's home. She clearly remembers sitting on the knee of the manager when he sexually assaulted her. She believes she told her mother that she did not like what this man was doing; she has a vivid memory of her mother confronting the manager and shouting hysterically at him.

The siblings were moved to another children's home, where Angie says she was subjected to three incidents of sexual abuse by older residents in the home. The first involved three older boys trying to get a younger boy

to penetrate her, which resulted in Angie sustaining a vaginal injury. She recalls using sanitary products to stem the bleeding, but instead of enquiring why such a young child needed them, staff told her off for wasting the products and stopped her pocket money.

In the second incident of sexual abuse, Angie was vaginally, orally and anally raped by an older boy who was resident in the home.

Angie recalls how the children were required to clean shoes as a chore. It was on one of these occasions that the third incident occurred. An older boy told her that he would teach her how to polish shoes properly and proceeded to make her masturbate him.

Clearly dismayed, Angie comments that despite obvious signs that something was wrong, no one made inquiries of her or attempted to intervene. She describes how she displayed her distress: 'I used to bite myself, throw myself downstairs, pull chunks of my hair out ... and I was just labelled disruptive ... Surely the carers weren't that ignorant?'

Some time later, Angie and her sibling were asked if they want to return abroad to live with their father and his new wife. She recalls being

frightened of this prospect due to things her mother had told her about him, but her sibling wanted to go so she agreed.

She describes their stepmother's behaviour towards the siblings as 'evil ... we were like Cinderella'. They were made to do chores and behave to an exacting standard and Angie recalls that she was not allowed to socialise or have boyfriends. She wonders whether her stepmother resented them.

One day Angie was raped by a stranger, but the harsh regime of her home life meant she felt unable to tell her father or stepmother, as she feared she would be blamed for the attack. She does not recall any contact or checking by social services with her family after she returned to the care of her father.

Angie describes how the very difficult experiences she had as a child and young adult led to her having relationships with men who physically assaulted her, until she met her 'amazing husband'. Together they built a family and a successful business, but an event occurred that revived her previous traumatic experiences and triggered serious mental health difficulties for Angie. She was subjected to an assault by a man, which she reported to the police. She says this process was extremely difficult for her, particularly so as she was interviewed by two male officers, and her memories of being abused became powerfully vivid.

She says: 'I had isolated myself as a means of protection; I was an adult, I could protect myself now and nothing was going to happen. Then BOOM! I felt so vulnerable and scared that I could not protect myself.'

Angie locked herself away and began to drink heavily. She was diagnosed with depression and referred for counselling but says this was a poor experience that added to her low self-esteem. With no confidence that she could get better and feeling that she had let her husband and children down, she climbed a high building to commit suicide.

She feels strongly that children in care need consistency to support attachments. To build a rapport, no more than three key staff should be involved in a child's care, doing everything with the child, including the school run and visits to dentists and doctors. That way, if something is wrong with the child, they should have a good enough relationship to pick up on non-verbal indicators.

Angie adds that additional training is needed for residential workers to develop the skills to pick up and respond to changes in a child's behaviour and ensure that they take responsibility to act. She thinks social services departments are insufficiently equipped to provide the early support to families to prevent admissions to care, and that prevention should be the focus of work with families. Politicians should look at the long-term picture, not at short-term wins.

Oliver has experienced serious mental health problems as a result of sexual abuse in his childhood. He came to the Inquiry to give his views on how mental health services are failing survivors.

As a young schoolboy, Oliver encountered an older pupil who he admired and looked up to. The older boy got Oliver to carry out increasingly strange tasks by way of ‘serving’ him. Looking back, Oliver sees he was in a sort of ‘sexual slavery’ and was subject to a variety of violent and sexual abuse. But, he says: ‘I didn’t see it as abuse at the time; just something really, really terrible.’

Oliver says he couldn’t tell his parents or anyone else but describes his behaviour as clearly that of someone trying to communicate a problem; he started to self-harm. He considered himself a ‘bad’ child and to compensate behaved very well at home, helping with chores around the house.

After a couple of years, the perpetrator lost interest in him, and Oliver says he found himself craving similar treatment, which the boy had told him made him special. He found another older pupil who would carry out similar acts against him. Later in his teenage years he started to go out with girls, but he remained concerned about his sexuality and the things he wanted other people to do to him. He contacted a national helpline for survivors and they made the link between his childhood experiences and his adult behaviours. Oliver says he had not realised this before.

He relates how his mental health fluctuated, with feelings that he was being watched, he wasn’t good enough, he was a fraud. He describes desperately trying to maintain a sense of order through obsessional behaviour. He repeatedly visited the sexual health clinic to be tested for sexually transmitted infections, despite knowing there was nothing wrong with him, until he told the doctor he felt suicidal and was referred to a therapist. Despite the seriousness of his feelings he had to wait several weeks for an appointment.

He went on to study and took a teaching position in a school where he was highly regarded. He continued to self-harm, and accessed counselling periodically. In middle age, his mental health took a significant downturn after it came to light that other teachers in the school had been sexually abusing boys. Oliver says the school reacted swiftly and appropriately, which resulted in successful prosecutions, but the events triggered a serious depression for him.

One day he broke down. His GP recommended he see a psychiatrist and he was admitted to a psychiatric hospital that night, where he remained for a number of weeks. The psychiatrist who assessed him said he needed cognitive behavioural therapy as he was a perfectionist and obsessional

and that his difficulties were partly due to a chemical imbalance in his brain. He did not ask Oliver if he had experienced abuse, nor did a sex therapist or various other psychotherapists he saw over the next few years.

Oliver left his job in the school and the loss of income meant he and his wife had to move. In his new location, his GP referred him to mental health services but despite several inpatient stays and his history of mental ill-health, he was advised he didn't meet their critical criteria for secondary health care.

Eventually, Oliver saw a senior mental health practitioner who pushed to get him appropriate support and asked the 'right' questions. He disclosed for the first time what he had experienced. He began attending a men's support group for survivors of child sexual abuse. This also helped him to think about his identity as a man. The most important difference from other services was that he also learnt that he was not mentally ill but traumatised because of his experiences.

At this time, he also met with a therapist who was unfortunately not very experienced. Then, after waiting for a year, he met with a

much more experienced therapist in the NHS, who specialised in working with men who had been sexually abused in childhood. This helped Oliver to understand how grooming had worked in his life as a child. Unfortunately therapy ended abruptly when the therapist left and was not replaced. Oliver coped by self-harming.

Through his struggle to access support services, and by challenging the system through patient involvement groups, Oliver says he has become aware that there is a lack of capacity in services and of therapists experienced in child sexual abuse, and that services are failing to recognise and acknowledge child sexual abuse. He feels passionately that society must listen to survivors and involve them in relevant decisions. He would also like to see long-term support offered at an early stage to survivors and continuing whenever they need it afterwards. Oliver feels that this early help could reduce costs in the long term, for example by preventing repeated hospital admissions. He says that the criteria applied often deny people the help they need and that joined-up services are essential to support survivors.

Years of sexual abuse, perpetrated by a priest who exploited a family connection to gain access to Abbie as a young child, has had a profoundly destructive effect on some aspects of her life for decades.

Abbie's family had a strong affiliation with the church and had known Father Paul, a senior clergyman, for many years. He took advantage of these circumstances to abuse her between the ages of seven and 11 years.

Paul would visit the family a few times a year, staying several days on each occasion. During these visits he would take Abbie on days out alone. She describes how he made her feel 'special and cared for', which was important to her, as there were some problems with her parents at home.

She recalls Paul having intense conversations with her about the need for physical discipline in families and changes her body would experience as she grew up and turned into a woman. These talks led to him touching her intimately.

Looking back, Abbie thinks she was not scared at the time, but now recognises how he groomed her to sexually abuse her. She never told anyone what was happening. After she was confirmed in the church, Paul suddenly stopped visiting. Abbie has no idea why or whether her parents suspected anything was wrong.

Abbie believes that overall, she dealt with her childhood experiences quite well, with

occasional periods of upset when certain incidents happened. But when she was in her 50s, she began to understand the impact the sexual abuse has had on her.

She has had a successful career, lots of friends and has travelled, but she has never had a serious relationship and feels her sexuality was 'put into a box' when she was a child. She says that some time ago, when she spent time with a male friend, her sexuality began to emerge, and she realised why she had been avoiding it. She felt things she had never experienced before but there were sexual thoughts that were very upsetting for her.

After the abuse ceased, and as she grew older, Abbie says she came to think of Paul as a 'dirty old man'. She says: 'What he did to me has had a huge impact on my life; he destroyed me as a sexual person and as a young person growing up.'

In some ways, in terms of her emotions and her sexuality, Abbie feels she has never really grown up and she has applied certain self-protection measures. She has also suffered a lot of health problems.

On a positive side, she has always been able to engage well with children, which has been important in her career.

Abbie is now receiving support from a counsellor and is working through the feelings of anger and worry over her sexuality, and how the abuse has impacted on her life.

Her many good friendships have been very important to her, particularly as she has not entered into any partnerships. But she is very sensitive to any upset or discord with her friends.

Despite the fact her abuser was in the church, Abbie has retained her faith and says it has always been very important to her. But her experiences of turning to clergy for support regarding the sexual abuse have not been helpful. She has tried to discuss it with different church members a few times – the first when she was in her 20s – but has been met with disinterest on each occasion.

The sexual abuse inflicted on Dennis occurred some years ago, and he says that the records of his time in care are contradictory and inaccurate.

His recollection is that at a very young age he was deserted by his mother and was then placed in several children's homes, an assessment centre, with a foster family and, for a brief period, in the care of a relative. There was also a period when he was placed back with his mother but he was removed again at her request.

