

Chapter 9:

Module 4 – Sisters of Nazareth, Belfast: Nazareth Lodge

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Site and Premises

1 Nazareth Lodge faced on to Ravenhill Road in the south side of Belfast. It had extensive grounds, including a small farm, a walled kitchen garden and playing fields for the children, together with a range of outbuildings used as garages and stores. The main building was imposing. It was approached up a curving drive and consisted of four storeys, with a small tower at the corner.

2 In a written submission, HIA 159 gave a graphic description of the farm: “Nazareth Lodge had its own farm, which though not self-sufficient was able to contribute a great deal towards the running costs...”.¹ “The farm took in a large rectangular area, which had hens, ducks, pigs and cows. Three or four men ran the farm.”

They looked after the animals, the boiler, the hedges, and the graveyard.

“We were allowed to watch the cows getting milked and pigs but not the hens, just in case we frightened them and they stopped laying, but we could go almost anywhere else”.² “For a number of months each year sheep were allowed to graze the big field with its swings and sandpit where we played every day”.

The boys were let off school to help get the sheep onto a lorry, but they ran all over the place. “The fun was great, the laughter merry”.³ HIA 87 said that a walled kitchen garden ran the length of the building, where they grew cabbages and turnips.⁴

3 According to HIA 159 a large area was concreted over in front of the main house, where they played football, rounders and gymnastics. There was also a large field with swings, sand pits and a large climbing frame. In the summer a fair left a large merry-go-round at the bottom of the field near the main road. They played tig, hide and seek, marbles, hop-scotch and with hoops. They also had tricycles and scooters.⁵

4 HIA 159 said that after 1953-54 a baby home and a caretaker’s cottage were built halfway up the drive. The people who worked for the home, such as gardeners and cleaners and some tramps seeking assistance, went to

1 SNB 32183.

2 SNB 32183.

3 SNB 32184.

4 Day 83, p.58.

5 SNB 32187.

the side of the main house for tea, bread and dinner.⁶ This meant that there was some risk that such visitors could have access to the grounds where the children were playing.

5 The main block was a red-brick four-story building.⁷ On the bottom floor of the main building there was an entrance hall where visitors were met, and to the right there was a bedroom for visiting priests, which was used from time to time by Fr Brendan Smyth. Also on the ground floor there was an assembly hall which was used as an indoor play room. HIA 159 said that the hall was also used for plays at Easter and in the New Year, which provided an opportunity for visitors to meet the boys, and that this sometimes led to visits on Sundays or weekends, and maybe eventually to adoptions. Later the hall was used for storage, including parcels from parents which, it was alleged, were not given to the boys, who did not know about them until years later.⁸

6 HIA 159 said that the main house had its own laundry, a washroom and a boiler room which supplied all the hot water and heating. The clothes were dried on great hot pipes.⁹

7 The main house had a connecting corridor to the nursery, and halfway along the corridor a door on either side led to the front door of the home or to the yard at the back, where there was a grotto to Our Lady. The kitchen was at the end of a corridor. On the right was the dining room and on the left another small corridor leading to the hall, the back yard and the farm.¹⁰

8 Until a purpose-built school was opened, there were three classrooms in the main house. In HIA 159's time:

“[SR 34] had the first class room at the beginning of the corridor, Mr Fern the second, and Miss Comfort the third, and [there was] a smaller room for boys a bit slower taken by another nun. After 1954-5 a dozen boys who could not pick up schooling very quickly were sent outside to a special school for slow learners”.¹¹

6 SNB 32185.

7 SNB 50497.

8 SNB 32184.

9 SNB 32187.

10 SNB 32190.

11 SNB 32190.

HIA 24 said that in the 1940s the school room in the main house was used to show films.¹² HIA 159 said they had religious films, comedies and cowboys and indians. The hall was also used for plays at Easter.¹³ The partitions which separated the classrooms were pushed apart and two sets of chairs were set out on each side of the classroom, with a centre aisle separating the boys and girls.¹⁴

- 9 On the first floor there was the chapel. The nuns also had their living quarters there, and the community included not only the sisters who cared for or taught the children, but also those responsible for ‘questing’ – obtaining funds through the house to house collections. There were also often some older nuns who continued to live in retirement as community members. Other than the sisters who had cubicles in the children’s dormitories, all the sisters slept and lived in the nuns’ quarters, and the whole group ate there. The children had no access to the sisters’ accommodation.
- 10 The two upper floors of the main block were used as living quarters by the children. Originally there were two large dormitories, each taking up a whole floor, but these were divided into two about 1950, so that there were four dormitories, each housing about 30 boys, grouped by age, but with older boys in each one to keep order. There were at this time five groups in all, one being the Bethlehem group for babies and toddlers. According to HIA 89, bedding and heating were satisfactory.
- 11 With the opening of St Joseph’s Babies Home, the Bethlehem group was closed and it was converted into accommodation for older boys. The number of groups was reduced to four, and then three, in the early 1960s, and this was the format during the period which was subject to most of the allegations of abuse.
- 12 An important development was the refurbishment of the accommodation for the groups about 1975, with the introduction of a mixture of bedrooms for three children and single bedrooms for older children on the third floor, “to give them privacy, personal space, independence and enable them to study and do homework in peace.”¹⁵

All rooms and corridors were carpeted and had dressing tables and wardrobes. According to NL 4 it was in SR 172’s time that the bedrooms

12 Day 83, p.69.

13 SNB 32184.

14 SNB 32185.

15 SNB 1591.

were fitted with carpets, instead of tiles, doing away with polishing as a result, and each group had a verandah.¹⁶ At the same time, bathrooms, playrooms with snooker tables, study rooms, dining rooms, kitchens and sitting rooms were introduced onto the upper floors, so that the group premises were self-contained, according to SR 46.¹⁷ This was the first of the major changes which resulted in the updating and improvement of childcare standards in Nazareth Lodge, and fewer allegations relate to the subsequent two decades.

- 13 At this time each unit was headed up by a nun, assisted by one full-time and two part-time lay workers.¹⁸ DL 40 was at Nazareth Lodge in the later 1960s and early 1970s, and he described the lay staff as very young untrained girls from the country.¹⁹ He considered it “a big ask” for one nun and two teenage girls to have to care for twenty vulnerable children.²⁰ As demand for residential care diminished, the number of groups was reduced to three.
- 14 At the very top of the building there were attics, and these were used as dormitories at one stage during the Second World War, though this practice ceased after Belfast was subjected to the blitz. HIA 99 recalled that he saw air raids from an attic window, but the boys were moved and had to sleep in the basement in case of bombing.²¹
- 15 Because of the siting of the rooms within the building there was no need for children to go outside. This was not only convenient for the children, but it made supervision simpler for the nuns. The children were allowed outside in the grounds to play after school and at the weekends, but even then certain areas such as the garages were out of bounds. There were also times when the boys were taken out for supervised walks to the parks or to parties at Christmas. Over time, rules were eased and children were able to go unaccompanied to local shops, for example, but for many witnesses for the greater part of their childhood the children’s world was bounded by the walls of the home.

16 Day 95, p. 79, and Day 113, p. 39.

17 Day 93, p.33, SNB 1586.

18 Day 93, pp.113 to 114.

19 Day 95, p.59.

20 SNB 1876.

21 Day 82, p.83.

The Groups

- 16 The group structure was set up under SR 34 about 1954.²² There were five groups initially, including Bethlehem for the little children. Following the closure of Bethlehem, there were four groups, two on each floor, though there was a short period when NL 5 had a small group in the attic who became known as the 'Dainties' or 'Whippets'. The dormitories of the four groups were sited in two pairs, and there were adjoining doors, enabling staff, and sometimes children, to visit the other group on their level. The groups also had designated areas in the dining room. In the later years, as the overall number of children diminished, the groups were reduced in size from 30 to sixteen per group. Towards the end there were three groups, known by the names of the sisters in charge, reducing to two, then one just before closure.
- 17 These groups had considerable autonomy, depending upon the style of management of the Mother Superior. One Mother was known for visiting the units and talking to the children, for example, while another tended to see the management of the administration and finance as her role and stayed in her office, leaving the care of the children much more to the group staff. The four sisters responsible for the groups used to meet informally to discuss the running of the home and any problems arising at the time. The meetings were not minuted, and there were no general staff meetings.
- 18 Until the 1950s there was just the one sister per group, with no other care staff in support, though there were other sisters and ancillary staff working in the grounds, the kitchen, the laundry, and the workroom, where clothes were made and mended. The demands made by the care of thirty boys must have been considerable for the sisters running the groups. HIA 408, who was at Nazareth Lodge in the 1930s, said that the nuns were seen as angels, not humans, and that the boys were not allowed to talk to them, let alone feel able to tell them about abuse.²³
- 19 In later years, civilian staff were appointed, first with one per unit, then two, and finally three. These staff were said to be mainly young girls, aged sixteen to eighteen, from the country, and until the later years no training was provided. The turnover of these staff was said to be high. Coping with boys who were not a lot younger than themselves must have been

22 Day 84, p.48.

23 Day 82, pp. 32 and 35.

demanding for such staff, and when the sisters were not present, at times they developed methods of control which represented poor childcare practice and in some cases abuse. Girls appear to have been admitted from the late 1960s, and by the mid-1970s there were five family groups, comprising 41 boys and 28 girls or 69 children in total.²⁴

- 20 Each group was the responsibility of a nun, who had a cubicle in the corner of the dormitory with a curtained window from which she could observe the boys. HIA 204, however, reported that:

“I was in St Joseph’s, [then the junior] dormitory and [SR 118] was in charge. She had a cell at the end of the dormitory but it was the older boys who were in charge of us at night time.”²⁵

According to HIA 408 there were three rows of beds in the dormitory in the 1930s, all with rubber sheets in case of enuresis. HIA 99 said that the dormitory was warm and “scrupulously clean”, with beds lined up in neat rows.²⁶

- 21 The groups were:

- (a) St Joseph’s Group
- (b) NL 5’s Group
- (c) Marion’s Group
- (d) Sacred Heart Group
- (e) Our Lady’s Group

Each of the groups was allocated a colour for their crockery in the canteen.²⁷

- 22 One of the aims of introducing girls to Nazareth Lodge was to enable families to stay together. However, when HIA 141 was admitted in 1981, four of her siblings were placed in SR 46’s group and three in SR 62’s, but she was on her own in SR 29’s group. Her siblings visited her and looked through the glass panels of the fire doors, but she had spent four years in St Joseph’s Baby Home and did not know who they were.²⁸

24 SNB 1592.

25 SNB 305.

26 Day 82, p.81.

27 SNB 211.

28 SNB 109.

- 23 The importance of the groups should not be underestimated. Although the children met residents from other groups at school and when playing outside, their main peer group consisted of the other children in their own group. In some cases they will have lived together for over a decade, and the groups developed some of the characteristics of a family, leading to life-long brotherly relationships.
- 24 Similarly, although the children met staff from other groups, for example in the dining room, it was the sister and lay staff in their own group who made all the difference to their happiness or misery. Indeed, witnesses said that if they were caught misbehaving by a member of staff who was not from their group, they were referred to the sister in charge of their group for punishment.

