

Contents

Chapter	Page
7	Module 4 – Sisters of Nazareth, Belfast
	Introduction.. 2

Chapter 7:.....

Module 4 – Sisters of Nazareth, Belfast: Introduction

	Para
Introduction1
The Homes11
The History of Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge32
Governance.....	.68
Finance72
Inspection	
The Order's Systems88
State Systems93
Finding99

Introduction

- 1 In Module 4 we considered two Roman Catholic children's homes, Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge, which were sited near each other, about one and a half miles south of Belfast city centre. The Module commenced with an introduction by Senior Counsel on 5 January 2015, and continued until 19 May 2015 when there were closing submissions. In all, there were 41 days of hearings allocated to this Module. In total, evidence was received concerning the two homes, either in person or through the reading of their statements, from a total of 117 witnesses who had been in Nazareth House or Nazareth Lodge as children. Of these, (taking account of witnesses who were in both homes) 74 gave oral evidence in this module. Thirty-three other witnesses, such as sisters, houseparents, social workers or inspectors also gave oral evidence. More people spoke to the Inquiry about the Belfast Nazareth homes, therefore, than about any other homes.
- 2 There were 50 applicants who had been resident in Nazareth House who contributed statements. The evidence of ten of these witnesses was read out as they were unable to attend for health reasons, and two because the witnesses sadly had died since preparing their statements. Three did not engage further with the Inquiry. One witness had given his evidence about Nazareth House during the module on Rubane. We therefore heard oral evidence from 34 witnesses.
- 3 We received evidence from 52 former residents of Nazareth Lodge. The statements of five were read out because of the ill health of the applicants, and two because of the deaths of the applicants, again sadly before they could give oral evidence. Five of the witnesses had given their evidence in the Rubane module, so that in this module we received oral evidence from 40 witnesses. In all, 31 of the people who gave evidence to the Inquiry concerning the Belfast Nazareth homes had also been in Rubane, as from 1953 to 1972 the boys in Nazareth Lodge were usually transferred there at the age of eleven. Two of the witnesses were not applicants but were former residents, one of them appearing at the request of the Sisters of Nazareth.
- 4 A number of children were sent to Australia as child migrants from both homes. Of these, two former residents from Nazareth House and one from Nazareth Lodge gave oral evidence during the module, and have been included in the figures above. There were also ten more applicants

from Nazareth House and twelve from Nazareth Lodge who gave evidence during the module concerning Australia. Their evidence is dealt with in Chapter 6. One of these witnesses had been in both homes, and so in total, therefore, 24 child migrants who had been in Nazareth House or Nazareth Lodge gave evidence to the Inquiry. It should be noted that many applicants who gave evidence in other modules provided only limited accounts of their time at Nazareth House or Nazareth Lodge.

- 5 We received evidence from seven social workers, six middle and senior managers in the social services and five members of the Social Work Advisory Group (SWAG) or Social Services inspectorate (SSI). One teacher, one GP, one chaplain, one handyman, two volunteers, five houseparents and eight sisters provided evidence. Three of these people did not appear due to ill-health; the remainder gave both written and oral evidence. The evidence of all but one related to Nazareth Lodge, mainly because Nazareth House closed in 1984 and they provided evidence concerning enquiries into complaints about Nazareth Lodge in the following years. In addition, one sister who gave evidence had moved from one home to the other, and her evidence related to both homes.
- 6 Submissions were also received from Sister Brenda McCall on behalf of the Sisters of Nazareth, from the HSCB on behalf of the predecessor bodies which had provided social work support for the children and their families, and from Dr Hilary Harrison for the then Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety.
- 7 We are indebted to the witnesses, all of whom came to address disturbing and painful personal memories or difficult issues for which their organisations had been responsible. The memories recounted to us typically related to events between forty and eighty years ago, and we have been aware that while the details of some incidents have remained sharp because of their emotional impact at the time, other memories are hazier or may have been influenced by the sharing of accounts or the passage of time. We are aware that for a small number of applicants who came to tell us of their experiences there has been the added shock that other witnesses have accused them of bullying or some form of abuse, and coming to terms with the perceptions of others will have added to their distress.¹

1 SNB 100007.

- 8 The Congregation has emphasised the risk entailed in relying on memories that may be faulty or false. We have been alert to the need to cross-check witnesses' written and oral evidence for consistency with the evidence of others and surviving documentation. As might be expected, we have come across errors and inconsistencies. One witness, for example, thought that as a very young child she had been in Nazareth House, but written records indicated that she had confused the home with another institution; in view of her age at the time and the length of time since her period in care, such confusion is thoroughly understandable. The fact that we have quoted witnesses extensively does not mean that we have accepted their versions of events unquestioningly. We appreciate that some evidence will have been affected by exaggeration or false memories, and the fact that we have not qualified every statement with a clause to state that this is the witness's allegation should not be taken to imply that we accept or reject the particular observation.
- 9 However, the more witnesses who repeated similar accounts of life in the two homes, and the more substantiating detail they provided, the more persuasive they proved to be. It is not our role to decide precisely what happened in relation to each allegation or to determine the guilt of individuals, but to conclude whether on balance there were general systemic failures. The volume and detail of the evidence has been sufficient to provide us with a full picture of what life was like in the two homes and to reach conclusions about the allegations of systemic abuse. It should be noted that, while many witnesses have been quoted in this chapter, on most subjects there were many others who have not been quoted but who provided corroborative evidence.
- 10 Inevitably, the applicants to the Inquiry have largely been people who had unhappy experiences about which they wished to complain, and drawing together their evidence in this chapter has also been a selective process, primarily identifying the failings of the homes. The picture painted, therefore, is inevitably not a balanced account of life in the homes.

The Homes

- 11 When the land was acquired and the homes were built, they were in countryside on the edge of the city. Since then, because of urban growth, the sites became embedded in a built-up area, but at the time of their construction the two homes were ideally situated in accordance with the thinking of the time, as they were readily accessible to Belfast, but the

children were able to enjoy the space of the countryside, away from the cramped and squalid city conditions where many of them had previously lived.