Dennis says that life with his mother 'wasn't good' and for the most part his time in care was better because he had other children to play with. However, during his stay in an assessment centre the manager sexually abused him on several occasions. He remembers being orally raped and has a vague memory of being bent over the bath. 'Then it's blank,' he says, 'I suppose, to cope with this I just blanked out what was happening.'

He believes he spent about a year in the assessment centre before being fostered by a family and spending a brief time with a relative. After this, he was moved to another children's home in his teenage years. Here, he was sexually abused following a process of grooming by a female member of staff at the home, Sarah. The sexual abuse continued over a number of years. His records say that he moved out of the home and in with a family

member but in fact, he says, he moved into Sarah's flat and had a relationship with her.

A few years after his contact with Sarah ended, Dennis saw some of his records which he says contained 'half-truths and lies'. At this point he decided to report the sexual abuse by Sarah. An investigation followed, and she was charged with indecent assault under section 15 of the Sexual Offences Act 1956. At the trial, it was found that Sarah had not committed the offences when Dennis was under 16 years old and the verdict was not guilty.

Dennis has been told that because the sexual abuse was not recent, the Sexual Offences Act 2003 (which changes the way in which lack of consent may be proved) cannot be applied.

He contended throughout the trial that his mental state at the time should have been considered because he should have been seen as unable to give consent to the sexual relationship.

Dennis would like victims and survivors to be given key workers to help them through the process of reporting their sexual abuse. He would also like there to be more clearly identified ways to report abuse in confidence and privacy.

Jackie

Jackie was doing well at school, socially and academically, until an event happened that had devastating consequences on her life. When she was in her early teens a teacher at her school raped her and it was 30 years before she was able to report it to the police.

The rape had a profoundly negative and lasting effect on her life, and she has clear views on how investigation processes and the judicial system could be improved to support victims more effectively.

With hindsight, Jackie can see that she was groomed by the teacher, James. He invited her to his home for tea, introduced her to his wife and child and asked her to babysit for them on a couple of occasions. One time, Jackie arrived at James's home but found that neither his wife nor the child was there. This was when he raped her. She has vivid memories of the room where the attack took place. She believes she disassociated from the experience, as she has a clear recollection of watching herself on the bed during the rape. Afterwards she returned home, had a bath and did not tell anyone what had happened to her for many years.

Jackie described how deeply ashamed she felt about being raped, and the major impact the event has had on her life. Her good performance and demeanour at school changed dramatically as she displayed her distress by losing her temper and fighting. But no one in school asked her what was wrong, and she recalled that James had told her that no one would believe her if she reported the rape.

In the following years, Jackie says she 'got on with her life'. She entered a professional career, married and had a family. However, the abuse affected her physical interactions with her children. For example, she struggled to give lengthy hugs. She also found it difficult when her husband touched her. Additionally, when her child began to reach adolescence, this triggered extreme anxiety in Jackie. She recalls that the idea of letting her child go to clubs and extracurricular activities terrified her. She was diagnosed with depression and referred to a psychiatrist.

Jackie describes feeling failed by mental health services. On disclosing the sexual abuse for the first time to the psychiatrist, she was handed a prescription and told to return in three months. She left and headed to a remote area with thoughts of committing suicide. It was, she says, the first person she had trusted to tell: 'But I felt like he didn't believe me.'

Her mental health deteriorated; she lost her job and had repeated voluntary admissions to hospital. She engaged in art therapy and again disclosed the sexual abuse, naming James. She says the art therapy was helpful but she feels let down that her account of the rape was not reported and she was not in a position to do this herself.

More than 30 years after the rape, Jackie, supported by a therapist, reported it to the police. She recalls feeling afraid she would not be listened to or believed. The case went to trial, after lengthy delays, repeated changes of personnel involved, and several false starts. Jackie states that the trial was significantly delayed when her recollection of events was challenged. This was despite her vivid memories. Jackie believes that the impact of trauma on memory is not clearly understood. Instead memories are assumed to be false.

Jackie describes the years of waiting for the trial to take place as 'like torture'. She was appalled at the manner in which she was treated by the defence barrister. She felt she was treated like a criminal. She says: 'I was made to repeat details of stuff I didn't want to say to anyone ... my husband heard it all. I didn't want him to know that about me. I felt totally let down.'

Jackie comments on how difficult it was during the investigation to repeatedly build

trust and relationships with police officers, only to have to start again with another person due to the delays waiting for the trial. She feels strongly there should be better continuity and recognition of the huge impact that lengthy waits and delays in the judicial system have on survivors.

She would like to see a review of the tactics that barristers are permitted to use, such as reading comments from a diary out of context; commenting on clothing; suggesting the jury should feel sorry for the victim as she has mental health problems, rather than the mental health problems being caused by the abuse. For example, Jackie notes that the defence barrister suggested that she has a personality disorder. Jackie comments that if the barrister understood personality disorders, they would have realised that often people who receive this diagnosis have experienced child abuse and not used this to undermine her.

William

William's memories of childhood are violence, neglect, sexual abuse and having no one to turn to. He says: 'My brain got broken a bit when I was young.'

He comments that his mother 'never really parented me' and he grew up witnessing severe domestic violence between his parents.

William says he made many attempts to kill himself. Social services and the police were involved with the family, but he describes his parents as 'good manipulators' and nothing seemed to be done to resolve the situation at home. William believes the family's young social worker was too inexperienced to deal with the situation.

At some point, William's cousin began to sexually abuse him. He remembers being masturbated while being shown pornography and telling his mother what had happened. He says that she laughed and did nothing to stop it. The sexual abuse carried on for a number of years.

At school William was diagnosed with learning disabilities but he says: 'I was actually quite smart, I just couldn't concentrate.' Home life continued to be very unhappy, with William being angry most of the time.

He gave up trying to tell people what was happening to him: 'It was made clear if I talked to anyone there'd be consequences.' He adds that anyway, he did not want to make people miserable.

Later in his life, when he found the courage to report his sexual abuse to the police, he was told there was not enough evidence to charge his cousin.

William says there were obvious signs of neglect throughout his childhood, but that the police and the managers of his local social services badly let him down. He is concerned at how often children are left in unsafe conditions and exposed to ongoing abuse.

William sees a counsellor once a week, which he says is 'sometimes helpful and sometimes not'.

He says: 'This doesn't end at childhood' and describes his day-to-day experience as like being a child in an adult's life. His father died recently, and William says that he didn't really feel anything about it.

A teacher at Diane's school exploited his position of power and authority to sexually abuse her. From then until now, the emotions and effects this caused for her have included feeling flattered, confused, depressed, anxious and suicidal.

Diane relates that when she started senior school, she became friendly with one of the teachers, Mr Jones. At first, they would just chat and if she was in the classroom with him he would always make sure that the door was open. But after about 18 months, the relationship changed; they began exchanging gifts and cards and Mr Jones then started visiting her at home.

Other pupils in the school noticed and used to tease her, saying that the teacher was her boyfriend, which really annoyed her at the time. No one in authority at the school questioned the friendship. Mr Jones encouraged her to go on a school trip and came into the room she was staying in. He sat on her bed, put his arm around her and kissed her on the cheek; she remembers feeling flattered by this. There was also an occasion on the trip when Diane and Mr Jones kissed openly in front of others.

The relationship became sexual, and she describes how sexual activity happened in the woods, in his car and even in the school during the holidays. Once she was in a classroom with Mr Jones when another teacher tried to open the door but could not because it was locked. When Diane left the room, the other teacher queried why she

was there, but Mr Jones replied that she had needed to talk about something.

At the time of the sexual abuse, Diane tried to end her life. She was sent to see a psychiatrist and, although she did not say what was happening with Mr Jones, she did talk about him a lot. Diane attempted suicide again a few months later.

Diane says her school advised she should change schools, and that the school records say that she had developed an unhealthy relationship with the teacher and indicate this was her fault. She still blames herself today for the sexual abuse.

Soon after starting her new school she reported the sexual abuse to the police. A female police officer told her that she would be in a lot of trouble if she was lying and that she would have to tell her mother what had happened. The police officer visited the family home and took a very detailed statement. Diane says her mother was not very surprised – she had pieced it all together – but she felt she had let her mother down when she gave all the detail of the abuse.

Months passed with no contact from the police, so Diane enquired what was happening. The police told her that despite

believing her, they did not have enough evidence. She describes how she was so shocked she attempted to take her life again.

Diane and her mother went to the Citizens Advice Bureau, who suggested that they make contact with the education authority. A few weeks later they received a letter from the authority saying that the matter had been investigated. Diane thinks they did not want a scandal. She reported the sexual abuse to the police again in the early 2000s and more recently but continues to feel 'fobbed off'.

Diane says the police have told her the papers from the investigation have been destroyed; the teacher was interviewed, but he told them the sexual abuse 'was just a crush'. Other teachers at the school who could have been interviewed have now passed away. She has also been told by an officer that in his opinion what happened to her was not grooming, as grooming tends to happen quickly, and that the sexual abuse would have been noticed.

Diane feels angry that the police have not investigated the case properly, and she is determined to keep fighting. She says: 'I want

answers ... I want justice.' She also questions whether the police response was based on her family's race, and that her mother was not fluent enough in English to question the police or their investigations.

She suffers from depression and anxiety and feels that she did not do as well at school as she could have done. She has periods when she finds it difficult to work. Although she holds down a job she lacks the confidence to apply for anything new. She also finds trust and relationships difficult.

Diane says she feels that people do not see the damage caused by sexual abuse. She says: 'It is seen as a dark dirty secret that no one wants to talk about.'

She is concerned that when those who suffer sexual abuse report it, the police still do not get the message. She would like to see increased support for those reporting sexual abuse to the police. She also feels that there are not enough places for victims and survivors of abuse to go for legal advice, with a lot of companies only being interested in compensation claims.