Admission

- 25 Many of the witnesses were admitted to the care of the Sisters of Nazareth as babies or toddlers. They were placed in the Bethlehem nursery section in the main building in the earlier years according to HIA 204 or in a separate unit later on, following the building of St Joseph's Baby Home, such as HIA 427. In these cases the admission to Nazareth Lodge would have been authorised by the Sister in charge of St Joseph's.
- 26 By the time the boys were moved from the nursery unit to one of the other groups in Nazareth Lodge they were used to institutional living. Other children were admitted direct to Nazareth Lodge. A few returned to their families, and others were fostered with a view to adoption, but the remainder stayed in the care of the Sisters in the earlier years. From 1953 they were in the care of the sisters till they were about eleven years of age and then transferred to the care of the De La Salle Brothers at Rubane. In either case, these children spent their whole childhood in institutional care.
- 27 HIA 33 was 12 years old on admission. He told us that his good clothes were removed and were not seen again. He said he was put in SR 118's group:
- “When she met us she asked me why I was crying and I said my mother had just died. She gave me a slap round the head and told me not to mention her again.”²⁹

29 SNB 138.

On his arrival, as the home was overcrowded, the boys were placed two to a bed in the attic. SR 118's group therefore filled the attic and the floor below. After a few months boys went to Rubane and to Australia, and the whole group was brought together on the floor below.

Daily Life

Routine

28 Witnesses varied in the details of their descriptions of daily routines, and indeed, practice may well have changed over the decades covered by the evidence. In general, former child residents thought that they got up earlier than the staff said they did, but it was pointed out that there were no clocks, so that we are considering people's impressions. HIA 87 said that in the late 1940s:

“We were woken every morning at 6 am and had to attend mass at 7 am before we got our breakfast. Breakfast was usually porridge and a slice of toast.”³⁰

According to SR 30 and SR 46 the boys were awoken at 7.30am and had their breakfast at 8am.

29 Lessons in school took place from 9am until 3pm. The school was open for children from the community to attend, and applicants told us that the 'home children' were expected to sit at the back. In the later years, according to SR 46, children were enabled to continue to attend their schools by taxi where they were already registered.³¹ During the week the children had school dinners.

30 According to HIA 87:

“After school we had various chores to do around the home, like washing the floors, polishing the corridors, and cleaning the refectory”.³²

The children were then allowed out to play until tea-time. After tea, they were mostly allowed out to play again, but when they were called in from playing outside, they then began the evening routine of preparing for bedtime. It was one of the complaints of NL 5's group that she always called them in first, and that after going to bed at 6 pm, even in summer, they could hear the others still playing outside. After playing, there was

30 SNB 255.

31 Day 93, p.38.

32 SNB 255.

supper: HIA 87 said supper was usually at 6pm and consisted of bread and lard with a cocoa drink.³³

- 31 In the evening the sisters had an evening meal and worshipped as a community. In later years, the lay staff took over supervision at this point. In the earlier years (in particular prior to 1953 when boys aged eleven were first transferred to Kircubbin) older boys were left in charge. HIA 159 said:

“The older boys were in charge of us, especially when the nuns were in chapel at Vespers. Winter times were the worst as they took great delight in scaring us with ghost stories, making us run down the corridor from one end to the other, shouting, ‘There’s a ghost coming up’, so we would run to the other end. We now know that it was somebody with a sheet over him and a Halloween mask on”.³⁴

- 32 More seriously, many of the allegations of abuse relate to this evening period. At different times both lay staff and older boys were reported to have abused the younger boys in the absence of the nuns. According to HIA 204, the nuns did not enter the bathroom at bathtime. Older boys aged 14 or 15 were in charge and sexually abused the younger ones in the toilet cubicles; he said he was “made to perform impure acts”.³⁵ The senior boys had “full control” while the nuns were dining or praying in church,³⁶ but the sisters were in charge during the night.³⁷

- 33 In the earlier years, according to HIA 159:

“All the younger boys were in one long dormitory in two long rows with a fire place at each end which was sometimes lit to warm the dormitory before we went to bed. Later, each had a pillow every night. We only had them in the winter time in 1950s.”³⁸

HIA 408 said:

“In bed you had to fold your arms across your chest”,³⁹

and HIA 5 added that SR 45 said this was “to get us ready for God”.⁴⁰

33 SNB 255.

34 SNB 32186.

35 SNB 305.

36 Day 82, p.8.

37 Day 82, pp.6 to 7.

38 SNB 32185.

39 SNB 219.

40 SNB 035.

- 34 HIA 408 said that two or three older boys were left in charge at night, and they hit him with brushes for not replying when they called his name or for not being asleep if he responded.⁴¹ According to SNB 139 and HIA 33, if anyone made a noise at night they were made to kneel in the corridor with their hands above their heads by the class boys, and they were hit by the nuns and the class boys if they dropped their hands. HIA 408 said:

“[SR 118] never came back to check on us during the night.”⁴²

HIA 307, however, said that nuns did come into dormitories at night to check that boys were settled and to deal with crying children.⁴³ He said he cried himself to sleep, that the beds were never warm enough, and that he “never [had] any sense of comfort or security”.⁴⁴

Chores

- 35 Chores were undertaken before or after breakfast on weekdays, and on Saturday mornings. Relating to the 1950s, HIA 33 said:

“Every morning before breakfast, we had to polish the long corridors on our hands and knees. We used to do it in lines of five. Five would put the polish on, five would rub the polish in, five would give the first shine, and five would give the final polish. The class boys would supervise and if you stopped for any reason they would hit you. The class boys were other residents who were put in charge. They had sticks and were free to hit you anytime. If they did not hit us when the nuns thought they should have they were punished by the nuns for not showing their authority”.⁴⁵

- 36 It was perhaps in later years that it was after breakfast that the children each had chores to perform. Opinions about chores differed. HIA 99 said that floor polishing was enjoyable:

“We all had to swing together in a row, back and forward with the polishing cloth while a nun stood over us”.⁴⁶

DL 40 said:

“We all mucked in with helping to keep the accommodation clean. I used to love waxing and buffering the floors. We used the buffer as a ride for sitting on”.⁴⁷

41 SNB 219.

42 SNB 219.

43 Day 84, p.5.

44 SNB 097.

45 SNB 138.

46 SNB 279.

47 SNB 1875.

- 37 HIA 89, on the other hand, said that his main cleaning job was a large corridor, with three other boys. He did not enjoy the chores, “Never; never”.⁴⁸ HIA 33 described the process, which was overseen by class boys, who slapped any boys who they thought were slowing up.⁴⁹ HIA 225 also complained of excessive chores, and said he was beaten if the work was not up to standard.⁵⁰ NL 5 saw the Saturday morning chores as something to occupy the boys while the sisters were out collecting.⁵¹
- 38 HIA 159 said that once a month the boys had their sheets and pillowslips changed and they turned their mattresses. They then gave the bedrooms a thorough cleaning.⁵²
- 39 In 1944 an inspection report noted that the chores expected of the boys were appropriate.⁵³ However, during the period relating to most of the witnesses the system of chores at Nazareth Lodge was by this time well out of date. In many children’s homes domestic staff would have been appointed to keep the communal areas clean; children would have been expected to look after their own sleeping quarters and to help out with other tasks such as preparing meals, with a view to their learning the household skills they would need when living independently. It is doubtful whether the Sisters could have afforded to appoint domestic staff. The systems they adopted kept the home clean and occupied the boys, but they bore no relation to preparation for independence.
- 40 We only received evidence of one instance which could have been considered seriously exploitative. HIA 422 reported that when he was nine or ten he was put through a hatch into the chimney at school and was given a wire brush to clean the inside of the boiler chimney. He was given no mask or protective clothing.⁵⁴ HIA 422 maintained his account in oral evidence. This type of task was clearly inappropriate for a young boy and was abusive, but as the only example it cannot be considered systemic.

Bathing

- 41 The institutional bathing routine figured frequently in the evidence. In the 1940s, according to HIA 87:

48 Day 83, p.7.

49 SNB 1641.

50 Day 87, p.28.

51 Day 114, p.67.

52 SNB 32193.

53 SNB 100208.

54 SNB 212, Day 85, p.56.

“We usually had our baths on a Saturday evening at around 5 or 6 pm. There were three baths for the whole Lodge, and we were made to line up in two lines waiting for our turn. If you were lucky you were one of the first in the bath when the water was clean. We were stripped off and put into the bath in pairs, and were given an old sheet to dry ourselves with. If you were one of the last boys to get your bath, you were left with dirty water and a wet sheet to dry with. We had no privacy at bath times, as we were always being watched by the nuns. We did not have our own toothbrush, but had to share with each other. Modesty went out the window”.⁵⁵

- 42 HIA 259 said that they shared a toothbrush between seven or eight boys and they only cleaned their teeth once a week:

“It was disgusting but that is the way it was”.⁵⁶

The sharing of toothbrushes was denied by the Order.⁵⁷

- 43 HIA 24 commented on the use of carbolic soap. HIA 33 noted that as his number was 128 he always came near the end of the queue, and since the bathwater was never changed, it was cold and dirty by the time he was due to bathe.⁵⁸

- 44 Bathtime routines remained institutional when girls were admitted. HIA 423 who was in Nazareth Lodge from 1964 to 1970 wrote:

“At bath time, we were stripped and made to stand in a line. We had to walk up and down the wooden steps [as the baths were high-sided] and then we were put in a big tub. The nuns used scrubbers, like those used to scrub a floor, to bath us and we all had to share the same bath water. There would be one nun on each side of us. They would grab us by the back of the hair and pull us down under the water to get the carbolic soap out of our hair. There was always an institutional smell that we couldn’t get rid of. We would be really red when we got out because of the scrubbing brush. All the children wanted to be the last to get bathed because whenever we got out of the bath we were made to stand, still naked and without any towel, until everyone was bathed. We could be left standing naked for up to an hour before we were allowed to get dressed”.⁵⁹