- 12 Both homes were run by the Sisters of Nazareth, and each had its Mother Superior. Both were accountable through the Mother Regional, who was responsible for the Order's services throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic for most of the period covered by the Inquiry to the Mother General, who was based in Hammersmith. The Order, its Rules and its systems of finance, governance and quality assurance are described more fully in Chapter 5 of this Report on Termonbacca and Nazareth House, Bishop Street, which were also run by the Sisters of Nazareth in Londonderry.
- 13 Although the two homes were sited only two hundred yards apart, they were managed separately, and each had its own community of sisters. For most of their history the main distinction between the two homes was that Nazareth House was for girls while Nazareth Lodge was for boys. Their backgrounds were, however, also distinct, as Nazareth House was a children's home from the start, whereas Nazareth Lodge was originally an industrial school. Until Nazareth Lodge was reclassified as a children's home in 1950, they worked under different regulations and were subject to different systems of inspection.
- 14 It was the practice in homes run by the Sisters of Nazareth to divide up children by gender and age. This may simply have been a matter of convenience, in view of the need to cope with large numbers of children whose needs did indeed differ with age and gender. Within Nazareth Lodge and Nazareth House not only were the children separated out by gender, but they were also divided by age group. There was a nursery unit for babies and toddlers and separate groups for young children of primary school age and older children of secondary school age.
- 15 Until families became smaller in the 1970s it was quite possible that the Sisters would be asked to admit several children from one family at the same time, following family breakdown caused by the death of a parent, severe illness or absence through working in England. In consequence, when groups of siblings were admitted, it was possible that they would be placed in different homes and different units within the homes, such that they had very little contact. Children were often unaware of the whereabouts of their siblings, even when they were living in the same

building, and witnesses provided many examples of separation from their siblings.²

16 Although this practice of dividing and managing children may have been necessary as a way of supervising large numbers in the early history of the homes, it was considered contrary to good practice throughout most of the period covered by the remit of the Inquiry, as the Home Office Guidance circulated in 1952 made clear.³ Some witnesses were of the opinion that there was a deliberate policy to split siblings, but it seems that the splitting was essentially the consequence of the way in which the homes were organised, though the impact proved to be sufficient to damage long-term relationships between brothers and sisters.

17 The Congregation was clear that it had no such policy. They denied that there was any attempt to conceal siblings from each other, but admitted that they themselves might have been unaware of siblings placed in other homes.⁴ Nor was there any attempt to separate siblings, though the age-based organisation of the homes meant that they might meet infrequently.⁵ In their final statement the Sisters said:

“For the avoidance of doubt, the Congregation maintains that throughout the relevant period it encouraged family and sibling contact wherever it was possible and practical.”⁶

Indeed, in their final statement the Congregation gave several examples of families maintaining contact.⁷

18 The splitting of families is a practice that appears to have changed from 1968 onwards, when boys were first admitted to Nazareth House. Almost all of the concerns about the splitting of families were expressed by witnesses who were in the homes prior to 1968 and the witnesses who reported ongoing contact with siblings were in the homes from 1968 onwards.

19 In their later years, the Sisters acknowledged that separating siblings was no longer acceptable and both homes admitted both boys and girls. The Hughes inquiry was informed that the first girls were admitted to Nazareth

2 For examples of children unaware of their siblings, see HIA 91 (SNB 198), HIA 387, HIA 171, HIA 43, HIA 214 (Day 86, p.4) and HIA 152 (SNB 2017).

3 HIA 470.

4 SNB 1508.

5 SNB 1509.

6 SNB 100156.

7 SNB 100153-100165.

Lodge in 1967,⁸ but HIA 423 was admitted to Nazareth Lodge as a baby in 1964 so that she could remain with her older brother, with the intention that they would be fostered together. In the event, HIA 423 was six years old before this happened.⁹ In 1969, on the direction of a judge, HIA 175's little brother was the first boy to be placed in Nazareth House and he was given the bed next to hers so that she could keep an eye on him.¹⁰

- 20 Although the two homes were sited near each other, they do not appear to have interacted much. The Nazareth Lodge boys played football on the playing fields adjacent to Nazareth House, and on occasion the nuns organised visits for girls to go and meet their brothers. HIA 204 only remembered seeing his sisters in the summertime when they played on a field in front of Nazareth Lodge.¹¹
- 21 The children also mingled when invited to Christmas parties provided by Belfast businesses. At times in the 1970s, boys visited Nazareth House to act as altar boys but they recalled that they had no contact with the girls on such occasions. In the later years there were a few examples of children being transferred from one home to the other. There were also a few staff who worked in both homes. By and large, however, the homes were run quite independently as two separate communities.
- 22 Although the two homes were separately run, there were many parallels in their styles of management, the childcare methods employed and the types of abuse which former residents have alleged. It will be noted that similar patterns could be seen in the two homes run by the Order in Londonderry considered in Chapter 5. While some of these similarities may in part have developed because of the policies of the Order of the Sisters of Nazareth, it seems more likely that they resulted mainly from contacts between people working in Roman Catholic homes sharing ideas on the grapevine, as similar systems and problems have also been reported in other homes, not only run by the Sisters of Nazareth in Northern Ireland, but also by other Orders, and in the Republic of Ireland and in Australia.¹²
- 23 Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge are dealt with in separate chapters below, but the similarities mean that there will be some repetition of the key issues, and the headings and subheadings within the two chapters are almost identical. Both homes were very large and institutional. Both were

8 SNB 50092.

9 SNB 5706.

10 SNB 161.

11 SNB 306.

12 Many of the childcare practices reported by witnesses in this chapter are also described in a book about St Joseph's Industrial School at Cavan in the Republic of Ireland where there was a serious fire in 1943. *Children of the Poor Clares* by Mavis Arnold and Heather Laskey (1985).

seriously underfunded in the early decades of the Inquiry's remit, and this was particularly apparent in the poor levels of staffing, which inevitably led to a dearth of personal individual attention and care for many of the children. Unsurprisingly, a number of impersonal institutional systems were adopted in order to keep the homes going.