When Eddie was sexually abused as a young boy by a man his parents trusted, one of his main concerns was that he should not make life difficult for other people by telling anyone about it.

Eddie describes his life as a constant battle to recover from what happened to him. He was 11 years old when he joined a sports club run by Doug, a friend of his parents they assumed their son would be safe with. The club held an event one weekend when Eddie's family were going away. He wanted to attend, and Doug told Eddie's mother that Eddie could stay with him.

That night Doug told Eddie that they had to share a bed and to get undressed. He then subjected him to sexual abuse. While this happened, Eddie says he remembers crying and thinking 'don't do this to me'. He remembers feeling scared when he woke up in the morning and thinking that he had nowhere to go.

He didn't tell his family what happened because he didn't want to 'ruin life for everyone else'. He says that sexual abuse wasn't talked about in those days, but he thinks his parents and other adults would have killed Doug if they had known.

Doug put Eddie in a position of trust in the club which meant Eddie had to attend meetings that Doug held at his flat. When Eddie didn't go, Doug told his mother he hadn't turned up. After that Eddie had to attend the 'meetings', during which Doug

continued to sexually abuse him. This continued for more than three years.

Eddie suspects he wasn't the only boy sexually abused by Doug. There was often another child knocking on the door and on one occasion Eddie went to Doug's flat and one of his friends was in the bedroom. Doug asked if Eddie wanted to join them. Eddie left the flat, never went back and never spoke to his friend again.

After the sexual abuse Eddie recalls that he didn't care about himself or anything else and says he went off the rails. He was expelled from school and took an overdose as a 'cry for help'. Eventually he told his mother, who was very upset, but his disclosure brought them closer together. He has still never told his father.

At some point during the sexual abuse, Eddie remembers telling a leader and another person at a youth club about it, but no one did anything. He feels that Doug surrounded himself with people in authority to protect himself.

The sexual abuse has had a devastating and lasting effect on his life. When in a room with other men he often feels nervous, and he finds the physical side of relationships very difficult.

Talking about the sexual abuse makes him feel he is back in the room with Doug, he says. It still feels 'so raw' and it is a constant battle going through recovery and talking about it, having not told anyone for most of his life.

Eddie feels it is essential to recognise that having to recount what happened to

them is very difficult for people who have experienced sexual abuse. He emphasised the importance of providing good support services for those who have been sexually abused. Eddie would like to see in the future a dedicated person to report abuse to without there being any repercussions.

Nancy feels strongly that she wants people to understand sexual abuse of children is not a new occurrence. Her traumatic experiences happened when she was a young girl during the Second World War.

Nancy had just started school when the Blitz began, and she and her sibling were evacuated from the city to a farm where they stayed for several years.

She says that the farmer was very fond of her, but his wife was vile. She didn't hit Nancy, but she did cruel things, like putting salt in the children's drinks. Nancy remembers being pinched and laughed at when she soiled her nightdress. The farmer's son also made life unpleasant, bullying and hitting Nancy's sibling. The only good things about life on the farm, apart from the kind farmer, were the animals that Nancy adored.

Nancy describes her father as a strange and distant man who had been brought up in care. He was serving in the armed forces and was stationed near the farm, in accommodation shared with other servicemen. Nancy's mother, who she says was lovely, worked and was also transferred near to the farm. She saw her mother perhaps every three months but rarely saw her father. Nancy remembers wishing that her mother would take her away from the farm, but she never did.

Life on the farm was hard and busy and the young children had to work. The farmer employed a man called Morris as a labourer. On market day, the farmer and his family

would take Nancy's sibling into town, but Nancy was considered too young to go with them. One market day, when everyone had left, Morris called Nancy into the farmhouse where he tied her to a chair, blindfolded her and raped her.

He told her he would kill her if she told anyone what had happened. Nancy was raped on numerous occasions; she would try to run away but Morris always found her. Nancy considered telling the farmer but the thought of how his cold wife might react stopped her. She thought about talking to a kind man who shared her father's accommodation, but he left before she had the courage to tell him.

One market day, in desperation, Nancy went to the farm's stables where she crawled under the manger, listening to the calming breathing of the animals and hoping she wouldn't be found. Morris didn't find her that day and he didn't touch her again. Soon after, she was considered old enough to start going on the trips to the market.

Nancy and her sibling were taken home by their mother at the end of the war. She never spoke about what had happened to her. When Nancy was older, her mother sent her back to the farm for a holiday. Nancy remembers feeling terror at the thought

of returning there but she could not say anything. The farmer's wife and son treated her well this time and seemed genuinely pleased to see her. Morris had left the farm and Nancy never saw or heard of him again.

She returned to visit the farm as an adult. The farmer's son had grown into a gentle man and their friendship continued until he killed himself. Nancy's sibling also attempted suicide. Nancy only spoke to her sibling once

about their time at the farm. She thinks it did a lot of damage to them both. She considered telling her mother but felt she did not want to hurt her.

Nancy says it makes her cross that people don't seem to realise that child sexual abuse is not a new phenomenon; it happened to her more than 70 years ago. It also angers her that there were apparently no checks carried out on the people who took in evacuees.

Fin says that until the Jimmy Savile abuse scandal emerged, he felt he had put the events that happened to him as a teenager ‘more or less to bed’, but now describes how being sexually abused has had a lasting effect on him.

He joined the navy in the 1950s as a boy sailor. The officer in charge of the sailing school praised his talent and put him in a position of responsibility. Fin told us that the officer then ‘made his move’ and sexually abused him.

Fin says he has asked himself ever since ‘How did I allow it to happen?’ and why he didn’t say no to the sexual abuse. He can see now that it was grooming.

Fin did go and speak to the padre and has tried to get a copy of his report, but all he was able to obtain is a comment from the padre that ‘Fin joined the navy to please his parents.’

Because of the sexual abuse and the stress he was under, Fin started bed wetting. He went absent without leave but was found and brought back to the navy where he was subject to corporal punishment, which

he describes as being carried out in a very ‘ceremonial’ way.

He was then sent for a hospital examination because of his bed wetting. No physical reason was found and no one considered he might have psychological problems. The navy decided that Fin was not fit for further training and discharged him.

Fin says he has a serious problem with relationships and doesn’t allow attachment for fear of rejection. He says he has had a good life financially, but not in terms of relationships, and wonders what his life could have been like if he had not been sexually abused.

Only one member of his family knows of Fin’s abuse. They were also at a sailing school in their youth and told him that sexual abuse was going on in their day too.

Fin feels things would not be different today.

Amanda says of her family life: ‘Everything was about pleasing daddy.’

There were sexualised and controlling relationships between her father and his wife and children, who were encouraged to compete for his favour and attention. She believes this dynamic made her vulnerable to sexual abuse in the residential school she attended.

Amanda describes how her mother dressed her and sibling provocatively and ‘paraded us’ in front of their father for his approval. Her mother would tell them they had to ‘suffer to be beautiful’, for example when their hair was being brushed and painfully pulled.

Her father sexualised and played power games with his children, watching them when they were naked. He did not allow them to see him unclothed. She says although he never physically abused them she felt his behaviour was mildly sexually abusive. At school she used to dress provocatively, as far as uniform regulations allowed.

Amanda had individual tutoring for university entrance exams in the school. Her father arranged this despite the school’s view that she lacked the academic ability to pass.

One day the teacher invited her to his home to babysit. When she arrived, he ran a bath and got in it and Amanda got in too. After this, he put her in a towel, took her to the bed and had sex with her. She says she froze. She has blocked out most of that time from her

memory but believes she was sexually abused on several occasions. She remembers once asking the perpetrator what they were doing, and he told her he was ‘teaching her to love’.

The teacher told Amanda to keep quiet about the abuse and bought her presents. She says: ‘It was like he was paying me for something.’

She didn’t pass her exams; she recalls that she was in turmoil and couldn’t write a thing. When she returned home she told her parents what had happened, but they swiftly swept it under the carpet. Her father told her it wasn’t worth ruining the teacher’s career over. She says he seemed almost happy it had happened, suggesting she consented and saying she should be pleased she was attractive enough that someone wanted to do this.

Some time later Amanda’s friend came to realise that Amanda had been abused by the perpetrator. It emerged that Amanda’s friend had been having what she understood to be a consensual relationship with the perpetrator since she was 16. He had groomed her for a couple of years previously and had told her he loved her.

After the Jimmy Savile case came to public attention and she discovered her teacher was still teaching, Amanda and her friend reported him to the police. She also spoke to the school’s headmaster about him. The police

questioned the teacher and fed back that he stated his relationships with these now adult women had been entirely consensual.

Amanda says the teacher was allowed to retire from the school and is currently involved in a church. She feels a written exchange with the headmaster was unsatisfactory as it seemed he was trying to cover up the sexual abuse. He stated the school had implemented safeguarding procedures since Amanda was at school and that her objective when reporting this – presumed to be the removal of the teacher – had been achieved. Amanda says her intention had been to prevent other young women being sexually abused and

she does not think he had been exposed sufficiently at all.

Amanda finds it difficult to understand what impact the sexual abuse has had on her life. She says she feels it was part of who she was, and that her father's behaviour made her vulnerable.

Amanda now has children of her own and they have been supportive of her taking action against child sexual abuse. She would value the opportunity to meet with the perpetrator and receive an apology. She believes there should be more education in schools on consent and healthy relationships.

Marcus was sexually abused during the 1960s and 70s by men from his local Scout Association and the church.

His quest for acknowledgment, an apology and recompense has been impeded by the length of time it took him to report the sexual abuse. He points out: 'It is very difficult to actually complain about something you didn't really recognise was going on.'