55 SNB 256.

56 SNB 543.

57 SNB 1941.

58 SNB 1641-1642.

59 SNB 741-742.

45 HIA 5 said that in the 1980s bathtime was “horrific”. Girls and boys had to queue together naked for their baths; he had never seen his brother naked before. A member of staff stood in the bath and held his shoulders down, one nun held his legs, while another nun poured a bucket of cold water and Jeyes fluid over him. Their mouths were washed out with carbolic soap to make their souls clean.⁶⁰

46 Sisters who were consulted had no recollections of children being required to line up for baths, and the Congregation:

“would not accept that there was any deliberate policy or policy requiring children to stand in a line with other children without clothing”.⁶¹

They accepted that, particularly in the earlier days, bath water would have been shared, as was the practice in many families at that time.⁶² The system of bathing used in Nazareth Lodge was presumably devised when the home was first opened and very large numbers of boys had to be supervised. Even in the 1950s it should have been possible to change the bath water more frequently than as described by the witnesses, and if it was necessary to economise, showers could have been introduced, reducing the likelihood of sharing infections through the dirty bath water and shared sheets for drying. By the 1950s, the system was contrary to the approach outlined in the 1952 Home Office Guidance, which said that children should be taught to bath themselves and that there should be clean water for each child.⁶³ In view of the minimal staffing of the home at that time it is unsurprising that such an outdated system was maintained, but this represented poor childcare practice. **The bathing system should have been abandoned and its continuation represented systemic abuse.**

Jeyes Fluid

47 Many witnesses recalled the use of Jeyes fluid when they were bathing. HIA 159 said that hair was washed on Fridays in a long sink like a horse trough, using Jeyes fluid, and that their underpants were examined for soiling. Three boys were made to sit in a cold bath for an hour.⁶⁴ By contrast, HIA 142 recalled the water being “always scalding hot” and that he was scrubbed till his skin was raw.⁶⁵ HIA 159 thought bathing was less frequent:

60 SNB 037.

61 SNB 1507.

62 SNB 1507.

63 HIA 475.

64 SNB 594.

65 SNB 284.

“We also had a bath once a month and our hair was washed once a week in a solution of Jeyes fluid to keep us free of nits and other hair infections”.⁶⁶

HIA 307 said that Jeyes fluid was put in baths, and it “stung like hell”. It was thought by the boys that the Jeyes fluid was used to deal with lice.⁶⁷

- 48 The Sisters accepted that a small amount of Jeyes fluid might have been used to prevent outbreaks of head lice, body lice and scabies, but did not accept that Jeyes fluid would have been used in bathing as an alternative to soap, suggesting that it was its pervasive smell when used to clean bathrooms that witnesses recalled.⁶⁸ This explanation would not account for the stinging sensation which witnesses reported, and the witnesses who recalled its use in bathing were persuasive.
- 49 There is no doubt that in running a home for over a hundred boys it was necessary to apply high standards of hygiene, and there was always the risk that newcomers or children on visits home could introduce lice or fleas. Cleanliness and regular checking were therefore important, but other treatments were available. Jeyes Fluid was a very strong detergent for use on floors and tiles.
- 50 **When Jeyes fluid was first developed in 1877 it was used for many purposes, but by the 1950s it should not have been used in baths or for hair washing. This practice was well out of date and in our view its use amounted to systemic abuse.**

Bedwetting

- 51 The first reference in the records to bedwetting arose from a complaint in 1927 that a boy had been punished for wetting his bed. A representative of the Ministry of Home Affairs told the sister and manager of the home:

“Punishment is not the proper way to deal with these cases, but on the contrary is liable to make them worse”.⁶⁹

Advice from the Ministry in those days would usually have been taken seriously, but the evidence of witnesses suggests that bedwetting continued to be punished.

66 SNB 32188.

67 Day 84, pp.5 to 6, SNB 099.

68 SNB 1508.

69 SNB 13660.

52 HIA 204, referring to the 1930s, said:

“When I wet the bed I was punished the next morning by being taken to the bathroom by the older boys, where they threw buckets of ice cold water over me. I then had to kneel outside [SR 118’s] room. When she came out she made me lie down on the floor and she beat me on the backside with a strap. This went on for years”.⁷⁰

Nothing was done to correct his enuresis and he continued wetting the bed after he had left Nazareth Lodge.⁷¹

53 Although not enuretic himself, HIA 408 confirmed HIA 204’s account:

“The boys who wet the bed were treated very badly by [SR 118]. All the boys in the dormitory were brought to the bathroom to watch the bedwetters get punished. They were placed in a cold bath, regardless of whether it was winter or summer. There would be an older boy who poured buckets of cold water over the boy’s head. It was so cold the boy in the bath would be unable to breathe. [SR 118] would then get the boy out of the bath and put him on the red tiled floor. She would hit him on the behind and it would sting because he was cold. If he turned over she would put her foot in his groin and hit him again. I never wet the bed so I was never punished in this way, but I was made to watch the same four or five boys being punished in this way nearly every morning”.⁷²

HIA 99 also described his personal experience of the same treatment in detail.⁷³

54 Even when girls were admitted to Nazareth Lodge, punishment was said to have continued. HIA 423 said that she wet the bed once and was beaten and called dirty:

“For the next week, when I was in bed, the nuns would tie my feet at the ankles to the bottom of the bed. It was an iron bed with poles and they used bits of rag to tie me to it. My feet would be freezing and the nuns would come back to check that I hadn’t covered them over”.⁷⁴

55 The Order did not accept that this happened.⁷⁵ However, the Sisters did accept the complaints about the treatment of bedwetting. Sr Brenda said:

70 SNB 305-6.
71 Day 82, p.12.
72 SNB 220.
73 SNB 275.
74 SNB 741.
75 SNB 1951.

“The sheer number and consistency of these complaints make it very difficult to deny that events such as those described did actually happen”.⁷⁶

She suggested that the treatment of the children:

“...was done out of ignorance of the issues behind the problem and a belief that the child could just stop the bedwetting if he or she wished”,

having perhaps considered the children rebellious or mischievous. Sr Brenda suggested that the punishment of being bathed in cold water reflected the need to be washed before attending school and a shortage of hot water.⁷⁷ This does not explain the cruel treatment meted out by SR 118.

- 56 It is hard to understand why such methods were used, especially as it had been acknowledged at Nazareth Lodge as far back as 1927 that punishing enuresis did not cure it. Children who wet their beds needed to be treated sensitively; by contrast, the use of terms by the sisters such as “fish” for the enuretics was presumably intended to be demeaning. It must have been apparent to SR 118 that her approach was ineffective if she had to keep on punishing the same four or five boys. **There was no justification for SR 118’s cruel conduct in punishing bedwetters, which amounted to systemic abuse.**

Health care

- 57 In their final statement the Congregation quoted four anonymous cases and twenty witnesses who described their health care at Nazareth Lodge. They also highlighted the evidence that medical officers had been appointed to the home and had visited regularly.⁷⁸
- 58 After an accident in which his eye was damaged by a privet hedge, HIA 159 had the eye removed in hospital and an artificial eye was fitted. As an adult he was classed as disabled, which made getting jobs difficult.⁷⁹ He had further spells in hospital while he was at Nazareth Lodge, with an infected knee, a broken leg and a serious cut to his hand. The treatment he received while at Nazareth Lodge appears to have been appropriate.

76 SNB 1510.

77 SNB 1510.

78 SNB 100143.

79 SNB 594.

- 59 More than one witness spoke about being ignored when they were unwell and confined to bed. HIA 183 said that no one checked on him or brought him food, and he had nothing to eat,⁸⁰ for example, and HIA 307 said he was left in isolation and no one spoke to him for days.⁸¹ If this happened it was poor childcare.
- 60 HIA 297 recalled that a nun treated a boil on his leg, but could not remember seeking a doctor or dentist during his four years at Nazareth Lodge.⁸² His medical records indicate that he had audiology tests and a tonsillectomy in Belfast City Hospital. HIA 33 said that the doctor was never called and that if a boy caught a cold SR 118 administered a spoonful of castor oil.⁸³ Even as late as 1980, HIA 10 reported that she had scars on her neck from the use of the silver lice comb and that she had seen other girls bleeding.⁸⁴
- 61 We are inclined to believe the records, rather than the witnesses' recollections. It is not surprising that inspections by medical officers were not recalled, as they probably carried little significance for the children and were viewed as part of the home's routine. The accounts suggest that, other than boys being left in isolation, the health care provide at Nazareth Lodge was satisfactory.
- 62 One female witness, HIA 363 alleged improper conduct on the part of a General Practitioner. Since the alleged behaviour was said to have occurred in the doctor's surgery it was outwith the remit of the Inquiry, and if the matter were to be taken further, it would need to be investigated by the Health Authority and the General Medical Council. It is not the Inquiry's role to reach conclusions on specific cases, but in so far as HIA 363's allegations related to failure on the part of the Sisters to notice her distress, the evidence of the witness was discrepant from the detailed health records maintained by the home. We concluded that there were no grounds for determining that there had been systemic abuse.

Clothes

- 63 Although clothing was individualised in the later years, for most of the period covered by the Inquiry's remit, the Sisters relied on donations from

80 SNB 523.
81 SNB 098.
82 SNB 353.
83 SNB 1642.
84 SNB 749.

the community or from supportive businesses, or they made the clothes in their workroom. In consequence, although there was no uniform as such, as HIA 87 commented, all the boys dressed the same and were easily identifiable as home boys. The styles, however, clearly varied from time to time, depending on what was available.

- 64 HIA 24 said that in the 1940s they wore shorts and orange jackets.⁸⁵ HIA 87 was given a one-piece boiler suit; shorts, a shirt and other smarter clothes were issued if boys were going out of the home.⁸⁶ HIA 247 said that there was no official uniform but all the boys wore shorts and similar tops. HIA 89 said they wore same clothes every day, and had shorts until they were ten or twelve years old. According to HIA 422 the boys had a brown corduroy uniform and short trousers.⁸⁷ HIA 110 said that they had “wee shorts and a t-shirt.”⁸⁸
- 65 This was not just a matter of fashion or individuality. Because stocks were limited, clothing was often ill-fitting. HIA 89 said that the clothes were satisfactory, but his underwear was too tight. HIA 408 said that he wore shorts and boots but no socks in the 1930s. Wearing boots without socks gave him blisters and he says that he has continued to suffer foot problems caused by the badly fitting boots he had to wear when at the Lodge. HIA 99 wore sandals mostly; he had to wear tight shoes once and says he was crippled. HIA 89 had holes in his shoes.
- 66 The Sisters said that they provided the best clothing possible and the children were provided with a full school uniform. They did, however, have to rely on hand-me-downs and donations from firms.⁸⁹ At a time when there was widespread poverty, and children in the community often wore hand-me-downs, it is not surprising that the quality of clothing and footwear was poor in the early years. The Order in Belfast was dependent on a poor community for its income and for the donation of clothing and footwear; no doubt some of the apparel it received was already well worn. However, from the 1950s onwards, the Sisters could have obtained fees from the welfare authorities for the upkeep of the children, and they were slow in accessing these resources. From the 1960s onwards it should not have been necessary for children to wear old or ill-fitting cast-offs.