- 24 Over the main decades covered by the allegations (the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s) a variety of improvements were made in both homes, with the introduction of smaller units, the appointment of lay staff to augment the nuns, better living conditions and investment in training for staff. By the end of the period covered by the Inquiry the quality of childcare in both homes had greatly improved, but the use of the homes by the Boards was reduced for a variety of reasons, such as better preventative work, an increased use of foster care, shorter periods in residential care, alternative residential provision and smaller families. In consequence this meant that in the 1980s and 1990s the occupancy of the two homes was steadily reduced and both were eventually closed as they were not economically viable - Nazareth House in 1984 and Nazareth Lodge in 1999.
- 25 Unhappily, despite the progressive improvements, for a variety of reasons many of these developments appear to have been implemented one or two decades too late. The Home Office Guidance on the division of large homes into small groups issued in 1952, for example, did not become reality until about 1970 in Nazareth House and 1972 in Nazareth Lodge. The care methods being employed by the Order were therefore out of date throughout most of the Inquiry's remit.
- 26 The failure to update the childcare practice in the two homes appears to have been influenced by two main factors. First, following the implementation of the Children Act 1950, which permitted the welfare authorities to finance the care of children in homes run by voluntary organisations, the state was content to allow the Sisters to continue to proceed as before, relying solely on the funds they could raise from the Catholic community to cover their running costs, though the MoHA helped with capital grants and money to support training programmes. It was only in the 1960s that the welfare authorities took significant steps to take children in the two Catholic homes into care and therefore pay for the care of the children. Thereafter the two homes had increasing levels of income and were able to recruit more staff and to make improvements to the buildings.

- 27 The second factor is that the Order wished to be self-sufficient and feared the impact of state intervention. It was felt that the appointment of lay staff could have an effect on the values which the Sisters wished to promulgate in the way that they worked with children, and that if they came to rely upon finance from the state, they risked becoming beholden to it. These fears had some grounding. The nature of the care offered did change with the appointment of lay staff, which coincided with a reduction in the number of sisters available to do the work. More significantly, when the Health and Social Services Boards were funding every child and the demand for residential childcare places diminished, the two homes were no longer independent of the state but inevitably had to be reduced in size and eventually closed.
- 28 It was against this background that witnesses have alleged abuse. It has to be acknowledged that in both homes the sisters responsible for the children must have been under severe pressure, especially in the earlier years, in having to provide for the children's material needs, keep up standards of hygiene and maintain order, day in day out, with few holidays or days off. (The summer period when many of the children were placed with families appears to have been the one time when the Sisters could hold retreats or take time off.) Because of the poor staffing and the pressure on the sisters' time, however, very few children could have experienced personal attention for more than a few moments in the early decades, contrasting sharply with the guidance given in 1970 in the standard text book *Residential Life with Children* that each child should have an hour's individual attention each day.
- 29 The evidence suggests that in both homes the sisters and other staff fell into three groups.
- (a) Despite the pressures, some nuns still managed to remain caring and imaginative in trying to provide homely personal care, and witnesses have spoken warmly about the care they offered, and have maintained links subsequently.
 - (b) A number of nuns and lay staff are the subjects of small numbers of allegations of abuse, while also being found to be generally supportive and caring by witnesses.
 - (c) At the core of the witnesses' statements, though, there were in each home a very small number of sisters and lay staff who were the subject of multiple allegations. It was during their tenure that the greatest numbers of allegations of physical and emotional abuse were made.

The sheer volume and detail of the allegations is persuasive, and the difficult conditions under which these staff worked did not offer an excuse for the persistent physical abuse, at times amounting to cruelty, which they inflicted. The accounts given of the abuse meted out by these people will be dealt with individually.

- 30 In both Nazareth Lodge and Nazareth House there were some children who clearly had miserable childhoods, experiencing a very basic standard of living, receiving no individualised love and attention, and wondering when they were next going to be subject to abuse. It must be stated, though, that other children clearly managed to avoid being abused or positively enjoyed their time in the homes, and many have kept contact with the sisters and lay staff up to the present day. Even some who stated that they were abused stayed in contact because the nuns were the only family they had. Similarly, some witnesses have clearly had most unhappy experiences as adults, probably influenced at least in part by their treatment in the homes as children, while others have had happier lives as adults and have come to terms with their childhood experiences.
- 31 Although we heard from 118 witnesses in this module, they were only a small proportion of the total number of children - approximately 6,000 - who lived in the two homes. It is impossible to obtain an accurate picture of the experiences of those who did not come forward. We have heard of some who clearly suffered from ill-health and mental health problems, and from anecdotal evidence more ex-residents appear to have died prematurely than one would expect in the population as a whole. We have heard of others who have succeeded in life. Our remit, though, is to respond to the people who came forward as witnesses and to determine from their evidence whether there was systemic abuse.

The History of Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge

- 32 The development of Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge was motivated by the drive on the part of the Roman Catholic Church to provide services for Catholic children, so that they would not need to be admitted to workhouses, state institutions or homes run by non-Catholic organisations where the Church felt that their spiritual needs might not be met appropriately. This was a matter of considerable concern to the Roman Catholic Church in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as there was some active proselytisation to attract children to become Protestants. The concern continued to influence thinking concerning childcare services within the

Roman Catholic Church up to the 1970s. As Sr Brenda explained, there is now no such concern, and it is the responsibility of those who manage children's homes to ensure that children have opportunities to practise their faith.¹³

- 33 In 1868 The Industrial Schools (Ireland) Act provided for setting up Industrial Schools for “neglected, orphaned or abandoned children”, and “for the rescue and care of younger boys ... who were in danger of becoming delinquent”. It was, however, over thirty years before a Catholic home was set up in Belfast to meet this specific need.
- 34 On 9 May 1876 Bishop Dorrian invited the Sisters of Nazareth to establish an old people's home and to care for children in Belfast, initially in the Bishop's own house in Ballynafeigh on the Ormeau Road. It consisted of two semi-detached villas, which were merged into one to form the home and later incorporated into the main home.¹⁴ Mother St Basil, who was the founder of the Congregation of the Poor Sisters of Nazareth, and three other sisters established the home.¹⁵
- 35 in 1877 a number of whitewashed cottages sited on the same property were used for Nazareth House.¹⁶ In 1884 the Sisters of Nazareth had a new building on a site adjacent to the Bishop's house on the Ormeau Road in Belfast.¹⁷ In 1897 a site formerly known as Fox Lodge (which had been used as an industrial school for Protestant boys) was purchased by the Sisters of Nazareth to provide accommodation for 50 boys in Belfast; until then they had lived in a wing of the home for old people.¹⁸ At first, five or six sisters were seconded from Nazareth House to run the home, but it was on 8 August 1900 that Nazareth Lodge, Belfast, was opened for boys by the Sisters of Nazareth as a separate community, and it was registered as an industrial school on 11 November 1902 to accommodate 50 Catholic boys under the age of ten.¹⁹ The girls remained at Nazareth House, and from this time onwards the sexes were segregated for nearly seventy years.