He describes his early childhood as idyllic, growing up in the countryside. But when his parents separated his mother was left to bring up her children alone and he says: 'She sort of stopped being a mum really and became a provider.' They moved to a deprived area of a town, but Marcus's mother ensured he was involved in local activities, including the Scouts, choir and church groups.

Marcus says that as soon as he joined the Scouts, the Scoutmasters started grooming him. The Scout Association and church were closely linked and over the next three to four years he was physically and sexually abused by men in both organisations.

He recalls that one of the Scout leaders, Percy, was particularly clever in grooming Marcus and the other boys. He ingratiated himself with Marcus's mother who thought he was wonderful. A policeman called Liam joined the Scout group and he too began abusing Marcus and the other boys. Marcus describes Liam as: 'A really nasty piece of work; a bully who got kicks from hurting the children.'

Marcus says that sexual abuse was quite widespread in local groups and the church, with numerous adults abusing lots of children. Marcus believes the Scout Association knew about the sexual abuse. He remembers that one former Scoutmaster was not allowed to be with the boys on a one-on-one basis but would turn up at events to watch them.

As Marcus got older, he became big enough to fight against what was happening and eventually the abusers left him alone. He had been a very bright pupil doing well at school, but as his behaviour changed and his work suffered no one bothered to find out what was going on. Marcus's behaviour continued to deteriorate; he got involved with 'the wrong type of people', ending up in trouble with the police and being sent to borstal.

Although it was a tough environment, Marcus says it was stable and beneficial for him to be taken away from the area. He worked hard and gained several qualifications and a trade. Although his job opportunities were limited by his criminal record, Marcus went on to have a successful working life. He got married and had a 'lovely family'.

It was only a few years ago, seeing media coverage, that he realised his experiences as a child were sexual abuse, and he began to recollect the full extent of it. He made a report to the police. They spent a long time

investigating and Marcus says it felt good that he was being believed and action was being taken. But a senior police officer decided that there was insufficient corroborative evidence and the investigation was closed. Marcus suspects that this may be connected with the fact that one of the abusers had been a police officer.

He has made a claim for criminal injuries compensation, which was rejected because of the delay between the sexual abuse and the time it was reported. He has challenged this decision.

Marcus feels let down by the police and also feels strongly that the Scout Association should acknowledge they were totally culpable for what happened to him. He describes the Scouts as a magnet for child abusers and says that those who knew what was going on turned a blind eye. He wants recognition and an apology for what happened.

He says: 'The reason I'm here today is I'm getting annoyed about it ... these people are now popping off with a clean slate ... it's not right ... they need to be held accountable.'

Overall Marcus feels he has coped quite well with life despite the awful experiences of his childhood and adolescence. He is receiving help through talking therapy from a local counselling centre which he finds beneficial, and the long-term physical conditions he lives with have begun to improve.

He believes that schools need to monitor unexplained changes in children's behaviour and create the right environment for children to disclose abuse if they need to.

He also would like a system for mentoring between appropriate adults and children involved in the criminal justice system – an independent but public service.

Haley

Haley grew up in care and at a young age was adopted by a family. Sadly, this did not keep her safe and secure. She was exposed to sexual abuse and blamed by her parents for the way she behaved subsequently.

Haley's adoptive parents were older people. Her father was unwell and unable to work, and her mother worked long hours, leaving Haley in the care of her older foster sibling.

When she was a young teenager Haley met a man who was working with her sibling. He was friendly and chatty which Haley says was something completely new to her – she enjoyed his attention and the sweets he used to buy her. One evening at his workplace, he sat her on his lap and started sexually touching her. Afterwards he gave her some sweets. Haley was not aware that this was wrong, and the sexual abuse progressed, although she cannot say how – she says she has blocked it from her mind.

Her abuser began picking her up from school and sexually abusing her in his vehicle. She started 'bunking off' school and getting into trouble and was sent to see the school chaplain. Haley says she could not bring herself to talk to him even though she had begun to realise what her abuser was doing was wrong. She says: 'At first I never saw myself as a victim.' Her parents knew the chaplain and Haley was worried that news of her sexual abuse would get back to them.

In an attempt to control her behaviour, Haley was sent to join an after-school activity by

her parents. When she was leaving one evening, her abuser was waiting outside in his vehicle. She ignored him, but the following week he convinced her to get in his car, where he sexually abused her again. On the next occasion, she recalls his sexual abuse became more aggressive, but she managed to get away and run home. She broke down and told a friend, who convinced her to tell the police.

Haley went to the police station on her own to report what had happened to her but was told that she needed an adult to witness her statement. She went through the embarrassment and shame of asking her sibling to do this, but they backed out at the last minute. It was inconceivable to Haley that she could ask her parents and the police did not proceed with an investigation. She still saw her abuser around and sometimes he would park outside the group that she attended.

Haley thinks there must have been talk in the area about what had happened to her because one day her parents asked her: 'What's all these lies about you being raped?' She remembers feeling very hurt by this and thinking: 'These people are meant to help me!'

Haley says she knows she began to see sex as a way of 'pleasing people' and gaining love

and affection. She now feels bad about this period of promiscuity but understands the motives she had as a lonely, younger girl.

To try and address what was seen as her bad behaviour, Haley was sent to see a psychiatrist. Her mother attended the sessions with her, so she never felt able to disclose her sexual abuse. However, she says the meetings were helpful in that they brought her feelings out.

When Haley was a young adult, both her father and mother died. She rented a flat and found work but says: 'A few years later it all got too much for me', and she collapsed following an overdose. After being taken to hospital she spent several weeks in a psychiatric unit. Haley told her therapist about her sexual abuse and the therapist asked if she had ever considered reporting it.

Some years after her first attempt to report the sexual abuse, Haley entered a police station again. After an uncomfortable start when she was asked why she had left it so long to report the sexual abuse, she says the police were 'brilliant'. Her abuser was charged, pleaded guilty and was sentenced to a period of probation. During the trial it emerged he had previous convictions for child abuse. Haley wonders if the offences would have happened if her first report had been taken more seriously. She felt very supported during most of the case, but her therapy stopped part way through, which she found hard to deal with.

Haley says that she would like there to be a better understanding within the police force of the effects of childhood sexual abuse and better therapeutic support for victims and survivors who report their abuse.

Alan's earliest memories are of living in fear at a care home. He endured brutal sexual abuse, cruel punishments, limited food, hard physical work and no kindness, love or affection.

Remarkably, in his adult life he went on to establish a successful career. He wants to relate his experiences to try and help children in the future.

Alan believes he was placed in the home as a baby, due to his mother's ill health and his father being away during the war.

He describes an atmosphere of fear established by the matron at the home. Children were not listened to and never believed. He says: 'If you were thought to have told lies you were shut in a cupboard without food all day to "wait for the policeman".'

At around the age of five or six, Alan was responsible for feeding the animals. Barbara, a female carer, would invite him into the laundry room where she was working. He remembers her encouraging him to lie down for a rest after his chores. She would lie down with him, undo his trousers and fondle his genitals, before performing oral sex on him. At the time he was not distressed by this. Barbara always gave him a biscuit afterwards, and because the children were given so little food this was very welcome. He thinks the sexual abuse continued for about a year before it suddenly stopped; he never knew why.

Around the same time Alan says he was also being abused by Seth, a male carer at the home. Alan describes how Seth would

bathe him and spend a long time washing his genitals. This progressed to penetrating his anus with his finger and later, raping him. Alan vividly recalls the pain he felt: 'My screams seemed to be the only thing that stopped him.'

Alan was given biscuits and sweets by Seth and remembers crying himself to sleep in fear. The next time Seth bathed him he forced Alan to perform oral sex on him. This pattern of sexual abuse became a regular occurrence.

The regime of fear at the children's home ensured that Alan was certain there was no adult he could report the sexual abuse to, and no one would believe him if he did.

He was regularly shut in the cupboard as a punishment for wetting the bed and made to stand with the wet sheets over his head. He comments that his constant bedwetting stopped within a month of him leaving the home.

When Alan was older he was moved to a boarding school to complete his education, where the harsh punishments continued. One female teacher would administer the cane on bare backsides of boys found masturbating and tell them they would go blind.

As a teenager he ran away from the boarding school and found work and accommodation.

He describes how from this point he finally felt free. With no known relatives, he looked after and supported himself, travelled and forged a successful career, later marrying and having a family.

Alan says that by sharing his experience he hopes to help prevent similar sexual abuse. He feels that isolating children, with no one to talk to, makes them vulnerable and should not happen.

The trauma of being sexually abused as a child by her grandfather became even more devastating when Jill realised that other family members had known and been complicit in covering it up.

Jill relates that she came from a middle-class background, with a businessman father. When her parents divorced very acrimoniously her time was split between them, with most of the holidays spent with her father. In need of help caring for his daughter, Jill's father would frequently leave her with his parents.

The sexual abuse by her grandfather started when she was very young and persisted for several years. Jill remembers being confused about what was going on, and scared to tell anyone what was happening, particularly her mother for fear there would be a huge row with her father. She recalls trying to disclose the sexual abuse to her grandmother but says that nothing was done.

Later, Jill went to boarding school and this is when she believes the sexual abuse stopped. She tried never to think about it again but as she grew older, she became more aware of reports in the media about the sexual abuse of children. Jill says she had an oddly morbid fascination with these stories, but it was a long time before she associated them with what she endured at the hands of her grandfather.

When Jill was a teenager, she tried to tell her mother about the sexual abuse, but her mother rebuffed her. She said she anticipated that Jill was going to tell her something that she didn't want to hear and told her

daughter to speak to her uncle instead.

Jill subsequently did tell her uncle. As she grew older, Jill also told her boyfriend and several friends.