85 SNB 419.

86 SNB 255.

87 SNB 214.

88 SNB 501.

89 SNB 1511-1512.

- 67 As social workers became more involved, grants for clothing became available and they (or the children's keyworkers) took children to the shops to buy clothing with their allowances.⁹⁰

Numbers and Names

- 68 The Sisters allocated numbers to the boys, ostensibly for the purposes of identifying their clothing, and this practice was clearly preferable to having a common pool of clothing. Many of the witnesses recalled their numbers, and it appears that their numbers were at times used for other purposes. HIA 183 said he was never called by his first name, but was always known by surname or by his number, 66, for clothes. Other witnesses provided similar evidence.
- 69 The Congregation said that there was no specific policy on the use of numbers, which was seen as a pragmatic way of dealing with laundry. Nor was the practice discontinued at any particular time.⁹¹ Throughout the period of the Inquiry's remit, if the Sisters were trying to create an alternative home life for the boys, it would have been best practice for staff to use first names in talking to children, and in so far as numbers were used for other than practical purposes, such as the allocation of clothing, this would have represented an institutional approach to care. It is our impression that the use of numbers rather than names happened on occasion, but there has been insufficient evidence to be certain that this was standard practice.

Food

- 70 Feeding a large number of boys with limited resources must have been a challenge for the Sisters, despite the presence of the farm and the kitchen garden, especially as growing boys are often hungry. The food provided appears to have been basic and without much variety. Understandably it was when the food fell below acceptable standards that the witnesses recall what was on offer. In the Congregation's final statement they quoted approving inspection reports from the 1930s and 1940s and the statements of witnesses who found the food acceptable.⁹² The most approving observations, though, relate to the last decade before the home closed, though even then there were critical observations.⁹³

90 SNB 100257.

91 SNB 1506-1507.

92 SNB 100130, 100135, 100137, 100138.

93 SNB 100133, 100134.

- 71 HIA 408 recalled that in the 1930s the boys were made to eat food which was “smelly and bad”. Breakfast was porridge with salt and sour milk, and there was a cup of hot milk and half a slice of bread and dripping at 11am. When he took breakfast to SR 118 he stole a bit of bacon as he had never seen it before.⁹⁴ HIA 422 said that the boys used to take bread out of a bin in the back yard and if there was a fire to burn rubbish they toasted the bread.⁹⁵ HIA 99 said the food was “not good”. He alleged that he was forced to eat a rotten potato by SR 118. He said that the volume of food was satisfactory, but noted that the older boys dined with the nuns and had meat.⁹⁶
- 72 Several witnesses reported that they had been hungry and they tried various measures to obtain additional food. HIA 408 said the boys had steamed potatoes, and that they scavenged peel from the dustbin. HIA 89 said he was always hungry and that food was of a poor standard. HIA 159 said that:
- “Most of the fruit ...was stored in the large barn at the far end of the old people’s home, which was behind the baby home. Small groups of boys used to go down at night and nick a few bananas and apples”.⁹⁷
- He said that he was forced to eat the stolen apples after a raid on the store and he had a struggle not to throw up.⁹⁸ HIA 183 said the food was not great - mainly stew and porridge, and he was so hungry that he sneaked into the kitchen and stuffed himself with bread.
- 73 By contrast, HIA 110 said that on the day of their first Holy Communion they had a fried egg; it is noteworthy that this was a special treat.⁹⁹
- 74 From 1975, with the new kitchens in the units, the food improved and the children were given supper.¹⁰⁰ However, HIA 363, who was admitted to Nazareth Lodge in 1977, said the food was still terrible; if not eaten, it was brought out the next day, and she was force-fed when the food was two or three days old.¹⁰¹

94 Day 82, p.42.
95 SNB 212.
96 SNB 276.
97 SNB 32183.
98 SNB 596.
99 SNB 501.
100 SNB 1975.
101 CLO 1005.

- 75 According to Sr Brenda the Sisters attempted to provide the best food they could, taking account of factors such as rationing. She said that the nuns ate the same food as the children, and when there was a shortage it was the sisters who went without.¹⁰²
- 76 It is apparent from the evidence that the boys were at times hungry, that there was little variety, that there was probably very little fruit for the children and that at times the quality of food was poor. However, it is likely that there were many people in the community who were in the same position, especially in the post-war period when food was still rationed. On balance, without denying any of the witnesses' evidence, we are inclined to accept that the Sisters tried to provide a reasonable diet within the limited resources available to them. However, there appear to have been times when the food failed to meet minimum standards in terms of both quality and quantity. As with clothing, the standard of food could have been improved earlier if income had been received from the welfare authorities.

Force-feeding

- 77 HIA 110 said they were hit across the face by the civilian staff if they did not eat the food.¹⁰³ HIA 142 said that he was force-fed held in "a clamped position" to keep him still and make him swallow, and he attributed current eating problems to this treatment.¹⁰⁴
- 78 HIA 141 alleged that SR 29 had force-fed her with Brussels sprouts, which made her vomit all over SR 29, who slapped her face.¹⁰⁵ HIA 225 said he was force-fed turnip:

"I did not want the turnip but this person pushed it into my mouth and hit me around the face and made me swallow it. This made me vomit and she then made me eat the vomit".¹⁰⁶

The Order did not accept that force-feeding took place, but when this was put to HIA 225 when he gave evidence he was adamant that it happened and remembered it vividly. HIA 225 said:

"...on this occasion I said, 'I don't like it. I don't eat turnip', and I was told to eat it and I wasn't going to eat it, and that's when...I had a

102 SNB 1511.
103 SNB 501.
104 SNB 284.
105 SNB 110.
106 SNB 531.

spoon put in my mouth, and I said, 'I will be sick', and it continued, and I was sick, and she lifted a piece of what I threw back up and put it back in my mouth and slapped me round the face. I mean, I can't imagine what the Congregation may feel about that. That is up to them, but I know how I felt about it."¹⁰⁷

- 79 The exasperation of staff when boys refused to eat food is understandable, as children were expected to eat everything, not only because of the waste if it were uneaten, but also because in residential care refusal was seen as a symbolic rejection of what the staff offered in their parental role. The rejection of food is often one of the symptoms that all is not well in a children's home. However, force-feeding sets up a confrontation which staff may lose, and it does nothing to persuade the child to like the food s/he has refused or form a closer relationship with the staff involved. This practice was therefore unacceptable in residential childcare. **We accept that force-feeding took place and it constituted systemic abuse.**

Punishments

- 80 SR 30 said that there was no disciplinary policy in the later 1970s, and children were sent to their rooms or deprived of privileges, for example when a boy flushed a hamster down the toilet.¹⁰⁸ SR 29 said that the responsibility for discipline lay with the sisters in charge of the units:

"...the main punishment for children who had misbehaved would have been having their pocket money reduced or taken off them for a short period, they could have been asked to do extra chores such as helping with the washing up or setting the tables and cleaning and polishing shoes, their access to the TV could have been withdrawn or not being allowed to watch movies. On some occasions they would have been sent to their rooms or could have been, what is now known in modern terms 'grounded' and not being allowed to go into town to the cinema or events like that".¹⁰⁹

Such punishments would have been quite appropriate in residential childcare at that time, but they contrast sharply with the witnesses' descriptions of physical abuse.

107 Day 87, pp.38 to 39.

108 Day 93, p.117.

109 SNB 1561.

Activities

- 81 On Saturday mornings there were further chores to be undertaken, but the children had free time in the afternoon. HIA 89 was at Nazareth Lodge from 1943 to 1953 and he said that:

“Other than a football there were no toys to play with. We made up our own games”.¹¹⁰

In contrast, HIA 159 said that there were swings, sand pits and a large climbing frame. They played tig, hide and seek, marbles and hopscotch. They also had hoops, tricycles and scooters.¹¹¹ In the later years they went swimming and attended a youth club, brownies or scouts.¹¹²

- 82 It was on Saturdays that the “sweetie men” called, bringing their guitars; they also accompanied the boys at holiday times.¹¹³ Since all the staff, other than the handymen and visiting priests, were women, the involvement of male volunteers who could provide role models would have been welcome. Occasionally the boys were taken out for a walk in the neighbourhood, but the witnesses who spoke of the walks did not generally have happy memories. HIA 87, for example, recalled that in the 1940s Sunday walks in Ormeau Park were “like open jail”, as the boys were not allowed to stop to play or talk to anyone. HIA 159 said:

“On Sundays in the summer months we would go out for a long walk to the Ormeau Park on the Ravenhill Road, and it could get very hot in these little brown uniforms”.

- 83 Other trips out were more memorable. There appear to have been regular trips to the cinema and the swimming pool and occasional trips elsewhere. DL 40 recalled that all the chaplains at Nazareth Lodge were kind and took the boys out for day trips in their cars, for example to Portrush and Portadown.¹¹⁴ HIA 21 recalled being taken to the pictures on Ormeau Road, and going to the swimming pool on Thursdays.¹¹⁵ HIA 159 remembered seeing *The Ten Commandments* from the circle, and during the break the boys had ice-cream and sweets. They also visited Dublin Zoo, and a circus at the Grand Opera House.¹¹⁶ In addition to the

110 SNB 487.

111 SNB 32187.

112 SNB 1590.

113 SNB 503.

114 SNB 1872.

115 SNB 634.

116 SNB 32187.

cinema trips, they had films in the hall - religious ones, comedies, and cowboys and indians, according to HIA 159.