13 Day 119, pp. 85-86.

14 SNB 10010.

15 SNB 10014.

16 SNB 10010.

17 SNB 10015.

18 SNB 10011.

19 SNB 10011,10525,10526,11559.

- 36 The demand for places was considerable, and as Nazareth Lodge was inadequate for the 200 boys living there, an additional wing was erected, and on 15 October 1905 it was opened by Cardinal Logue. The new building was financed by a loan from the National Bank of £10,000. It is clear that the then Mother General did not approve of the new building or the certification, which had been undertaken at the behest of the Diocese.²⁰ The Industrial School Certificate was extended in April 1912.²¹ The home then served as an industrial school for boys until 1951.
- 37 The first baby was admitted to Nazareth Lodge on 16 October 1934, when the home took on the role of providing a diocesan service for babies. A purpose-built nursery named Bethlehem was later erected, serving up to 90 babies. Although this was staffed and run by the Sisters of Nazareth and was within the curtilage of Nazareth Lodge, it was technically under diocesan control.
- 38 The city of Belfast was subjected to severe bombing in April and May 1941. The boys in the upper floors of Nazareth Lodge could see the impact on the city. They were moved to lower floors as a safety measure, but the homes were not evacuated, and fortunately neither home suffered any damage.
- 39 Overcrowding appears to have been an ongoing problem as the Sisters did not want to turn any child away, but this had a serious impact on the quality of care which could be offered. On 23 December 1949, for example, Nazareth Lodge Industrial School was inspected. It was certified for 206 children, but it was seriously overcrowded and 282 boys were present. There were many detailed criticisms: for example, there were only four toilets for 164 boys aged over 5 years and their accommodation was badly lit and badly ventilated. As a result of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1950, reformatories and industrial schools became training schools and an inspectorate was set up. However, very few of the boys at Nazareth Lodge had been committed by the courts: by December 1950 there were only three boys committed by the courts and 274 voluntary cases in Nazareth Lodge.²² Indeed, all of the applicants from the period when Nazareth Lodge was an industrial school were there on a voluntary basis.²³ It was decided therefore in 1951 that it should be registered as a children's home.

20 SNB 11563.

21 SNB 11573,10525,10526,11559.

22 SNB 13672.

23 SNB 100196.

- 40 The next major change in the role of Nazareth Lodge was in 1953. Rubane House at Kircubbin was opened, with a Board of Management appointed by the Diocese of Down and Connor, to be run by brothers of the De La Salle Order, to provide for older Roman Catholic boys, and to reduce the overcrowding at Nazareth Lodge.²⁴
- 41 For several years thereafter, parties of a dozen or so eleven-year-old boys were transferred to Rubane every autumn, and Nazareth Lodge became essentially a home for boys up to the age of eleven, though occasionally an older boy was permitted to stay on in order to attend a school in Belfast. This system continued until 1972. This change also addressed the concern that, in being cared for by the nuns, the older boys at Nazareth Lodge had had no male role models during their adolescence.
- 42 This development had a number of consequences. One was the change in group dynamics without the influence of the older boys. Witnesses such as HIA 159 said that when the older boys moved to Rubane in 1951 there was no more abuse from them, which was a great relief.²⁵ HIA 159 said that with the older boys in Rubane:
- “It was great when none of the older boys were there or the nuns, as we could throw water, soap and flannels about”.²⁶
- The opportunity was used to break the large groups up and about 1951-52 the home was split into four groups. HIA 159 noted that each boy had a bed and a locker.
- 43 The development of smaller units was consistent with professional thinking at that time. The Home Office issued Guidance, which was circulated to voluntary organisations in Northern Ireland in 1952. This recommended the use of family group homes and it contained an appendix on ways in which large institutions might be broken down into smaller units in order to create family-sized groups and offer the children a more personalised type of care. The four units in Nazareth Lodge each had the capacity to hold about thirty boys, and each of these units was therefore still the size of a largish children’s home, much bigger than the small groups recommended by the Home Office.
- 44 The early 1950s were a difficult time for agencies providing residential care. Belfast had suffered terribly from the bombing raids during the

24 RUB 10067.

25 SNB 593.

26 SNB 32191.

Second World War and nationally priority had to be given to housing. Food rationing only ended in 1953, the economy had not picked up, and the Sisters of Nazareth were still relying totally on financial support from the community to run the homes. It is not surprising therefore that standards of physical care were still very poor.

- 45 A detailed inspection report by Kathleen Forrest, an Inspector in the Ministry of Home Affairs, has survived from this period. She wrote that she visited Nazareth Lodge on 9 January 1954 and found that the babies were:

“well-cared, well-clothed and fed” but “The whole premises - except the parts immediately above the laundry and boiler-house - were dreadfully cold. ...The babies’ hands were blue with cold and felt icy to touch. ...The school-children are now the worst off and Rev. Mother agrees that they are not getting any sort of chance in life and cannot make proper development, especially those who have known nothing but this institutional care from babyhood. ...What is needed here is really fundamental re-organisation so that these little creatures can have some individual loving care instead of being dragooned. Rev. Mother recognises this and even went so far as to say that children playing in the gutters of the slums were better off, if they had a father and mother to care for them, however poorly”.²⁷

- 46 The needs of Nazareth Lodge were recognised in the distribution of grants in June 1954. £1000 had already been allocated out of the Ministry’s budget to support voluntary homes, and a further £5000 was allocated to help with redecoration, upgrading the dining room, fencing, reconditioning the dormitories and providing toys. It was recognised that the headquarters of the Order in Hammersmith were not supportive of the “new-fangled” idea of breaking the dormitories up into smaller bedrooms, but this was clearly the Ministry’s aim, in accordance with Home Office thinking.²⁸
- 47 One of the reasons for the opening of Rubane at Kircubbin was to alleviate the pressure on Nazareth Lodge, as there was a considerable demand for places. Nazareth House faced similar problems and a number of children from both homes were sent as child migrants to Australia. The migration of children from Northern Ireland to Australia is dealt with in Chapter 6, but three of the migrants gave evidence in this Module.