Jill's grandfather became very ill when she was in her 20s and she was tasked by her father with looking after him. This caused her great pain. She says she wanted to get her grandfather to accept what he had done and to apologise. She never completely confronted him but one day they had a huge row about the treatment of paedophiles after her grandfather commented how terrible it was the way that sexual offenders were treated. Jill says she felt so angry with him, but he had mentally 'checked out' by this point and never acknowledged what he had done.

At university, she began to suffer from depression and sought help from a counsellor, who advised that she needed specialist support. Her father agreed to fund the support but only for a limited number of sessions, so she did not accept.

After university she suffered again with depression and eating disorders which were exacerbated by the pressures of her new job. When she asked her father again for help with counselling he began to question her, saying: 'I am only going to ask you this once: were you abused by my father?'

Jill says she was very shocked at this, and even more so when her father told her that Jill's grandmother had walked in on her husband sexually abusing Jill. Her grandmother had contacted Jill's father and her grandfather was confronted by the family, but he assured them it had been a one-off and would never happen again. Her father said he reported the sexual abuse to the family GP who simply advised Jill's father not to say anything and not to involve social services. Her father could not recall how old Jill was at the time.

Jill says she was already suffering greatly and these revelations 'rocked her world'. She felt extremely angry with her father for continuing to expose her to her grandfather even after he was aware of the sexual abuse. She says she could not understand how her father did not go and punch her grandfather. She knows the sexual abuse by her grandfather continued after the family confrontation and recalls that at some stage he started sexually abusing

her at night rather than just during the day. Jill embarked on extensive therapy. She cut contact with her father for a long period of time, during which he sent accusatory and threatening letters.

After a while her father got back in touch. She says her father will not accept he contributed to his daughter's long-term poor health and happiness – he claims that going to the GP was sufficient action.

Jill is still seeking support from health care services. She credits her husband and other family members for helping her overcome what happened to her.

She is keen that children should be educated about sexual abuse and that the public have an open dialogue about the topic. She believes that victims of childhood sexual abuse could be triggered when having their own children and that this should be considered by the midwives when speaking to expectant mothers.

Joshua was sexually abused as a young teenager by his adoptive father Davy, who he describes as a ‘local celebrity’.

A conviction was secured against Davy, after another victim came forward. However, this was some time after Joshua first told people in authority about the sexual abuse and his experience was that he was not believed, and no action was taken because of his reports.

Joshua had been in foster care but was abandoned by his foster mum, which led to a swift adoption process when he was a teenager. He lived with Davy until he was 15.

He does not want to talk in detail about the sexual abuse he suffered but adds that from the age of 14 he was passed around from paedophile to paedophile.

Joshua says he told teachers at school he was being sexually abused by Davy before the adoption went through. He recalls this resulted in a big argument between the headmaster and a social worker, with Davy present. As far as Joshua was aware, the school did not take it any further and he felt he did not want to make a fuss.

The first time Joshua told the police about the sexual abuse was after he had run away from home and Davy had reported him missing. Joshua says by that time he was being groomed by another individual who told him he should report the sexual abuse by Davy. He felt the police did not want to know, because of who Davy was.

Davy emphasised to Joshua that ‘he knew everybody’ and told him that nobody could prove he was a paedophile. Along with Joshua’s experiences of trying to report the sexual abuse, this confirmed his belief that he would not be believed by the police or social services.

Joshua signed himself out of care as soon as he could. His life spiralled downwards with drink, drugs and sexual promiscuity. He says he was a like a ‘Tasmanian devil’ – an angry young man who felt dumped by the system.

Joshua did not hear anything more following his report to the police for some time, until he received a phone call from another child that Davy was sexually abusing. The police then asked him for details that he had previously given. He was told that some of the files had disappeared.

The process made him feel bad and he did not want to do it, but he felt obliged to go through everything a second time. Joshua says the police used his past behaviour against him to get him to go to court and believed they were partly in it ‘for the glory’.

There was pressure to get a conviction to correct a wrong, and he does not believe that the case was investigated in depth. The focus was on Davy, but Joshua’s own life was a ‘car crash’. However, he does not believe that only one man was responsible for that.

Joshua describes his life as difficult. He feels he was let down by several individuals and institutions, including his foster mother, his school (although he believed at the time that the headmaster did support him), social services and the police.

His experiences have resulted in him suffering mental health issues.

Joshua would like to see interviews about sexual abuse of children conducted not by the police but psychiatrists or therapists, as they know best when to push or stop a conversation. The interviews should be based on the Icelandic model, where children are usually interviewed once by one person and the interview is used for multiple purposes.

Many years of regular sexual abuse, that began when she was nine years old, have left Dawn with a long-term condition that continues to affect her life.

An attempt to get justice against the perpetrator was not successful and Dawn has an intense wish for him to acknowledge the impact of his actions.

Dawn's abuser, Charlie, was an older boy who lived nearby. She believes that at first she didn't understand what was happening to her or that she could have tried to say no. She never knew when the sexual abuse would take place and thought it would never stop. She describes feeling that she didn't matter and had to be available for Charlie. As she grew older she worried that she might get pregnant.

At the time, Dawn did not consider telling her parents. She was frightened of what they would say and says there was no other adult she could talk to. Recently, she did tell her mother about the sexual abuse, but says her mother's response showed more concern for Charlie's mother, who was still her neighbour, than for Dawn.

Dawn says she was ostracised at school, so she was often on her own. She told us she was well-behaved, studious and a 'people pleaser' but behaved differently at home, with incidents of shoplifting, annoying the neighbours and stealing money from her parents. She feels her parents should have known something was not right because of this. She thinks she would have benefited

from having a 'safe' adult to talk to, such as a mentor based in school.

When she was a teenager, Charlie sexually assaulted her in an alley then told her he had no further need for her as he had a girlfriend.

Dawn suffered a nervous breakdown. She feels she has been robbed of the life and career she could have had.

In later years, Dawn sought counselling for a bereavement and through this her feelings surfaced about the sexual abuse. She is very angry with her abuser and feels that he ought to pay for the way the sexual abuse has affected her.

Dawn gained support and was able to report her sexual abuse to the police. She says the police thought she had a good case, but the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS) did not proceed with it. She appealed and the case was examined by an independent panel but after six months they upheld the CPS decision.

Dawn says one of the reasons given for not proceeding with a prosecution was the issue of consent. She considers this unfair.

The experience has left her feeling that the justice system is weighted against victims and survivors and can be a cruel and unfair process that makes things worse for them.

She describes the process she has been through as traumatic, particularly as Charlie is not being prosecuted. She wants him to hear her story and understand the impact of his sexual abuse, and how it has affected her sense of self-worth, her confidence and behaviour.

Dawn says that a motivating factor in pursuing the prosecution was to help others, but this

has been at a cost to her. She feels those involved in the process of investigation and prosecution should take account of the effect that trauma may have on the ability of victims and survivors to remember precise details and dates when providing evidence.

She would like to see some form of restorative justice with abusers expressing guilt and responsibility.

Dylan grew up in a family of active church members. But the sexual abuse he and others were subjected to by a curate and the inadequate response from the church have caused him extreme distress and turned him away from his religion.

The sexual abuse happened to Dylan when he was a boy. In his teenage years, he saw a news report about his abuser, Jacob, who had been convicted of an offence against another boy. This prompted Dylan to disclose his own abuse to his parents. His father reported it to a bishop who advised him that Jacob had been moved to a new parish away from the area and the police were monitoring him. The bishop added that Jacob had been censured by the church and demoted.

Some years later, Dylan discovered that Jacob had left a church in a different area following rumours of his inappropriate behaviour with children. Dylan went to the police to report his sexual abuse and provided details of others who may have been sexually abused around the same time.

He says the police were supportive and helpful following his reports and during the criminal proceedings. A clergyman spoke in court, but Dylan says he was not truthful about what had occurred. He suggested that Jacob had led a blame-free life for many years, that he was still doing good work and shouldn't be sent to prison. Jacob received a suspended sentence and was later de-frocked by the church.

Dylan feels that the only concern of the church officials was to redeem Jacob, not do the right thing for him and other victims. He says that Jacob was presented as the innocent one in court and he thinks the clergyman should not have been allowed to give evidence – he did not tell the truth about Jacob's past behaviour and he had misled other parents that Jacob would not be allowed to work with children again.

The police contacted Dylan a few years later, asking him to provide evidence after another victim came forward to report sexual abuse by Jacob. At the subsequent trial Jacob was convicted and jailed.

Dylan has found out that since leaving prison, Jacob still has the protection of the church concerning his current home and income. He thinks that the church may still not always be acting appropriately in responding to safeguarding allegations and they are still denying or making excuses for those they know have previously committed sexual abuse.

As a result of his experiences, the stresses of criminal proceedings and other difficulties, Dylan has been on the verge of taking his own life. He says the thought of his children and

the effect it would have on them was the only thing that stopped him.

He has not made a formal complaint to the church about his sexual abuse. He has considered it but feels he has a stable and happy family life now and doesn't want to upset that. He is reluctant to seek compensation as he doesn't want to be labelled a person who is only seeking money. He adds that he doesn't want to jeopardise

opportunities for others to come forward and report their sexual abuse in the future.

However, Dylan would like a formal apology from the church for the actions of the clergy in covering up the abuse and putting other children at risk.

He is no longer a practising Christian. He occasionally attends church for celebrations but finds it difficult to be in church buildings because of the bad memories they bring back.

Years of sexual abuse that began when she was a small girl led Aalia to obsessively self-harm. Years later she endured the ordeal of multiple trials.

Aalia was around seven or eight years old when she started going to the local mosque with her sibling. Soon she began going on her own, arriving early and waiting downstairs. A new mosque representative noticed her and suggested she should say her prayers early in his quarters. She thought this odd but agreed. He would stand next to her and compliment her. This went on for a few weeks.