- 84 An activity which brought back happy memories and a sense of pride was the music. HIA 159 wrote:

“[SR 152] was in charge of the choir. We used to practise upstairs in the corridor at night when it was near Christmas time, and to keep our voices clear and warm, [she] used to bring up a large pot of very hot water with loads of jam in it. We usually had two cups, then we were singing again”.¹¹⁷

- 85 The boys’ choir was used for special occasions:

“...we got dressed up in our little brown uniform and sandals for this opening day [St Joseph’s Baby Home] and...on the feast of Corpus Christi we would walk from the chapel down the avenue saying the Rosary and finish beside the statue and sing some hymns. We also wore our suits when we went away to Bangor, Dublin, as part of the choir, or Belfast city to make a record of some Christmas carols...”¹¹⁸

- 86 HIA 204 said that he was selected to sing and do Irish dancing at concerts organised for visiting nuns and priests, sometimes having to dress as a girl, and sometimes having to present chocolates to the visitors.¹¹⁹ HIA 247 also mentioned winning a cup for Irish dancing.¹²⁰

- 87 HIA 307 said that singing was one of the few good things about the Lodge. He had a good voice, they nurtured his ability and he enjoyed it, though he felt that he was used by the nuns at fundraising events. There was a lot of practising to get things right and the nuns encouraged him to have a sense of pride; he was the lead singer and actor at the time.¹²¹

- 88 In large homes such as Nazareth Lodge activities were important as ways of occupying children, and thus avoiding misbehaviour, as well as giving them positive experiences and, in the case of music, developing their talents. The Sisters appear to have made good use of their community contacts, and it is clear that the opportunities to sing and dance were much appreciated.

117 SNB 32186-32187.

118 SNB 32188.

119 Day 82, pp.11 and 17.

120 Day 84, pp.125 to 126.

121 Day 84, p.21.

Birthdays

- 89 Birthdays were generally not celebrated, at least in the earlier decades, and some children did not know when their birthdays were. HIA 99 said that he did not know what birthdays were until he was older. HIA 422, however, said that when he was eleven there was a party for him in the dining hall,¹²² and in the 1970s HIA 210 had a party every year to celebrate his birthday.¹²³ SR 29, who was at the home in the late 1970s and early 1980s, said that children had “small parties for their birthdays”.¹²⁴ As stated to the Hughes inquiry, there is a reference in the log on 2 January 1976 to the combined celebration of two boys’ birthdays.¹²⁵
- 90 Even in a large home it should have been possible to make each child’s birthday a special day, and the failure to celebrate each individual once a year in the earlier decades indicated the institutional nature of the childcare at Nazareth Lodge. The fact that children did not know their birthdays also indicates lack of discussion about personal matters.

Christmas

- 91 Christmas was recalled as a time of mixed excitement and disappointments. The main memory of Christmas time was the parties which children were invited to attend. They were held at big businesses such as Mackie’s factory and Kennedy’s bakery. A witness said that these parties were the only times that the boys at Nazareth Lodge and the girls at Nazareth House saw each other. HIA 247 said that at the parties, they were spoiled with cake and sweets.
- 92 Attendance at the parties was shared out, but selection also appears to have depended upon the behaviour of individuals. HIA 87 said:
- “Only the good boys were allowed to go out on trips or to the Christmas party [at Mackie’s Iron Factory] but it was difficult to be good enough for the nuns, because they were always wanting more work out of us or finding fault with anything we had done. We could never please the nuns”.¹²⁶
- 93 There were other special events according to HIA 408, such as a visit to the cinema for a Mickey Mouse film and the Midnight Mass on Christmas Eve. HIA 99 said that plays were put on at Christmas. HIA 141 said that

122 Day 85, p.41.

123 SNB 600.

124 SNB 1562.

125 SNB 100154.

126 SNB 256.

she was given a present when sitting on Santa's knee for a photograph, but the nuns removed the present immediately afterwards and she never saw it again.¹²⁷

- 94 Several witnesses recorded getting presents on Christmas Day - an orange and an apple and three sweets according to one witness, a bun and an orange according to HIA 89, and apples and oranges but no toys according to HIA 87. HIA 99 said that the boys were given toys to play with on Christmas Day but they were not allowed to keep them. HIA 21 said that Christmas time was exciting, but toys had to be handed back the next day, causing resentment:

“One year I received a toy milk float with churns and it broke my heart when I had to give it back”.¹²⁸

The Order did not accept that this happened.¹²⁹

- 95 HIA 87 said that Christmas was also a time when benefactors visited, and so things were polished and better pillows and quilts were put out. HIA 21 said that on Open Days lots of people visited and gave them sweets.¹³⁰

Education

- 96 The Nazareth Lodge primary school was within the grounds. HIA 408, who was at Nazareth Lodge in the mid-1930s, said that there was an emphasis on religion and Latin at the expense of other subjects such as geography and maths.¹³¹ However, the nuns never explained the meaning of the Latin they used to the children.¹³² HIA 16 wrote:

“The standard of education was poor in the home. The school was in the [grounds of the] home. I recall I was never given homework and there was very little structure to the classes. I felt that we were taught very little.”¹³³

- 97 HIA 21 said that there were four classrooms and four teachers: SR 34, SR 47, SR 156 and NL 63, a lay teacher. He felt that they were all good teachers, though two of them NL 63 and SR 34 used the strap. He reported that no home work was required of the boys, and in consequence, their

127 SNB 109.

128 SNB 634.

129 Day 84, p.79.

130 Day 84, p. 83.

131 Day 82, p.40.

132 SNB 222.

133 SNB 396.

attainments were poor, which later affected their employment prospects, for example in failing to fill in application forms.¹³⁴

98 HIA 99 said that in his time they had civilian teachers, who concentrated on the brightest children, but he had no complaints about them, as he learned to read and write. HIA 183, on the other hand, found the education poor, and he could not read or write when he left. HIA 159 said that:

“...after 1954-5 a dozen boys who could not pick up schooling very quickly were sent outside to a special school for slow learners”.¹³⁵

99 There were, however, boys who considered themselves intelligent, but who felt that the schooling had failed them. HIA 247 took a technical examination with another resident, NL 287. They were expected to succeed but they had been taught the wrong things, so they failed and were sent instead to Rubane. Unknown to HIA 247, the Sisters had made unsuccessful efforts behind the scenes to get him a place in a Belfast secondary school.¹³⁶

100 HIA 33 said that he was doing well academically but was never given the option of furthering his education; instead he was directed to work at the front door, scrubbing the steps, polishing the long corridor, answering the door and providing soup to vagrants who called.¹³⁷

101 HIA 225 saw himself as intelligent and felt that if he had had a normal education he would have passed the 11-plus (as his younger brother did) and gone to grammar school. As it was, he considered his preparation for the 11-plus “woeful” and he failed. To make matters worse, NL 4 announced the result to the group, labelling HIA 225 “stupid”, which hurt him more than any beating. He said that he had a chip on his shoulder thereafter.¹³⁸

102 HIA 132 concluded:

“The education was bad. They didn’t treat you well because they thought we were orphans and wouldn’t get anywhere in life anyway. They were right. Without an education you can’t get anywhere and you end up in low paid jobs...”¹³⁹

134 SNB 635.

135 SNB 32190.

136 Day 84, pp.126 to 127.

137 SNB 1642.

138 SNB 534, Day 87, p.55.

139 SNB 586.

- 103 In September 1974 St Michael's was opened, combining both the Nazareth Lodge and Nazareth House schools. It had a Board of Governors, and according to NL 63 the content of its teaching was less religious.¹⁴⁰

Holidays

- 104 During the summer some children went to stay with members of their family, and others were placed with foster families. These placements are considered below. The children for whom no placements were found went on holiday as a group to places such as Ballyhornan, where they took up residence in some RAF huts near the seaside. HIA 159 said that during the summer they went to Tyrella beach where they camped in tents like giant wigwams. Later the home spent holidays at Waterfoot.¹⁴¹
- 105 To some extent the lifestyle on holiday replicated that at Nazareth Lodge, but it seems that the atmosphere was generally more relaxed. Most of the boys have fond memories of their holidays. DL 40 said they had such a great time at Ballyhornan, making friends with other holiday makers,¹⁴² that he wanted his ashes scattered there.¹⁴³
- 106 SR 46 said that she might have been too strict, but that she had been affected by a serious accident that happened to a boy when on holiday. He had been allowed to go and buy maggots climbed on rocks and fell 70 feet, suffering brain damage, such that SR 46 was more restrictive thereafter.¹⁴⁴

Family Contact

- 107 Parents typically visited children at weekends, but mid-week visits also took place. Some children also returned home for weekends or holidays. There were some concerns mentioned in the evidence. HIA 24, for example, said that his mother visited him a few times while he was at Nazareth Lodge, but when she visited he was warned by the nuns to say nothing derogatory about them.¹⁴⁵
- 108 The draft inspection report in 1983 was critical of arrangements for parents to visit and suggested that greater efforts should be made to make them feel welcome. Although the inspectors were told that parents were welcomed, in practice very few visited, though family contact was

140 Day 110, p.5.

141 SNB 32184.

142 SNB 1873.

143 Day 95, p.58.

144 SNB 1590, Day 93, pp.35 and 36.

145 Day 83, pp.67 and 68.

maintained through the children's weekend visits home.¹⁴⁶ When the smaller units were established, rooms were set aside for visitors. Overall, this was not a point of contention.

Personal Possessions

109 Witnesses expressed considerable strength of feeling about things which they considered to be theirs and which they allege the nuns removed and they never saw again. This included the clothes they wore on admission, presents of clothing brought in by relatives, toys which they were given at Christmas and money given to them by foster carers.

110 HIA 10 said that her mother sent her a Barbie doll with a horse and riding gear, but she was only allowed to play with it on Christmas Day and then it was taken away.¹⁴⁷

111 There were some complaints that parcels sent to boys did not reach them. HIA 159 said that the nuns prevented him from having contact with his mother and his aunt. Sandals sent by his mother for him were given to NL 71 by the nuns, and he never received a promised birthday present. Later he was told that mail had been sent to him, but he had not received it. He said that he saw lots of toys and parcels in a room above the entrance.¹⁴⁸

“Some boys never received the parcels sent to them from their mothers or aunts”.¹⁴⁹

Sr Brenda stated that there was no policy of withholding letters from children, though in some cases the sisters might have done so if it was thought that family news would upset a child, or if a letter were being looked after for a small child.¹⁵⁰ The 1952 Home Office Guidance said that normally the staff should not read children's letters.¹⁵¹

112 The Sisters denied that toys would have been removed from children, and did not understand where this memory came from.¹⁵² As NL 5 pointed out, toys that were donated were “not always new” and NL 151, the handyman, had to take some to the dump.¹⁵³ NL 4 said that children

146 SNB 14813.
147 SNB 748.
148 SNB 595.
149 SNB 32189.
150 SNB 1509.
151 HIA 476.
152 SNB 1508.
153 SNB 80035.

had no personal belongings but that toys were owned communally.¹⁵⁴ This observation was consistent with the complainants' evidence. If this were the case, it reflected poor childcare, as children should have been encouraged to develop their individuality, and having personal possessions was one important aspect, indicating their personal attachments, tastes and interests.