27 SNB 16116.

28 SNB 16116.

- 48 It was also in 1953 that St Joseph’s baby home was opened, superseding the Bethlehem wing at Nazareth Lodge.²⁹
- 49 In the early years, nearly all of the children placed in the two homes were placed voluntarily. This meant that:
- (a) the children’s parents had requested, or at least agreed to, their placements;
 - (b) the placements had been arranged by their parish priest or someone else in a position of authority in the Roman Catholic Church, such as the Mother Superior of a nursery;
 - (c) by implication, the welfare authorities had not been involved in the placements, had not assessed the children’s needs, were not accountable for the children’s care, did not pay for the placements, and indeed were usually unaware of the children’s existence.
- 50 The Sisters of Nazareth were at this stage reluctant to be beholden to the secular authorities, but their independence came at a price. In continuing the practice of voluntary placements they were choosing to forgo substantial payments by the welfare authorities, which affected their resources to improve physical standards of care and staffing. The welfare authorities for their part did not seek to involve themselves and were prepared to let the Catholic homes care at their own cost for children who otherwise might have needed to be taken into their care.
- 51 By 1956 the outdated nature of the large institutions was already noted. In *Children in Care*, a report by the Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council published by HMSO, it was concluded that the practice of voluntary placements was:
- “likely to lead in the future to serious difficulties unless allied with closer co-operation with welfare authorities”
- and suggested that voluntary agencies should seek the help of the welfare authorities before admitting children. It was noted that:
- “some voluntary organisations are already committed to buildings that are difficult to alter”.³⁰
- The report also addressed staff training needs, staffing ratios, inspection, discipline, domestic work expected of children and the danger of institutionalisation.

29 SNB 50495.

30 HIA 1752.

- 52 It was unfortunately another decade before the Sisters of Nazareth were offered financial and professional support from the welfare authorities, and while foster care was expanding and the welfare authorities were opening smaller homes (mostly family-sized) Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge remained in their large and increasingly outdated buildings.
- 53 In establishing smaller groups within the two homes the Sisters of Nazareth were constrained not only by their limited resources but also by the number of sisters available, as they were reluctant for some time to appoint lay staff, for fear that the Order's influence might be weakened through the involvement of staff who had not committed their lives to the service.
- 54 The problems of the voluntary sector persisted and in 1966 *The Role of Voluntary Homes in the Child Care Service* was published for the Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council by HMSO. The report was based on visits to all voluntary homes and concluded that:
- “in the majority of homes it was evident that improved standards of accommodation, education and training were required”.³¹
- The homes were:
- “hampered to a greater or lesser degree by lack of money”.³²
- The majority of homes had no trained field officers and decided on admissions without reference to the welfare authorities. Staffing levels were inadequate. Some voluntary organisations were concerned that they might lose their independence if they developed too close a relationship with the welfare authorities, but the report concluded that:
- “The best hopes lie in increased mutual understanding and sympathy and in an appreciation of what each has to offer the other”.³³
- 55 In 1968 Belfast Welfare Authority was the first authority to decide to allocate a social worker to every child in residential care. It should be noted that families became smaller, and the welfare authorities, and later the boards, increasingly undertook preventive work to support children at home, fostering services were developed and small children's homes were built. The result was that the children requiring residential care were fewer in number, were generally older, and were often more disturbed, having experienced failed foster placements, for example.

31 HIA 540.

32 HIA 559.

33 HIA 557.

- 56 The demands placed on residential childcare staff became more complex, and a higher degree of professionalism was required if homes were to continue to be used by the welfare authorities. Robert Moore expressed sympathy for the staff, saying that prior to the implementation of the Hughes Report's recommendations homes were essentially being run by amateurs, who were "understaffed, underpaid and undervalued".³⁴
- 57 From the late 1960s onwards the two homes were affected by the Troubles. The families of many of the children lived in areas where there was social unrest, and the children would have been concerned about their safety. Unlike some of the other homes and training schools we have considered, neither Nazareth House nor Nazareth Lodge was directly involved in the Troubles (with the exception of one visit by soldiers looking for rifles, following a hoax call)³⁵ and they could be seen to have offered a safe haven for children from home areas where there was civil disorder and a serious risk of danger to the children and their families. The main problem identified by witnesses was that children and young people who had been protected from sectarian discrimination and violence when living in the homes had not been prepared to deal with it when they were discharged as teenagers, and this put them at risk.
- 58 In 1972 a two-storey extension known as the Bethlehem wing of Nazareth Lodge was converted into two small units, each with its own dining room and other daytime facilities on the ground floor and bedrooms on the first floor. Shortly afterwards, the main building was converted to create two more small units, so that the home now consisted of four family-sized groups.³⁶ It was probably this development which heralded the introduction of a number of improvements over the next two decades.
- 59 It was September 1972 before the Belfast Welfare Committee agreed that the remainder of privately placed children should be received into care and funded by the welfare authorities.³⁷ From then on, weekly capitation fees were paid and, as the Order's income increased, lay staff were recruited, and with the improved staffing levels the groups were also reduced in size, improving the opportunities for children to receive more individualised care.
- 60 Nazareth Lodge and Nazareth House both had large catchment areas and were seen as regional resources, but the majority of the children

34 SNB 6900.

35 SNB 10046.

36 SNB 50495,50497.

37 KIN 216.

came from Belfast. The Eastern Health and Social Services Board, which covered Belfast, however, added considerably to its own range of residential provision, which was more up to date and consisted largely of smaller homes. The demand for residential placements diminished as foster care was used increasingly, and the length of children's stay in children's homes was also being reduced as social workers found long-term foster placements for them. Having quoted the details of thirteen children who spent more than ten years of their childhood in Nazareth Lodge or Nazareth House and who were placed there voluntarily, HSCB stated that:

“Within the Applicants there are no examples of children that were placed in Nazareth Lodge, Belfast, or Nazareth House, Belfast, by the welfare authorities at a young age, and who then remained in the Home for such a long period.”³⁸