One day, the mosque representative started touching Aalia on her back and then under her clothes. She remembers that she froze when he did this. After a few months he started masturbating in front of her. The first time it happened, she ran into the corridor and wet herself. She was very scared, but he just laughed.

She remembers worrying about smelling of wee when she went home and trying to work out what she would tell her mum if she noticed. She could smell him on her and became obsessed with having a bath. She wished she could tell her best friend.

From around the age of nine or ten she began self-harming. The first time she cut herself and saw blood she felt it was cleansing her. She became obsessed with cutting and would scratch and pinch herself which left scars.

The mosque representative began leaving 'love bites' which bruised her and Aalia would

have to make excuses for the bruising. Her abuser started 'rewarding' her by leaving money in certain places on the carpet; she later realised this was grooming.

When another girl began coming to the mosque, she realised what he was doing. Several months later the girl told her parents, who reported it to Aalia's parents. She says she wishes that she'd been brave enough to tell them herself.

Aalia was sent to stay with relatives. She continued self-harming and recalls watching an episode of EastEnders with a storyline about a love bite that confused her and made her think that her abuser must love her.

At secondary school she blocked out all her experiences, stopped going to the mosque and lost her faith. She was popular at school and made good friends.

Aalia later went to the police and reported the sexual abuse. Her abuser pleaded not guilty. At his lengthy trial Aalia had to stand in court for long periods over several days.

A retrial followed, during which Aalia found the girl from the mosque, who became a witness, and her mum gave a statement. This was a very difficult time for Aalia – the court dates kept changing and she says she felt angry and depressed and did not want to get out of bed.

Aalia says the police detective on the case was 'great', but as this officer worked part-time and no one covered their work, often weeks would go by without any communication. She describes her overall experience with the system as traumatic.

She feels the relationship with the Crown Prosecution Service was poor – they have yet to formally inform her of the outcome of the trial – and she received no support from victim support services.

Richard

Richard was sent to a boarding school where sexual abuse was perpetrated by staff and pupils. He feels strongly that parents should protect their children from potentially abusive environments.

When Richard was a young child, his parents divorced, and he and his mother moved to another area. Life was not easy for them, and social services became involved. Richard's memory is that his mother was 'coerced' by a social worker to send him to a boarding school.

Here it was apparent that some of the teachers should be avoided at all costs and Richard says he developed a 'violence radar' to try and protect himself. He recalls an incident that occurred when he was a young teenager, involving a teacher called Andy, who would appear at the door of the boys' bathroom to inspect them, saying that he was checking they were properly dry. Richard reported this to his housemaster and Andy left the school.

Richard remembers another teacher who invited him into his room for a chat. Richard sat on his knee. He says the door was open, the teacher then went to make some tea, and this was all that happened. Richard says this was the only teacher who showed him any kindness and he remembers wishing that he had a dad like him.

Around the same time there was an older boy called Frank at the school who was known as a bully. One night, Frank nudged Richard awake and directed him to his cubicle. Frank

dropped his pyjama bottoms to reveal his erect penis. Richard ran to his bed and hid under the covers. Frank followed Richard to get him back, but when he refused Frank left, and it never happened again. Richard said that he didn't report the incident as he did not feel he knew who to trust.

Richard later resolved to be the antithesis of those who had gone before him by befriending and helping the boys in his dorm. He says that he still has a recurring dream of trying to escape from the school. He believes that irreparable damage has been done to him by the school and social services.

Years later, another former pupil told Richard that he had witnessed a teacher having sex with a pupil. He had never said anything about it and Richard encouraged him to report what he had seen.

Richard thinks that people who are alive today and have committed sexual abuse should be brought to account; that children should not be sent to boarding schools; that parents should care for their children and not send them to a sterile and possibly violent environment. He would like a written letter from the local council apologising for placing him at that school, and recompense for a robbed childhood.

Joanne was first sexually abused by a neighbour as a young child and by others as she grew older. Responses to her suffering by many of the adults in authority she encountered included blame (of her), unkindness, indifference and inappropriate advice.

During her childhood, Joanne was intermittently placed in care. Her mother suffered from mental illness and was an alcoholic. She had a memory of childhood sexual abuse by a neighbour when she was a young child, and now knows that a social services case report described her in the following terms: 'Joanne was wilful and defiant, sexually precocious ... indecently assaulted by a man who was later convicted.' The report also notes 'long history of reception into care ... different children's homes'. Joanne says she was devastated to read this – she feels it showed that social services had no understanding whatsoever of her needs as an abused child.

She was permanently taken into care with her siblings after she witnessed a violent incident between her mother and her father. In the children's home she became sexually involved with an older boy. It was discovered that she was pregnant, but she had no understanding of what was happening. She was taken into hospital for a termination but says no one asked her whether this was what she wanted. Joanne vividly remembers the trauma of the labour and birth of the dead child.

Joanne was moved to another children's home. She says the housemother was lovely, but the father was violent. Joanne recalls

that a male member of staff groomed her with alcohol and cigarettes and raped her on several occasions. She now knows that she was craving love and felt that any attention was good. At that time, she met the father of her child, became pregnant and had another termination while still a teenager. Again, she was not consulted about her options, but told she would have to have a termination. She later gave birth to a child, of whom she is very proud.

Joanne says she regularly absconded from school and under-achieved, but did manage to pass enough qualifications to get on a training course. She left care at the age of 16 and was given no preparation or support. About this time, she started to drink; she became an alcoholic and was addicted to prescription drugs, entering rehab on more than one occasion.

Joanne says it took a long time to get her addictions under control. She has had a succession of failed relationships and has difficulty acknowledging that she has been successful as a mother to her child, who has now given her grandchildren.

She still suffers from the effects of sexual abuse. She says: 'It is a sentence for life, like pebbles thrown into a pond, the ripples keep

on getting bigger.' She worries constantly about her grandchildren's well-being and knows that this is a consequence of what happened in her own childhood. Her childhood sexual abuse and her longing for affection have resulted in her forming abusive relationships in adult life.

She describes how she turned to religion for a number of years, where she sought counselling but was told she should forgive her childhood abusers and get on with her life. She is bitter about this advice, feeling it showed no understanding of the devastating impact and trauma that the sexual abuse has had on her life.

Joanne believes she was let down by the staff at the care home, and health, police and social workers. She thinks someone should have recognised the signs of sexual abuse and acted to protect and help her. Although some of the staff and one social worker were kind and caring, no one was effective in preventing her sexual abuse despite it being clearly described in the report by children's services.

She believes that professionals should be trained to read the signs and act upon them and should protect children. She also wants better preparation to be given to young people leaving care and support for them afterwards.

Ethan says he had a positive childhood with wonderful supportive parents and lots of opportunities. But this was marred by sexual abuse perpetrated by an adult from a youth organisation.

Ethan's parents believed him when he told them, and took action, but stopped short of involving the police. He worries that his abuser may have continued his crimes.

As a young boy Ethan joined the Cub Scouts and enjoyed activities, camping and shows. He and his friends took part in opportunities to learn new skills and to gain badges.

Ethan remembers that when he was about eight years old the Scoutmaster, Seb, invited him to his house for a training session. During the lesson, Seb asked him if he knew how babies were made. Ethan did know as his mum had talked to him about such things. Seb then asked him if he had seen sperm and encouraged Ethan to sit on his lap, while he nuzzled his neck and masturbated over him. Ethan recalls this was clearly presented to him as an opportunity to educate him. Many similar incidents followed, including an occasion when Seb made Ethan and another boy 'demonstrate sex'. Again, this was done in the guise of educating them.

After a time, the sexual abuse stopped, and Ethan recalls walking home from junior school with two Scouting friends. One, Steve, spoke about Seb having touched him. Ethan said it had happened to him too, while the third friend defended Seb.

Ethan clearly remembers realising at that point that the sexual abuse was not just happening to him, but other boys were involved. He says he felt conflicting emotions as he realised that it wasn't because he was special, which was how he had been made to feel; he felt a bit jealous that other boys had been involved and he felt ashamed.

A couple of years later the parents of Ethan and Steve were contacted by the parents of Arthur, another Scout. Arthur had told his parents that Seb had sexually abused him, and the two boys' parents asked them whether anything had happened to them. Ethan told his parents about what Seb had done, and they were very supportive. The two sets of parents together decided not to involve the police, but they did ensure Seb resigned from the Scouts.

Over the years Ethan says he has asked himself why he didn't tell at the time what was happening to him. He concludes that what happened was normalised, society didn't speak about child sexual abuse then, he wasn't hurt and maybe he enjoyed being made to feel special. He also feels what was happening to him in the Scouts was a common experience within the organisation at that time.

Despite going on to have a successful career, a happy marriage and wonderful children, he does feel the sexual abuse affected his sexuality and sexual behaviours and he is concerned that Seb may have continued to sexually abuse children.

Ethan thinks that no one should be immune from prosecution; even if perpetrators are dead they should be spotlighted, and cover-ups should come to light. People should be made accountable for what they have done; not necessarily sent to prison but restorative justice could be applied.

He would like an apology from his abuser, and more importantly to know he is not still sexually abusing children.

He also thinks cultural changes are needed to empower children, with education from a very young age about sexual abuse and what is right and wrong if an adult touches them. He is concerned about societal views of fathers that can make them hesitant to offer comfort to a child in distress for fear of being labelled a paedophile. He would like the media to consider the impact of sensationalist headlines.

Lucy

Hospitalised at the age of 11 years because of an assault by her mother, Lucy was taken into care and placed with a foster family. There, she was raped repeatedly by a violent man and his two teenage sons.

Lucy's attempts to seek justice have not succeeded and she has suffered severe mental health difficulties. Despite this, she has managed to build strong and happy relationships with her family and loved ones.