- 113 During much of the period in question it was considered very poor childcare practice to intercept mail or parcels unless there were strong reasons that a child would be in some way put at risk if staff did not intervene. It is possible that the Sisters' practice was long established and that they diverted items sent to children in order to ensure that children with generous parents did not receive appreciably more than those without families or whose parents were less well off. The Sisters themselves had had to sacrifice personal possessions voluntarily on entering the Order, and they should have appreciated how much personal possessions such as items sent by parents mattered to the children in symbolising that their parents still cared for them.

Foster Care

- 114 Some of the boys had been in foster care before admission to Nazareth Lodge. One example was HIA 307 who had developed a close bond with his foster mother. She visited him monthly and complained to the Reverend Mother that HIA 307 was not being cared for properly. Her visits were stopped. HIA 307 was later told by a boy who had been with him in the foster home that she was told that HIA 307 had gone to a good home and she need not visit again. The other boy stayed with her until he was 21 and got married, and HIA 307 felt that life would have been different for him if he had had the same opportunities.¹⁵⁵ He said:

“That lady was the one person in my life that ever gave me any affection and I still feel her loss today. I have no doubt that the nuns lied to her because she was critical of their neglect and low standards of care. The nuns took from me the one important emotional attachment I ever had in order to protect themselves from criticism. If that relationship had been allowed to continue I think my life would be quite different.”¹⁵⁶

154 Day 113, p.54.

155 Day 84, pp.18 to 19.

156 SNB 100.

- 115 A large number of boys who could not spend the summer with their families were placed with families for occasional weekends or for summer breaks. These placements did not provide foster care as it is known today. It appears that the Sisters contacted priests, who sought volunteer families from their congregations. Although Section 2 of the Children and Young Persons Act 1950 laid down a requirement that written approval for any placements should be sought from the welfare authorities, this did not become standard practice until much later.¹⁵⁷ The children at Nazareth Lodge had been placed in care voluntarily, so that the welfare authorities were not involved in overseeing their care and were unaware of their existence. The Sisters were presumably continuing long-standing practice. The result, though, was that the families were not properly scrutinised, and the failure to assess them left some of the boys at risk.
- 116 It was in July 1972 that Bob Bunting, Assistant Director in the Belfast Welfare Authority, wrote to the Mother Superior to ask her to ensure that couples and families were approved before children in the Authority's care were allowed to visit them, even for day visits.¹⁵⁸
- 117 HIA 21 went to foster homes at weekends, but said:
“Ironically in most cases the boys couldn't wait to get back to the Lodge; after all it was our home”.¹⁵⁹
He visited a family for weekends, but “it was good to get back ‘Home’ to the Lodge”.¹⁶⁰ HIA 247 visited a well-off family who wanted to foster him but they were refused, perhaps because of parental objections.¹⁶¹
- 118 A woman took HIA 183 out once a month and a family took him for two or three weeks in the summer.
“I thank God for those short breaks away as they are the only happy times I remember from my childhood”.¹⁶²
On returning to Nazareth Lodge, the sister took sweets and money off him. He was not worried about the nuns having the money as he had nowhere to spend it. In oral evidence HIA 183 said that he was still in touch with both the woman, who was now 85, and with the family. He really looked

157 HIA 165-166.

158 SNB 9149, 100281.

159 SNB 634.

160 Day 84, pp.80 and 81.

161 Day 84, p.129.

162 SNB 523.

forward to holidays with them.¹⁶³ HIA 247 also said that he was still in touch with a family who had had a farm at Kilkeel, where he had had “a great time” during the summer.

- 119 HIA 259 was first sent to a farm, which he did not like much. He was then sent to a foster family who bought him clothes, a bicycle and football boots. However, on his return to Nazareth Lodge, the clothes disappeared, NL 5 gave the boots to another boy and the bicycle was replaced with an older one; thereafter the foster parents kept things they bought for him at their home.¹⁶⁴
- 120 HIA 225 spent Christmases with a family who wanted to adopt or foster him, but his father would not allow it. HIA 225 said, “It was my only experience of real family life”, and he remained close to them till they died.¹⁶⁵
- 121 HIA 41 said that when he stayed with a family for a weekend, a man talked to him sexually and groped him when he sat on the man’s lap to drive his car on a public road. HIA 41 had been selected to stay with this family when another boy had refused to go.¹⁶⁶
- 122 Some of the placements, as described above, were highly appreciated by the boys, as they offered a chance to experience family life and they led in some cases to life-long friendships. Arranging a large number of these placements every summer must have entailed a lot of work for the Sisters, and despite their failure to have the families properly checked and some consequent exploitation and abuse, the holiday foster care system as a whole has to be seen as one of their successes.
- 123 As social workers became increasingly involved, foster placements were arranged for children to move to as permanent placements. NL 190 described the problems of recruiting foster parents in the mid-1970s. At that time there was no specialist fostering team and it was for individual social workers to recruit foster carers. She wrote:

“The social worker would place an advert in the newspaper, follow up any responses, complete a home study and obtain approval from senior staff”.¹⁶⁷

163 Day 84, pp.61, 70.

164 Day 88, pp.123 and 124.

165 SNB 533.

166 SNB 442.

167 SNB 6071.

This task was additional to their full caseload, and each social worker requiring a placement had to learn the procedure. NL 190 was working with HIA 210 and his brother, who were members of a family of thirteen, eleven of whom were in long-term care, split between different children's homes. She felt that the splitting of the family was not good practice but was inevitable through lack of provision; the siblings, as it happened, were not enthusiastic about meeting.¹⁶⁸

Work Experience, Discharge and Aftercare

124 In the period when Nazareth Lodge was an industrial school there was a requirement that the school found employment for boys who were funded by the state. In the 1930s, when HIA 408 was aged twelve, he was picked to work on a farm run by a couple, NL 82 and NL 83. He recalled that twelve boys were lined up for NL 83 to choose from, and HIA 408 thought he saw money passed by her to the sister. He said that he felt he was "sold like a slave".¹⁶⁹ He alleged that he worked every day from 6am to 10 pm on the farm without pay for two years; he never had a day off and he spent a lot of time cleaning eggs.¹⁷⁰

125 HIA 87 finished school at 13 and was given jobs to do around the home, such as looking after little children and growing vegetables. He was made a charge boy working with the infants group, helping by feeding them, for example.¹⁷¹ HIA 99 confessed to the priest about all that had happened to him while he had been at Nazareth Lodge, and he was moved the following week for adoption by a couple who had a farm.

"I was given no preparation for leaving Nazareth Lodge and it just happened out of the blue".¹⁷²

126 If these recollections are accurate, they represent systemic abuse. HIA 408 would have been of school age; payment for such an arrangement would have been quite improper; and the conditions which he described were exploitative. This is, however, the only evidence which we have received describing such practices, and without further corroborative evidence to indicate that was commonplace it is insufficient for us to make a general finding of systemic abuse.

168 SNB 6070.

169 Day 82, p.49.

170 Day 82, p.50.

171 Day 83, pp.47 to 48.

172 SNB 280.

- 127 In 1950 the Nazareth Lodge Welfare Committee was established, with the Bishop of Down and Connor as its Patron. To judge by its reports and minutes it provided impressive services for boys who had left Nazareth Lodge, for girls a paid welfare officer based at premises in Great Victoria Street, Belfast, and a number of volunteers. The services offered included help in finding employment and accommodation, and the provision of clothing. The Committee raised a considerable amount of money, for example through organising day trips to the Isle of Man.¹⁷³
- 128 When Rubane opened in 1953, the boys were usually transferred there at the age of eleven. There was generally no need, therefore, for the Sisters to obtain employment for school-leavers or to provide aftercare. A small number of boys did stay on, but this was to enable them to attend schools in Belfast as they were showing some academic promise.
- 129 From 1953 onwards the transfer to Rubane took place each autumn. HIA 56 wrote:
- “Once we turned eleven we were taken in groups of about ten or twelve boys in a minibus to Rubane. ...It happened very quickly and there was no preparation”.¹⁷⁴
- Staff at Rubane commented on the lack of background information which they received.
- 130 A number of boys were discharged from Nazareth Lodge by being sent to Australia. This is dealt with in Chapter 6. In all, twelve applicants who had been sent to Australia from Nazareth Lodge gave evidence to the Inquiry.
- 131 School-age boys were still given tasks that entailed responsibility within Nazareth Lodge. In the early 1970s HIA 41 was given the job of minding the front door out of school hours from 4pm to 10pm; this entailed answering the door, welcoming visiting priests, brushing the paths in the garden and nuns’ graveyard, giving beggars tea and sandwiches, and locking up. This role gave him both responsibility and a measure of freedom. NL 5 denied that HIA 41 undertook this role, saying that it was “pure fantasy”, but it was mentioned by SR 30 and in social work records.¹⁷⁵
- 132 HIA 132 said that his elder brother, who had acted as his protector, was adopted, and he left without the opportunity to say goodbye.

173 SNB 17003-17312.

174 SNB 469.

175 SNB 440, 2161, 5619, 7179, 80065.

“When he left, I was on my own”.