- 61 According to Mother Gertrude's evidence to the Hughes Inquiry, it was in 1967 that girls were first admitted to Nazareth Lodge.³⁹ Originally, as noted above, Roman Catholic providers had divided their homes by gender and age as a way of coping with the high level of demand, but this basic framework had served to split families. Making the homes mixed countered this problem.
- 62 Both Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge had their own schools at first. In 1974 the school on Ormeau Road at Nazareth House was closed and it amalgamated with the school at Nazareth Lodge, opening on 7 September 1974 under the name of St Michael's Primary School, which also provided services to children in the locality.
- 63 In 1975 the Children and Young Persons (Voluntary Homes) Regulations (Northern Ireland) were introduced following the enactment of the Children and Young Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1968, but their content was very similar to the 1952 Regulations.⁴⁰
- 64 In the later years Nazareth House provided residential care for children in three units, which acted virtually as separate homes, although the heads of the groups were all technically accountable to the Mother Superior. However, as the numbers of children admitted dropped, various options were considered, and the sisters involved decided to propose to the Mother

38 SNB 100103.

39 SNB 50092.

40 HIA 288, 445.

General in Hammersmith that the home should be closed. In doing so they were following a pattern which was being replicated in homes run by the Sisters of Nazareth throughout the United Kingdom. Despite all the internal improvements, the buildings remained large and institutional and were now well out of date.

- 65 By October 1980 there were only two groups in operation with twenty children resident in all.⁴¹ By September 1983 there were only four children remaining.⁴² On 31 May 1984 Nazareth House, Belfast, was closed, having accommodated 2,909 children since its opening in 1876. It continued to care for older people until 2000, when it finally closed.⁴³
- 66 From the early 1970s there were five family groups in Nazareth Lodge, with twelve children in each group, but by April 1985 the numbers had reduced to 38 children and there were only three groups. Demand for places continued to fall and the last child was admitted in 1998. In 1999 the home, which had accommodated 3,708 children since its opening in 1900, was closed. Despite a campaign to preserve some of the buildings, they were demolished and the site was redeveloped. Nazareth Care Village has replaced Nazareth Lodge.⁴⁴
- 67 Between them the two homes had, therefore, in total accommodated over six thousand children and young people in a period covering approximately a hundred and twenty years.

Governance

- 68 As noted above, the Mothers Superior of the two homes were accountable to the Regional Superior who in turn was accountable to the Superior General in Hammersmith. Decisions about the policies and plans for the Order were taken by the Congregation, which met every six years and elected the Superior General.
- 69 The Order was independent and not, therefore, accountable to the local Bishop, but the homes had close working links with the Diocese of Down and Connor. The bishops visited frequently, providing pastoral oversight to the Sisters, and in 1938 Bishop Mageean turned to the Sisters to run a nursery for babies on its behalf. This work was undertaken by Nazareth

41 SNB 19859.

42 SNB 19862.

43 SNB 1958.

44 SNB 1959-1960.

Lodge until St Joseph's Baby Home was opened in 1953. The Bishop was supportive in the opening of Rubane, enabling Nazareth Lodge boys to transfer at secondary school age. The Diocese provided chaplains for the homes, and was also involved in the after-care of young people when they left the homes, as the Bishop was Patron of the Nazareth Lodge Welfare Committee.⁴⁵

- 70 There is one reference to a House Committee being set up in 1952 for Nazareth House, chaired by Canon O'Neill to undertake the monthly statutory visits, but there is no information on its subsequent history.⁴⁶ There are references in the evidence to Nazareth Lodge having appointed a Management Committee in 1987 following the Hughes Inquiry, and it was treated as such, for example in its authority in establishing a subcommittee to inquire into complaints, but it had no managerial powers nor did it fulfil any statutory role.⁴⁷ It is considered in more detail in the section on inspection.
- 71 Prior to the 1980s, when the system changed, the Mother Superior of Nazareth Lodge was supported by two councillors, sisters who were drawn from the community who were not part of the residential child care staff, to provide her with confidential support. They met regularly, but their meetings were not minuted. The first councillor was older and more experienced; the second councillor was younger. This system was seen as augmenting Mother Regional's visits and meeting the statutory requirement for a monthly visit.⁴⁸

Finance

- 72 The finance of residential childcare is dealt with more fully in Chapter 2, and the approach taken by the Congregation is considered in some detail in Chapter 5 concerning the Order's other two homes, Termonbacca and Bishop Street, Londonderry. This section is therefore brief and relates solely to Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge, Belfast.
- 73 As an industrial school, Nazareth Lodge had a mixed role which was not well defined. On the one hand, training schools admitted young offenders and the most disturbed children, and on the other, children's homes were intended to take children who for the most part did not exhibit serious

45 SNB 17003-17312.

46 SNB 11290.

47 SNB 2291-2292.

48 SNB 9149.

behaviour problems. The remit of industrial schools lay in between; they were intended to take children on the verge of being in trouble, and prepare them for work.⁴⁹

- 74 Some children at Nazareth Lodge were committed by courts, and the state funded their care. A Committee on Reformatories and Industrial Schools, set up by the Ministry of Home Affairs in 1922 reported in 1923 that funding for the schools was inadequate, and the Committee recommended a capitation grant of 2/6d per head per week from the Government and an equal amount from the relevant welfare authority.⁵⁰ By 1937 the Government payment had risen to 7/6d a week with an equal amount paid by the local authorities.
- 75 The boys committed by courts were aged 6 to 10; on reaching 10 they were transferred to St Patrick's. The numbers of committed boys were very low, however. In 1939 and again in 1944 there were only eleven committed boys, as against respectively 179 and 174 boys placed voluntarily by their families.⁵¹
- 76 When Nazareth Lodge became a children's home in 1951 the welfare authorities presumably replaced the state in taking responsibility for such placements, but the numbers placed under Fit Person Orders were also very low. The income from such placements was too small to have a significant impact on the home's budget. Some children were placed in the homes by welfare authorities, and there is a record of Belfast Welfare Committee paying £3 per week for a child's maintenance in 1956.⁵² The numbers funded in this way at that time were, however, small, and the Sisters of Nazareth took no steps to increase their income by requesting that other children were funded by their welfare authorities.
- 77 The Sisters of Nazareth raised all the funds required for the provision of the services that they offered to boys admitted voluntarily. According to HIA 159:

“The nuns used to go out every Wednesday and Saturday with their black bags and go door to door collecting. ...They were known as the penny nuns”,

49 The categories of children included neglected children, offenders under the age of 12, children under 14 who were beyond parental control, and children who persistently failed to attend school or refused to submit to reasonable school discipline. (SNB 13639).