Mr and Mrs Ambridge, the foster carers, had two teenage sons, David and Stephen, and also fostered several other children, some of them very young. Mrs Ambridge insisted Lucy call her and her husband 'mum and dad', which made Lucy uncomfortable. Lucy remembers that in all the time she lived there she never once heard any babies crying or younger children moving during the night and she thinks it is likely they were drugged to make them sleep.

Soon after she moved in, Mr Ambridge and both his sons began sexually abusing Lucy. The three of them raped and sexually abused her every week for a year, and she was given money each time it happened. One day David hurt her even more than usual and Mr Ambridge beat him as punishment. He made Lucy watch, asking her how much he should hit David. She was very distressed by this.

When another girl, Brenda, came to the foster home for a short stay, Lucy told her about the sexual abuse, hoping she might report it when she left, but Brenda didn't believe her. One

night, Brenda was upset and withdrawn, and did not talk to Lucy for the rest of her stay.

Lucy had a social worker, Mrs Brown, who regularly took her for hospital appointments for a medical condition. Lucy tried to tell Mrs Brown about the sexual abuse, but says she was unable to find the words, and the social worker did not seem interested.

On the day that Mrs Brown was returning Lucy to her mother, Lucy finally told her what had been happening. She remembers being taken to a clinic and told to undress to her underwear. No examination took place and she was simply returned to her mother's home. Her attempt to talk to her mother about the sexual abuse resulted in Lucy being called a liar. Her mother also beat her severely.

Lucy went to bed that night and resolved to try and block her experiences out of her mind. For many years she would not allow herself to think about her terrible childhood sexual abuse, until physical and mental health problems caused her to suffer a breakdown. Feeling suicidal, she went to hospital, where she saw a psychiatrist and began counselling.

As she became more able to talk about her past, she reported the sexual abuse to the police. She gave a statement and was reassured by the officer that the case would

go to court and she would have the chance to face her one remaining abuser, David. By that time Mr Ambridge and Stephen had both died. In a voluntary police interview, David denied even knowing Lucy. She persuaded the police to seek other potential victims, and several others came forward who had been fostered by Mr and Mrs Ambridge. They reported physical but not sexual abuse.

Lucy continued to chase the police about her case, which had been passed to another officer who she found to be cold, rude and dismissive. When she expressed concerns about the delays, the officer showed sympathy for David and the impact it would be having on him. She was eventually told it would not be referred to the Crown Prosecution Service. She felt upset that the police had not followed up several leads she had given them, and particularly angry to see in the media that police resources were being put into investigating high-profile allegations of child sexual abuse.

Lucy says she feels she has had a good adult life but there have also been difficulties for her family caused by her health conditions, her struggle to deal with the trauma of recalling the sexual abuse as a child and the response by the police. She found it particularly difficult to tell her adult children about her past experiences.

She describes a feeling of loss of trust and faith. She feels she and others suffering similarly have not been appropriately helped, and that more prompt support and counselling should be available. Her counselling and group therapy have been helpful, but inflexibility and waiting lists have caused long delays.

Despite this, Lucy highlights another positive in her life. She says she has been very well supported by her victim support officer who has helped her make a formal complaint to the police and prepare for her contact with the Inquiry.

Michael

Michael says that when he heard about the Truth Project it reminded him of Archbishop Desmond Tutu encouraging the public hearings of human rights abuses in post-apartheid Africa.

He believes it is invaluable for people to be able to speak out about the past, and he thinks it would be wrong of him, as a victim and survivor of sexual abuse, not to share his experience. He hopes he can better inform people and help protect children in the future.

As a young boy, Michael attended a small boarding school, where he stayed until he finished his secondary education. The younger boys had their own boarding houses and Michael was placed in one where a teacher called Charles was the resident housemaster.

The first half term was uneventful. School days were regimented apart from a few hours on a Sunday for letter writing, followed by some free time. One day, Michael needed to telephone his parents about his train trip home for the next school holiday, which meant going to Charles' room.

Michael got through to his parents but as he was talking to them, Charles put his hands up Michael's shorts and started 'messaging about' with his genitalia. Michael didn't know the facts of life at that point and wasn't sure what was happening.

The following term, Charles began taking boys into his room in the evenings for tuition. This happened to Michael every week or so, and the same routine occurred every time after

he opened his exercise book. Charles would either unzip Michael's shorts or put his hand inside them. By this time, Michael had had a science lesson about the facts of life and he discovered that he was not the only one being sexually abused by Charles. There were a few boys who had more tuition than others.

Towards the end of the spring term some of the boys began talking to each other about what was going on. Michael shied away from the conversations; he says he knew what was occurring was wrong but didn't know what would happen if the boys did anything about it.

Michael went home for the Easter holidays. Then one day during the summer term, Charles summoned Michael to his room. Charles pulled Michael's trousers down, opened his own flies and pushed Michael down to perform oral sex on him. Michael has never forgotten this but has never told anyone about it before now.

The sexual abuse continued until one day Michael was called to see the headmaster who asked what had happened between him and Charles. Michael later found out that after further sexual abuse by Charles, some of the other victims had told the school captain who reported it to the headmaster. When questioned by the headmaster, Michael could

only sob. The headmaster didn't tell Michael that any action would follow; the school did not tell his parents and nor did Michael.

Charles was left in post until the end of the summer term but in the next school year he lived off campus, although he still taught there for another year.

About 12 months after Charles left the school, Michael was at home when his mother said: 'You will never guess who has been on the phone – your old teacher Charles – he is coming to see us tomorrow afternoon.'

Michael's abuser arrived at the house smiling, asking Michael how he was doing at school and engaging his parents in conversation. Michael states that if he is bitter about anything, it is this breach of his parents' trust.

He believes Charles was trying to invade his family circle to gain access to his siblings.

Charles stayed friends with Michael's parents until he died. Michael believes this was a demonstration of his power, and he would always refuse to see Charles when he visited.

Michael has never told his parents. He says it would make them feel bad and nothing would be gained. He says he had a 'fantastic time' at the school and feels the school was the making of him. He has never wanted to go to the police about what happened as he doesn't want to harm the school and has no interest in making any sort of claim. He says he has dealt with what happened there. However, he thinks that the school should have told his parents about the sexual abuse.

Cathy was sexually abused by a youth worker in her church who became a minister and went on to work in another youth organisation.

Cathy felt stonewalled by the church in her attempts to gain acknowledgment of the sexual abuse, but has persisted in speaking out, with the support of her loved ones.

Cathy grew up in a strict religious family and felt very isolated as a child. Her mother had a condition which made it difficult to have visitors, and she never knew her grandparents. In her early teens, she joined the local church youth group where she met Alexander, who had been appointed to look after young people.

Alexander organised an evening drop-in for the young people and Cathy attended regularly until she went to college. She was able to talk about her personal problems and describes how it felt 'amazing' to have someone listen to her – she felt Alexander understood and cared for her.

Cathy had a local voluntary job. To her surprise she discovered Alexander also attended there and he suggested that she could help with administration. He would pick her up and take her to his house where she would do typing for him.

Over time Alexander started to talk more about himself and problems in his marriage. He told Cathy she was the only person he could talk to. He would put his arm around her and on one occasion made her lie on a

sofa and put his hands on her. He was much bigger than her physically and would tell her that he was showing her 'God's love'.

The sexual abuse escalated. Alexander would approach Cathy while she was typing and put his hands down her top. Then on one occasion, he demanded oral sex, telling Cathy it was all for her benefit and she must not tell anyone. She was forced to have penetrative sex on four occasions at various locations, including her own bedroom, which she had considered her safe place. Later, when Alexander hosted a residential retreat he would take her to his room every afternoon; she felt unable to say no.

Some people were suspicious having seen Alexander and Cathy together regularly, and it was reported to the church. She believes Alexander was visited by members of the church to discuss his relationship with her, but she was never asked about it.

The sexual abuse lasted many months, until Alexander asked Cathy to pose for some photos in a bikini. She said no and felt empowered by her refusal. She wrote Alexander a letter saying that she wanted it all to stop. When she next saw him he simply said: 'I got your letter, that's fine', and walked off.

Cathy tried to move on with her life. When she attended a seminar on grooming she

recognised that this was what had happened to her. She felt able to discuss it a little with her loved ones.

The church was reviewing its safeguarding procedures and asked if anyone wanted to share their experiences. Cathy wrote down her account and sent it to the church, expecting both acknowledgement and support in return. Weeks went by with no response and this made her increasingly anxious that her confidentiality might have been broken or the letter gone astray. Eventually she received what she considered a very poor response in terms of confidentiality and respect for her.

Cathy says at that time she was suffering from depression and anxiety and had suicidal thoughts. Eventually the church 'put their hands up' and offered some support. However, she found the offer hugely upsetting as it would have put her back in the environment where some of the sexual abuse had occurred.

Cathy feels this was the last straw. She had a breakdown and attended a mental health centre. She has been receiving weekly support from the NHS and says working with the community psychiatric nurse has been very helpful.

Cathy wrote to a senior official in the church to make a formal complaint of sexual abuse, but again received no response. She discovered that Alexander was a minister and had been moved from another church due to allegations of incidents involving other women. Cathy remembered that he had told her that 'she was not the first'.

Cathy made a report to the police, but the Crown Prosecution Service stated that there was insufficient evidence to prosecute. They added that the allegations would be flagged on file should anything further come to their attention.

She feels very unhappy with the poor procedures she has encountered while trying to report the sexual abuse she suffered.

Still feeling that she had unfinished business, Cathy took out a civil case against the church and won. She found this very empowering and has used the settlement to pay for psychotherapy and training.