He said that he had been unable to trace his brother since then. Such a practice no doubt precluded the tensions of a farewell scene, but it must, even in the 1960s, have been apparent that to fracture family relations in this way was poor childcare. HIA 132 was also prevented from visiting his grandmother and aunt when the nuns found out that they were not Roman Catholics, though his aunt wanted to adopt him.¹⁷⁶

Religion

133 Religious observance played a big part in the boys’ lives, but it was not generally a source of complaint. HIA 99 said that there was Mass every morning, and prayers before and after meals, but said he was content with the religious regime.¹⁷⁷ HIA 183 remembered the Mass in the morning, and after tea, Rosary and Benediction.¹⁷⁸ HIA 159 recalled a practical problem:

“...going to confession always seemed a long-drawn-out affair, waiting for ages to go to the box. In the end it was decided to send just a few boys at a time, as so many wanted to go to the loo that they wet themselves when they got there”.¹⁷⁹

134 When HIA 423 was at Nazareth Lodge she felt privileged when going to chapel as she was provided with a special outfit and the nuns did her hair so that she looked lovely.¹⁸⁰ She was expected to give the impression to other church-goers of being happy.¹⁸¹

135 HIA 152, however, was critical:

“Religion was a very big part of our daily routine with mass, benediction and confession. It was more important to the nuns than education, which is why we were not well educated in Nazareth Lodge. I have no recollection of homework or exams. We went to school in Nazareth Lodge. It felt like we never left the building”.¹⁸²

136 HIA 24’s mother was a Catholic but his father was a Protestant. As an altar boy he received communion but he had not been baptised, and the nuns became aware of this while Bishop Mageean was visiting. HIA 24 said he

176 SNB 586-587.

177 Day 82, p.78.

178 SNB 523.

179 SNB 32186.

180 SNB 743.

181 Day 87, p.13.

182 SNB 516.

was dragged out of the church by the ear as they were “really angry”. He was therefore baptised and confirmed on the same day.¹⁸³ Coughing in church was considered the worst crime as it was seen to be disrespectful, according to HIA 33, and SR 118 hit him with the spindle of a chair back when he had a tickly cough.¹⁸⁴

- 137 For the Sisters, religious observance was clearly of great importance. In a report on a visitation from 28 October to 5 November 1989, presided over by the Regional Superior, it was recorded:

“The work is very demanding and time-consuming, still the spiritual life of the Sisters should always be given priority; sufficient staff should ensure that this is so.”¹⁸⁵

In a statutory children’s home, the only purpose of the staff team coming together would be to care for the children; in the case of homes run by the Congregation the statement suggests that the spiritual life of the Sisters took precedence, with the care of children and others being the practical outworking of their faith. No doubt the spiritual life of the community strengthened the nuns in their total commitment, but the practical effects of the thinking described above (and elsewhere in the visitation reports)¹⁸⁶ led to the use of charge boys in earlier times and the associated problems described in this chapter.

Records and Care Planning

- 138 It appears that for many years the records kept about the children in Nazareth Lodge were minimal, BR 2, who admitted boys from Nazareth Lodge to Rubane, said that there were few or no records provided about them. He explained that the information received was sparse in the extreme “without names of parent/siblings, where they came from, their medical history, their educational attainments or special needs”.¹⁸⁷ **We consider the Sisters’ failure to pass relevant information about a child’s time in Nazareth Lodge, even if little was known about their lives before coming into the care of the Sisters of Nazareth, was unacceptable and showed a lack of care and consideration for each child’s individuality, development and well-being which we considered amounted to a systemic failing.**

183 SNB 419-420.

184 SNB 139.

185 SNB 19890.

186 SNB 19892.

187 RUB 1040.

- 139 In the absence of records, any planning of the boys' care can only be inferred. There must, for example, have been some discussion and preparatory work undertaken when boys were selected to go to Australia. Planning the move to Rubane would have been simpler, as boys moved once they were eleven. Arranging summer family placements must also have taken time. However, none of this would have matched the systems established in the 1960s and 1970s in England and Wales whereby childrens' needs were comprehensively assessed and plans for their care were drawn up and reviewed at intervals.
- 140 In the mid-1970s the cases of children who were in the care of the local authority were reviewed every six months. The reviews were held in the office, involving the social worker and the senior social worker; no staff from the home were present. NL 190 said that, by contrast with the authority's reception and assessment home where the staff were welcoming and worked as partners with social workers, the staff at Nazareth Lodge were not looking for social work involvement, and to fulfil her commitments to the boys she felt that she had to drive the contact.¹⁸⁸
- 141 SR 52, who worked in the two Nazareth Houses in Belfast and Derry between 1975 and 1977, said that the Belfast home was ahead of that in Derry in a number of respects. All the children had their own social workers, and they visited every month or two months. There were six-monthly reviews of their cases. The units in Belfast were mixed. Lay staff were appointed earlier in Belfast. Record-keeping was also better. Her view was that the improvements in practice had been accelerated by the involvement of social workers.¹⁸⁹ SR 52's views were corroborated by SR 18 and SR 2, who also worked in both homes.¹⁹⁰
- 142 Daily logs commenced in January 1984, possibly initiated by SR 46, who was qualified in social care. According to NL 114 under SR 222 every child had their own diary.¹⁹¹ At that time, social workers visited monthly, progress reports were made and reviews were held.¹⁹² NL 114 said that, as a houseparent, she reported problems to SR 46, but did not attend or contribute information for reviews.¹⁹³ Under SR 148 the keyworker system (which she had learnt about on her qualifying course at Aberdeen) was

188 Day 109, p.75.

189 Day 29, p.83.

190 Day 29, p.83.

191 Day 104, p.75.

192 SNB 62319, 62306, 62300.

193 Day 104, p.75.

introduced. She also gave lay staff access to files and encouraged them to contribute to daily recording.¹⁹⁴

- 143 According to SR 46, in the later years social workers visited the children and the children could phone them. SR 46 prepared reports on the children's progress for the social workers, and copies were kept on their files, together with their medical records, details of family visits and so on, in locked filing cabinets in their respective units.¹⁹⁵ It would seem that by this time standards of record-keeping were probably adequate, and that social workers were undertaking the necessary care planning. Good practice would also have entailed involving children in their reviews.
- 144 In summary, we were critical of the lack of background information the Sisters of Nazareth provided to the De La Salle order about boys transferring from Nazareth Lodge to Rubane and considered it amounted to a systemic failing. However, it appears that, starting from a low baseline, standards improved over the period covered by the evidence we received. For some time the quality of records was poor in relation to professional expectations at that time, but once the sisters were trained, standards were improved to an acceptable level.

Staffing

- 145 At the start of the period covered by the witnesses' evidence, the groups were of sixty boys, later split into two thirties. At this time a single nun worked with each group. Later, lay staff were appointed, increasing in number until there was a nun and four lay staff per group. In parallel, the group sizes were reduced. These were major improvements, but they need to be set against expectations in residential childcare services at that time. Until the 1980s neither the lay staff nor the sisters were trained in residential social work, and the staff numbers remained inadequate by accepted standards.
- 146 Sr Brenda said that:

“The Sisters who were responsible for attending to the children would normally have had some form of early year's childcare qualifications”.¹⁹⁶

The commonest qualification at this time was known as the NNEB (National Nursery Examination Board) and it was designed primarily for 16-18

194 Day 116, p.19.

195 Day 93, p.44.

196 SNB 1502.

year olds who wanted to work in day or residential nurseries with little children. Its academic standards were not on a par, therefore, with other professional qualifications and although there was no higher qualification in that field it was generally viewed as a preliminary award. Its curriculum did not address the needs of older children and young people, and it was inadequate as a preparation for residential childcare.

- 147 The Castle Priory report, *Residential Task in Childcare*, which was published in 1969, was quickly accepted as standard guidance. The standards which the report proposed reflected the staffing levels already adopted by progressive providers, and were intended as a prompt to encourage improvements among those who had not yet attained those levels.
- 148 There are variations in the report's recommendations, depending upon factors such as the length of the working week (40 or 45 hours). This makes comparison with the contribution of the Sisters difficult as they lived on site, and were therefore capable of covering the equivalent of two or three staff, though it is arguable whether this was a reasonable expectation. Allowance also has to be made for the support provided by the Mother Superior, the sisters who worked in the laundry, kitchen and workroom, and the gardeners and handymen, though the Castle Priory figures exclude domestic and other ancillary staff.
- 149 The report's recommendation was that a 30-bedded unit required between 13.5 and 18 staff, as noted in the 1983 SWAG inspection aide memoir.¹⁹⁷ From 1 April 1987 the weekly payments were increased by the Eastern Board from £80 to £147, on the condition that two extra staff were employed in each group.¹⁹⁸ Even when the units had reduced to sixteen children, the staffing complement should have been 10 per unit. The contrast between these standard expectations and the reality of staffing at Nazareth Lodge is stark.
- 150 There was a sharp dividing line between the sisters and the lay staff. The nuns filled the managerial roles and took the significant decisions. It appears that when they were first appointed the lay staff were resident and were expected to undertake the practical tasks of caring, but over time almost all the lay staff became non-resident, so that the sisters were the only resident staff. As a result, SR 148 observed, the nuns became

197 SNB 50506.

198 SNB 100126.

the children's primary attachment figures.¹⁹⁹ It is significant that even in the 1980s when SR 148 was a qualified social worker, she still ate in the convent, even though the residential workers now ate with the children.²⁰⁰

151 Until the latter years, lay staff never did night duty, as the sisters were resident. An unfortunate side effect was that the lay staff had to work split shifts to cover the periods before and after school, and this was unpopular, as the working day could amount to twelve hours, and the period in the middle of the day was not useful as time off.

152 When SR 148 qualified and moved to Nazareth Lodge in 1980 she was the first to hold a social work qualification.²⁰¹ Staff were later seconded to Queen's University for the social work qualifying course and to Rupert Stanley for the social care course. By the time the home closed, all the staff were qualified. Following criticism by the Inspectorate about the lack of male role models, SR 148 was the first to employ male staff, in 1985.²⁰²

153 SR 52 wrote:

“In 1980 the appointment of [SR 148], who was a qualified social worker, was a progressive and positive step. She took on a monitoring and mentoring role and was a great support to staff in each of the groups. There were serious efforts to improve practice and planning for the children. Documentation and communication was greatly improved and a greater effort to release sisters and staff for professional qualifications in social work became the norm. The issue of staff ratios and qualification was inextricably linked to the question of finance. Each child was assigned a keyworker. Sister had a lot of contacts with the social services and with Mrs Grogan from the Down and Connor office. The latter received half her salary from Nazareth Lodge.”²⁰³

154 Jim Tracey worked as a member of the residential childcare staff at Nazareth Lodge from 1984 to 1992. He wrote:

“The central figure, however, in most of the children's lives, was the Sister-in-Charge in each of the three units. She lived in the unit 24-7, and most, if not all of the children, often saw her as the ‘mother figure’. This arrangement meant that staff (during my time) were not

199 Day 116, p. 51.

200 SNB 80110.

201 SNB 80109.

202 Day 116, p. 67.

203 SNB 1594.

required to work beyond 10 p.m. This changed some years after I left the home and Nazareth Lodge complied with night-time supervision requirements in line with other statutory and voluntary residential children's homes".²⁰⁴