50 SPT 17108.

51 SNB 13708, SNB 13750.

52 SNB 15535.

because they never refused to accept even a penny.⁵³ Some of the sisters were designated as ‘questers’ to undertake the collection of funds, and it should be noted that many of the people who donated were from the poorer sections of the community. SR 52 said that the rate paid to Nazareth Lodge by Health and Social Services Boards was low for voluntary homes and they could not have managed without these voluntary contributions.⁵⁴ The rates were, however, based on data provided by the homes which, pre-1973, took account of the income which the homes could raise voluntarily, though the later per capita fees ignored this. Furthermore, as the HSCB has pointed out, there were additional grants to cover birthday and Christmas presents, and holidays. The level of donations can be seen in the records for 1973-1984.⁵⁵ There was also a steady flow of legacies; some of these were sizeable, but they were not a reliable source of income.⁵⁶

78 Businesses also contributed in kind, donating clothing or food. There are references, for example to Marks and Spencer providing food. Others, such as Mackies, provided parties for the children at Christmas, which were much appreciated. The problem was not as acute as in Londonderry because the economy in Belfast was stronger, but raising sufficient funding remained a major problem.

79 HIA 159 also noted:

“There were also open days when hundreds of people were allowed to come up and look around to see where all the money the nuns collected door to door was going”.

There were badges with a boy’s face on it for 6d or a shilling, sold in the early 1960s.⁵⁷

80 Some income was obtained from parents, but it is likely that this was more of a token gesture than a serious source of finance. HIA 204 said his mother paid 10/- per week for his upkeep. HIA 36 said his mother paid £5 a month throughout his stay at Nazareth Lodge.⁵⁸ HIA 43 said that although her father was not well off he was intimidated by the nuns into giving them money, handing over ten shilling notes on numerous occasions, and that they took advantage of him as he was a countryman.⁵⁹

53 SNB 32183.

54 SNB 1593.

55 SNB 16465.

56 SNB 16554-16616, 100066.

57 SNB 32185.

58 SNB 425.

59 SNB 711.

- 81 The witnesses' evidence contains a number of examples where small amounts of money were taken from children, after visits to families, for example. The Order has stated that this was done for safe-keeping, but none of the witnesses mentioned receiving the money later. Working children were also charged for their keep. Similarly toys, clothes and sweets were taken from children, and it was believed by witnesses that these were sold in other parts of the country to raise funds though this was denied by the Sisters.⁶⁰
- 82 As noted earlier, the Order wished to remain self-sufficient, in order to avoid becoming beholden to the state. The consequence of the Sisters' approach was that, while the nuns themselves received no salary and only required their keep, the Order had insufficient resources to appoint paid staff. As HIA 87 put it:
- “Everybody had a job to do. ...they didn't have the staff to run the place.”⁶¹
- 83 There was a steady increase in the number of placements financed by the welfare authorities. By March 1965 there were 88 voluntary placements and 31 funded by the welfare authorities in Nazareth House, and in Nazareth Lodge 81 placements were voluntary and 28 were paid for by the authorities.⁶² From 1973 the Health and Social Services Boards paid a per capita rate in both Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge, irrespective of whether the children had been placed by the Boards or privately by their parents. The amount took account of the fund-raising undertaken by the voluntary bodies however, and the Sisters' success in obtaining donations and legacies therefore reduced the income they received from the state.⁶³ The Boards negotiated rates with each voluntary home and the HSCB accepted that at first they did not meet the actual costs of placements. They explained that in some cases this was due to lack of full information about the actual costs, but that it was more generally due to the Boards increasing the rates they were prepared to pay incrementally. The HSCB acknowledged that the voluntary sector argued in 1985 that the Boards were expecting them to provide a professional service provided by suitably trained staff without paying the economic rate for such care⁶⁴ but argued that the Boards did support the voluntary sector to professionalise its workforce. The weekly payments to the voluntary sector

60 Day 96, p.141.

61 Day 83, p.40.

62 SNB 16623.

63 SNB 100106.

64 SNB 100107.

ranged from £42 to £198 in 1985, while the average cost of residential care per week in homes run by the four Boards ranged from £185 to over £250.⁶⁵ By 1991 Nazareth Lodge had accumulated a deficit of £45,000 this was cleared by a one-off grant from the Eastern Board, which was helpful, though it was unsatisfactory as a method of resolving an ongoing revenue problem.⁶⁶

- 84 The matter was unresolved when Nazareth House closed, but the improvements made in the 1980s were substantial. In consequence there was sufficient funding both to improve physical standards of care and to appoint paid lay staff. Indeed, as the number of sisters diminished, the balance between lay and religious staff changed until the sisters' role was primarily to act as the managerial staff in charge of the units. By the time Nazareth Lodge closed, some of the team leaders were lay staff. This change was paralleled by an increase in staff training for both nuns and lay staff, and the introduction of a more professional approach to residential social work.
- 85 Following the implementation of the Children and Young Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1950 state funding was available to voluntary providers under Section 118 to improve premises or equipment. This measure proved problematic as welfare authorities were required to contribute towards the funding, but the decisions on approval were taken by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The welfare authorities therefore found it difficult to budget as they had no idea what the level of demand might be and they resented having to pay towards services which they did not use. Tyrone County Welfare Committee, for example, protested about contributing to grants to Nazareth Lodge.⁶⁷
- 86 The grant awarded in 1954 by the Ministry of Home Affairs has already been mentioned.⁶⁸ The Ministry also paid grants to assist in providing qualifying training for staff. Typically this covered fees, expenses and replacement staff, though in the period before the Order started to employ lay staff the need for additional staff salaries might not have applied. Nazareth Lodge is recorded as having received £1000 in 1954 for this purpose, but the records do not detail how the money was used.⁶⁹

65 SNB 100107.
66 SNB 100116.
67 SNB 16461.
68 SNB 16113-5.
69 SNB 15822.

- 87 Homes run by the Order could apply to the mother house in Hammersmith for loans, but the expectation was that such loans would be repaid, for example when legacies were received. In 1980, for instance, there is a record that £10,000 was repaid and, when in 1983 Nazareth Lodge was in difficulties prior to a substantial increase in the per capita allowance, a further £30,000 was borrowed from Hammersmith.⁷⁰