Cathy later discovered that Alexander held a position of responsibility in a youth organisation. Someone close to her raised concerns about Alexander and they believe he has now been removed from this role and is not able to work with children any more.

Douglas describes a childhood of bullying, fear and sexual abuse at the hands of those who should have cared for and protected him.

As a young boy, Douglas sustained a brain injury. As a result, his behaviour changed and his mother found it hard to manage him. She approached social services and Douglas was placed in a residential assessment centre. He remembers trying to run away on the day he first arrived and being placed alone in a secure cell.

The culture of the unit was of bullying and physical and sexual abuse. Punishments included being stripped naked and locked in a secure cell for the weekend. Bullying by other inmates was encouraged by staff as a means of control and sexual abuse by Patrick, a residential worker, was prolific.

Douglas also spent time at a second residential home with a similar harsh and abusive environment. With visible distress, he describes being returned to the first unit two or three times, to be greeted by Patrick rubbing his hands at the sight of him returning. He says: 'It was like facing my worst nightmare each time I was sent back.'

Douglas now thinks that Patrick was part of an organised paedophile group that he supplied with looked-after children. He remembers being transported in a van up and down the country. On one occasion, when he believes he was drugged, he was driven many miles from his residential unit. He remembers seeing a road sign of the place he was taken to, before he was taken into a concealed

outside area, where he was sexually abused by different men.

Douglas says that during his time in care he witnessed the sexual abuse and rape of other young people. He tried to complain at the second unit but was told he was not allowed to.

The only person who showed Douglas any kindness in his childhood was his social worker, but she failed to take any action to protect him. Nor did the police, when he came to their attention for petty thieving as an adolescent, nor later, his probation officer.

As an adult, Douglas reported the sexual abuse in the residential units to the police. Some other victims and survivors came forward and he believes their accounts of sexual abuse were supported by evidence from professionals. Patrick and others were charged and appeared in court, but the case was dismissed.

Douglas was awarded a significant amount of money in compensation for his sexual abuse, which he donated to provide counselling for victims and survivors of child sexual abuse. He says he did not want money – he wanted, and still wants, justice.

Throughout his life, Douglas feels he has been treated as second class by society, as a result of being in care. He has experienced

mental health problems and struggled to find a counsellor he felt could help him. He has difficulties with relationships and recently he has lost contact with his child. He feels the judge used his history of care and sexual abuse against him in reaching this decision and feels angry, bitter and let down again.

Douglas has spent many years campaigning for justice for himself and other victims and survivors of child sexual abuse at the residential homes. He wants to see more thorough checks made on those people working with children. He says: 'Victims need justice – it is not about money.'

The daughter of migrant parents who had high aspirations for their family's future in the UK, Karen was sent to a private girls' school as a boarder.

Karen was very young, the school was a long way from home and her younger sibling had sadly died in childhood. A male teacher exploited her vulnerable position to sexually abuse her and then stalk her for a time after she left the school.

Karen found it very hard to settle in her new environment. The school was a grand old building from the outside, but inside it was cold, the food was awful and there was a strict punishment regime. Karen describes it as a daunting, miserable place for a young girl.

She became active in sports, arts and drama and by her second year she was managing to get by. Later, she was put in a special class for girls preparing for common entrance exams, with a teacher named Mr Thomas. When he was absent from work due to illness he requested that the girls visit him in his flat, and Karen and some classmates went to see him in his bedroom.

When Mr Thomas returned to teaching he encouraged what Karen describes as a 'strange relationship' with the girls in his class. Looking back, Karen feels Mr Thomas was part of a child abuse ring, as he would tell the girls he would take them to London to meet his friends.

He began asking Karen to do chores for him and he would give her treats. He locked the door of his room and got her to sit on his knee, then he would wiggle about and touch her. He would refer to his penis as her 'friend' and describe beforehand the sexual acts he would commit.

This occurred once or twice a week and Karen remembers being terribly scared that someone would find out what was happening.

Towards the end of Karen's final term at the school, Mr Thomas arranged a secret party for her with lots of sweet treats. Someone tried the door handle, and she was stricken with fear. A few minutes later the key turned in the lock and the headteacher opened the door. He shouted at Karen to get out, but he never spoke to her about the incident.

Just before she left the school Mr Thomas asked Karen to meet him in secret. He told her they had to be very careful as he was not supposed to see her anymore, and he kissed her.

She returned to the family home for school holidays. One evening after a day out with friends, Karen walked into her house to find Mr Thomas sitting on the sofa, drinking and socialising with her parents. He said he'd come to give her a present for doing so well at school.

At her new school Karen began receiving letters from Mr Thomas, but she ripped them up and tried to ignore them. He had moved on from her previous school by that time. The letters became more rambling and accusatory when she did not reply. Eventually they stopped coming, but for some time after, Karen dreaded the post. She says: 'Wherever I got to, it felt like he was there.'

One evening, while out walking in the school grounds, a man exposed himself to Karen and tried to grab her, ripping her skirt. She managed to get away but didn't report it to the school until a week later. She was surprised when she told a teacher that they seemed keen to take action. Around this time, she also told a trusted female teacher what had happened with Mr Thomas at her previous school, but as far as Karen knew, nothing was done about it.

Karen says her teenage years were very difficult because of what happened to her. She was badly behaved, with no respect for authority and no trust for adults. She felt on the edge of a nervous breakdown. Later she sought counselling which she found

very helpful, allowing her to deal with her experiences and move on in her life. She told her mother what had happened with Mr Thomas, but her mother's reaction was to tell Karen she 'must have asked for it'.

Some years ago, after media coverage of child abuse investigations into private schools, Karen decided to report her sexual abuse to the police. She felt a duty to do this – she did not want to face any court action on her own, but was willing to take part if other victims of Mr Thomas had come forward. The police traced him but said no other complaints had ever been made against him and the matter did not proceed any further.

After those difficult times, Karen's counselling continued to help her deal with her experiences.

Karen has always felt strongly about avoiding private education and its networks. She thinks private schools, particularly boarding schools, are attractive to those who want to abuse children sexually, emotionally and physically and that they are very vulnerable environments for children.

Neglected by his mother and sexually abused throughout his childhood by adults who were supposed to care for him, Colin is striving to come to terms with his experiences.

Colin says that part of this process, with help from his wife and a support worker, is talking about feelings he suppressed for many years, and speaking out to the Inquiry.

Colin and his two siblings were taken into care when he was very young but were not kept together. He describes bouncing around numerous children's homes 'like a ping-pong ball'. He often returned from school to find his suitcase packed and a stranger would take him to yet another unfamiliar home.

The absence of any stability in Colin's life led to behavioural problems. As a young child he was taken to a combined mental health unit and school. During the time he was there, he was given different medications which he believes were unnecessary. No one talked to Colin about his behaviour. He says he wasn't mentally ill – he was simply a very traumatised little boy.

Colin says he would be taken into a padded cell where a Dr Gibby would give him medication and put a mask over his face, pouring a strong-smelling liquid onto it that he now recognises as ether.

He has vague memories of that time but is certain he was sexually abused by Dr Gibby. Even as a young child he knew something was very wrong when he left the cell feeling very sore around his bottom. But he was too young

to understand what was happening to him or to tell anyone.

A few years later, Colin was taken to another children's home. One day, a male staff member came up behind him and put his hands down the front of his trousers, fondling him. The staff member threatened Colin, saying no one would believe him if he said anything and that he wouldn't get any pocket money.

Colin tried to stay out of this man's way but on another occasion the member of staff sexually abused and raped him in the basement of the home. He ran away several times. He begged the police not to return him to the home, telling them he didn't want to be hurt again, but the police didn't listen and took him back.

Colin says he became a very angry young man. He would frequently pick fights, seeking out the physical pain that acted as a release for him.

After being involved in a serious fight, Colin spent time in a young offenders' institution, which he preferred to the children's homes as there was a sense of stability and he knew exactly where he was and how long he would be staying for. On another occasion when he got into trouble he was given the choice between serving a prison sentence or joining

the armed forces. He chose the forces, and this marked a major turning point in his life.

Colin enjoyed his time as a serviceman. The military discipline gave him an outlet for his pent-up aggression and anger. He feels certain that if he hadn't joined up he would have become a career criminal and could have been convicted of very serious offences. Over a decade later, Colin met his future wife and left the services.

Having known very little about his family he was recently contacted by one of his siblings, who had been looking for him for many years. Colin is trying to find information about other family members, but data protection rules are making this difficult. He feels angry about the lack of assistance from the local authority that has resulted in him spending most of his life without his family. He wants to know who decided to separate him from his siblings, and why this happened.

Colin has suffered from depression and was unable to talk to his wife about what had happened to him until recently, when following media reports of child sexual abuse, he decided to come forward.

He came to speak to the Inquiry as part of his healing process and because he wants to try to prevent other children being hurt. He is fearful for children in care and is worried nothing will change. He has struggled to find any appropriate local support and feels that cutbacks mean essential social and care services can't be provided.

He describes how he is constantly troubled by his experiences: 'You always carry that stigma. Even though I know it wasn't my fault, I keep mulling it over. Could I have done things differently? Could I have done more to get someone to listen to me? But I concluded, no, I couldn't.'

My life was taken from me. I will never know what might have been had I not suffered years of abuse, and struggled to get the help I so desperately needed. Thank you for helping me share my experiences. I hope that lessons will be learned.

Truth Project participant

I have lived for too long with the pain, anger and frustration of the trauma of sexual abuse. Sharing my experiences with the Inquiry gave me hope and reassurance; hope that this crime will no longer be hidden and denied, reassurance that, at last, an official authority listened and believed. For the first time my truth is now accepted and respected. Thank you.

Truth Project participant



 INDEPENDENT INQUIRY
CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

For further information, please visit
truthproject.org.uk