Inspection

The Order's Systems

- 88 The Sisters of Nazareth had their own internal inspection system. The Superior General, who was based in Hammersmith, visited all homes once every three years and conducted a full inspection, which included the spiritual life of the community as well as the childcare. Mother Regional, who was responsible for all the services in both the Republic and Northern Ireland, was based in Dublin and typically visited three or four times a year, though she told the Hughes Inquiry that she had visited Nazareth Lodge 13 times in 1984. In evidence to the Hughes Inquiry Mother Gertrude, the then Mother Regional, said that the statutory requirement to undertake the monthly visits required under the Regulations rested with her.⁷¹ If she typically visited only three or four times a year, this would have fallen well short of the statutory requirement of monthly visits.
- 89 In a report dated 14 April 1996 SR 189 said that in the 1950s Nazareth House had a committee consisting of the School Manager, the Local Superior, two teachers from the school and the sister in charge of the children. This committee met monthly and received reports from their appointee who visited the children; according to SR 189 any recommendations they made were implemented. It was a system established by the Congregation and was not intended to fulfil statutory visiting requirements.⁷²
- 90 In October 1984, as a result of the Hughes Inquiry, a monitoring team was set up for Nazareth Lodge. The Committee was referred to as the Management Committee but its role was strictly advisory. Pat Kinder, who had been a senior administrator in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, was invited by SR 36 to set up an Advisory Committee for Nazareth Lodge. He contacted a number of persons who had professional skills in

70 SNB 19896,19897.

71 SNB 50044.

72 SNB 16906.

sociology, psychology, medicine, teaching and the law.⁷³ All agreed to help; SR 36 approved the list and Pat Kinder agreed to act as secretary.

- 91 The members of the Committee were allocated to one of the three groups within the home and they visited, meeting both staff and children. The Committee met monthly with the three sisters in charge of the groups and discussed any issues which they wished to raise. The Committee's purpose was to give the children access to someone other than their carers, and they inspected the complaints book.⁷⁴ SR 18 referred to a committee of volunteers who carried out monthly inspections in the 1980s and 1990s, which presumably was this Committee.⁷⁵ This Committee was asked to produce a written report every six months, to be presented to the Sister in Charge and Mother Regional.⁷⁶
- 92 Neither the advisory systems to support the homes' Mothers Superior described above, nor the (approximately) quarterly visits of the Mother Regional, appear to have met the statutory requirement laid down in paragraph 4 (2) of the Children and Young Persons (Voluntary Authorities Homes) Regulations (Northern Ireland), issued in 1952 and reiterated in 1975, that both the homes should have been:

“visited at least once in every month by a person who shall satisfy himself whether the home is conducted in the interests of the well-being of the children and shall report to the administering authority upon his visit and shall enter in the record book ... his name and the date of his visit”.⁷⁷

Mother Regional acknowledged that it was her role to meet this requirement, but her visits appear to have been too infrequent and there is no indication that reports were prepared on the visits. The other support systems were explicitly advisory. **We consider the failure to meet the statutory requirement for both Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge to be visited monthly to have been a systemic failure.**

State Systems

- 93 As an industrial school Nazareth Lodge was inspected annually by the inspectors from the Ministry of Home Affairs. The Ministry was authorised

73 SNB 2291.

74 SNB 50043, 50044, 50049.

75 SNB 1860.

76 SNB 50048-50049.

77 HIA 288.

to inspect under Section 46 of the Children Act 1908, but the Ministry had no direct control over the training schools and industrial schools which it inspected. Its limited remit was to report on the health of the children, the conditions in which the children were kept and the schools' record-keeping. Reports dating from 1927 to 1944 are extant, and they are broadly positive about the state of the premises, the health of the boys and the training and education being offered. Visits made by Ministry of Home Affairs Inspectors to Nazareth Lodge from 1950 onwards are listed in Annex C of the evidence prepared by Dr Hilary Harrison, indicating consistent annual visits.⁷⁸

- 94 Following the passing of the Children and Young Persons (Northern Ireland) Act in 1950, Regulations were introduced for voluntary children's homes, and these would have been applied to Nazareth Lodge which had been re-registered as a children's home. (These Regulations appear to have been based on Regulations which had been applied in England and Wales following the Children Act 1933, which was not replicated in Northern Ireland.) In 1975 the Regulations were updated, following the 1968 Act, but they remained largely the same.
- 95 The Regulations were applied by the Ministry of Home Affairs, and there are records to indicate that Kathleen Forrest visited Nazareth Lodge. Her visit reports indicate real concern for the children, awareness of the practical issues, and a desire to take action to remedy unsatisfactory conditions.⁷⁹ Her visits were not considered to be formal inspections, such that neither Nazareth House nor Nazareth Lodge was deemed to have been inspected until 1983.⁸⁰
- 96 The Social Work Advisory Group was established in 1973, the DHSSPS (now DoH) has claimed that adopted a new approach, by which it offered advice and support, and ceased to undertake annual inspections. In the light of Kincora and the Hughes Inquiry the advisory approach was dropped and a more rigorous inspectorial approach was resumed. This development and the philosophy behind the changes of policy are examined more fully in Chapter 2.
- 97 The effect of these changes was that there was a hiatus of several years in which there were very few formal inspections. The Social Work Advisory Group carried out an inspection of Nazareth Lodge in October 1983 and

78 SNB 9576.

79 SNB 16116.

80 Day 111, pp.68-70.

provided evidence to the Hughes Inquiry.⁸¹ From 1985 the Social Services Inspectorate undertook annual inspections, the last being in November 1995.⁸² Our criticisms of the lack of inspection by SWAG and the content of the inspections referred to above are dealt with in the respective sections of this chapter on the two homes.

- 98 The SWAG and SSI also had a co-ordinating role. Following the Sheridan Report and the Hughes Inquiry there were annual “Review of Registration Meetings” at which SWAG, the Department’s Policy Branch, voluntary providers and Boards were all represented, and these meetings were used to discuss the planning of residential childcare provision.⁸³ These developments did not affect Nazareth House, which had closed by this time.

Finding

- 99 **We consider the failure to meet the statutory requirement for both Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge to be visited monthly to have been a systemic failure.**

81 SNB 50232-50266.

82 SNB 13813-13864.

83 Day 118, pp.72-75.