- 155 Jim Tracey trained and obtained the Certificate in Social Services, being promoted to Assistant Team Leader.²⁰⁵ He could not be promoted further, as all the more senior posts were held by sisters.²⁰⁶ This glass ceiling for lay staff caused irritation and was divisive.
- 156 The division in the staff between the sisters and the lay staff was apparent at an inspection in 1983. It was noted that staff meetings were held in only one of the three units. The lay staff had no sitting room or kitchen where they could relax off duty. This was unfortunate as they had at times to work split shifts, an unpopular practice which had been abandoned in most residential childcare services some time earlier. In consequence, while the sisters had the support of their community, the lay staff did not socialise; overall, these divisions must have undermined teamwork within the staff group as a whole.
- 157 The home had the benefit of volunteers, which augmented the range of relationships for the children and offered them a wider variety of activities. NL 14, for example, had been a resident at Nazareth Lodge, but on leaving he called in regularly to have his tea. He also helped by playing football with the boys and coaching them. Two girls and one boy alleged that he had abused them, which he denied.²⁰⁷

Childcare

- 158 Some witnesses made a variety of observations which had a bearing on the quality of childcare. HIA 141, for example, was highly critical of SR 29, who ran her group. On her first day in school SR 29 marched her down the corridor and told to go in to her classroom. "[She] just left me outside the door. I had no support or help".²⁰⁸
- 159 HIA 141 shared a room with an older girl who was put in charge of her to help with her homework, but the girl smacked her hard and said she was thick and punched her head until HIA 141 cried loudly. Her sisters heard from the next unit and confronted the older girl until the nuns intervened

204 SNB 2200.

205 SNB 2201.

206 SNB 2201.

207 SNB 80099-80100.

208 SNB 109.

“like a riot squad”.²⁰⁹ SR 29 cut her hair, so:

“you were left that you didn’t know if you were a boy or girl. ...I felt that my identity was stripped”.²¹⁰

Aged five or six she was made to stand on a tin mop bucket to do the dishes on alternate days. She also recalled being smacked a lot, stating that SR 29 put over her knee and used a leather strap to hit her.²¹¹ This was denied by SR 29, who said:

“...I never put a child across my knee or used a leather strap”.²¹²

160 HIA 141 said that her social worker never helped her, as she went straight to SR 29’s office and there was never an opportunity to speak to her confidentially.

“I think [she] was afraid to leave me alone with her in case I said anything. The Sisters and social workers never got down to my level as a child and they were always looking down at me. I always looked at the ground because I was afraid of looking into their eyes because I was so afraid of them”.²¹³

161 HIA 154 contrasted Nazareth Lodge with the children’s home to which he and his siblings moved:

“I was so happy to move...; it was like a holiday camp. ...It was smaller than Nazareth Lodge. ...We got better clothes, pocket money and better food. We could go to the fridge whenever we wanted and we got three meals a day. We were very well looked after.”²¹⁴

Nor was he sexually abused, as he had been at Nazareth Lodge.

162 With better resources and the introduction of up-to-date thinking, standards of childcare at Nazareth House could have been improved significantly. The children could have had better clothes and food, better bathing arrangements and better schooling. The unnecessary chores could have been stopped. There would have been no need to put class boys in charge. Staff could have been better trained. Most importantly, the children could have had individual attention and care from staff, ranging from the symbolic celebration of their birthdays to care planning involving

209 SNB 111.

210 SNB 110.

211 SNB 110.

212 SNB 1927.

213 SNB 110.

214 SNB 885.

social workers and preparation for discharge.

- 163 Even when staffing levels had been improved they fell short of Castle Priory expectations. The staff were simply too few to give sufficient individual attention. Understandably some children were seen by sisters as favourites and others obtained attention by misbehaviour, but many would have passed through Nazareth Lodge by keeping their heads down and avoiding attention. It is significant, though, that when improvements in staffing and living conditions had been made, the volume of allegations dropped dramatically, and the quality of care was clearly better. Jim Tracey, for example, recounted the ways in the later years the staff tried to create something of a family atmosphere, by staff and children cooking meals together, and sharing in the laundry and other chores. Although there was a central kitchen, over time the staff in the units requested budgets and prepared their own meals.²¹⁵ This was evidence of good practice.
- 164 In the preceding paragraphs, twenty-three aspects of daily life have been considered. In four of these (the management of bathing and bedwetting, the use of Jeyes fluid and force-feeding) we have concluded that the specific practices amounted to systemic abuse. Some aspects were positive, such as the summer family placement scheme and the holidays. **For the most part, until improvements in physical conditions, staffing levels, staff training and professional practice were introduced, the evidence indicated poor, out of date childcare practice, and we consider this was systemic abuse.**
- 165 It is against this general background of poor quality care that the allegations of physical, emotional and sexual abuse have to be considered.

Allegations of Abuse

Physical Abuse by Staff

- 166 A number of witnesses spoke of a general atmosphere of violence, and of physical abuse by several named sisters. The evidence below indicates the extent of the abuse from the 1940s to the mid-1970s, when the allegations diminished in frequency. In most cases a relatively small number of allegations were made against any single individual, and though some were serious, they were made by only one witness in almost every case.
- 167 There were, however, four members of staff against whom we have

²¹⁵ SNB 2200.

received multiple allegations of physical abuse. Two were sisters, SR 118 and SR 34, and two were lay staff, NL4 and NL 5. Between them, the four key names were the subject of perhaps 90% of the witnesses' allegations, and they are dealt with individually.

168 HIA 307 was at Nazareth Lodge in the late 1940s and 1950s, and he found the regime “bleak, harsh and cruel”. He said that the nuns:

“...were at best indifferent but more often were sadistic bullies who spoke with harsh loud voices in scornful, dismissive tones. They were quick to strike out and provided no reassurance or comfort to a small frightened child.”²¹⁶

169 HIA 192 was at Nazareth Lodge in the late 1940s and early 1950s. He said he was accused of biting a notebook and when he refused to own up, SR 101:

“...beat me in front of the entire class. She said she was going to beat me until I told the truth. She made me kneel down in front of the class with my hands out. She hit me with the handle of a hurley stick. She kept hitting me until she got tired. My arms dropped down from the tiredness of holding them up and my fingers curled from the pain, I lost five fingernails in the next couple of weeks as a result of the beating”.²¹⁷

In oral evidence he said that he counted 66 strikes before he lost count.

“I was fighting a battle in my mind. I can't say I done that, because I hadn't done it. So it became just me and her sort of thing. Actually I didn't feel the physical pain because it was so - so much thinking I'm going to win this. I'm going to win this”.²¹⁸

170 HIA 210's main criticisms were levelled at SR 62. Attending school was “a terrible time for me” as SR 62 beat him hard if he was thrown out of class or got his homework wrong.²¹⁹

“She used to beat me with brush shafts, metal parts of the Hoover and large wooden tweezers you used for washing...This happened once or twice a week and I was often bruised”.

He said that he was known as SR 62's pet and other boys were jealous,

216 SNB 097.

217 SNB 300.

218 Day 92, pp.26 to 28.

219 SNB 599.

but it was terrible; no one would want to be her pet.²²⁰

171 HIA 89 said that when he was aged six or seven, nuns started to beat him, for example for failing to clean the floor to their satisfaction. He said he was hit on the palms of his hands and on his backside, with sticks, straps and hurley sticks and that SR 118 and SR 100 beat him the most. He said that nuns put the boys' hands in cold water before hitting them with a stick, so that it would intensify the pain.²²¹ HIA 89 said that he also had to stand naked and then be beaten.²²²

172 SR 149 looked after the chapel and HIA 89 said that she beat him with a whip. He said that she also hit him with a crutch for being late and the boiling water he was carrying scalded him, such that he spent two or three weeks in the Mater Hospital. He told us that on another occasion she threw him down the stairs and broke his arm. The Congregation said that there were no corroborative records concerning these incidents, though they doubted whether the incidents would have been as described.²²³

173 SR 47 was said by HIA 422 to have hit him regularly with a big stick "half an inch thick".²²⁴ HIA 87 said he was involved in an incident when he was accused of killing some pet mice; he was beaten and lost his temper, eventually being caned severely and shut in an upstairs room for two weeks, as he said he was going to run away. He told us he was also shadowed for the following two weeks.²²⁵

174 HIA 427 spoke of regular physical assaults:

"If you did not greet a nun properly you got a slap on the face, your hair pulled or you would be lifted up by the ears.²²⁶ ...the nuns kicked and beat us, cut and shaved our hair, and used Jeyes fluid to clean us."²²⁷

The boys were not allowed to leave the grounds, and HIA 427 added:

"If you sneaked out the nuns would give you a serious beating."²²⁸

175 HIA 307 alleged that nuns boxed him on the ears and in 1956 his hearing

220 SNB 598-599.

221 Day 83, pp.14 to 15.

222 Day 83, pp.14 to 15.

223 SNB 488, 1932, Day 83, pp.10 and 12.

224 SNB 212.

225 Day 83, pp.40 to 42, SNB 258-259.

226 SNB 562.

227 SNB 563.

228 SNB 563.

was impaired. The pain was excruciating and made him nauseous. He said that his hearing difficulties had affected communication and employment prospects throughout his entire life. He said:

“One of the most painful punishments dished out by the nuns was the beating of my fingertips with a wooden ruler. The nuns would grab my hand and squeeze the fingers all bunched up together until they went red and then strike them across the fingertips with a ruler. The pain was terrible and it was done with viciousness especially in winter when our hands were so cold, so they could inflict the greatest pain and generate fear”.²²⁹

176 Some witnesses had mixed feelings about the sisters. HIA 41, for example, was deeply attached to SR 30, but he also alleged that she slapped him and humiliated him.²³⁰ He said that she had a vicious temper²³¹ but she was “80% fantastic” and he had discussions with her about religion.²³² She also spoiled him by giving him money, budgies, canaries, mice and goldfish.²³³ His evidence suggests that HIA 41 was an example of a boy who benefited from the individual attention he was given, which might have been seen by other children as favouritism.

177 A number of witnesses reported that while the sisters were caring, it was the civilian staff who abused them. When the sisters went for their evening prayers and time together as a community, the civilian staff were left in charge, and many of the allegations of physical abuse related to this part of the day. HIA 375 was highly critical of NL 155, a lay worker in her group, describing her as:

“an animal who should never have been allowed to work with children. We were petrified of her”.²³⁴

178 HIA 48 also said that she was chased and hit by NL 14 and NL 122, two of the gardener/ handymen.²³⁵ DL 40 said that NL 122, one of the handymen was a nasty bully and hit him several times, such that he was terrified of him, but as NL 122 had caught him out of bounds he did not complain about NL 122’s behaviour.²³⁶ NL 122 denied the assaults, saying that he

229 SNB 098.

230 SNB 440.

231 SNB 443.

232 Day 89, p.152.

233 SNB 446.

234 SNB 732.

235 SNB 861.

236 SNB 1873.

never abused, punished or chastised any child, and that he assumed the witnesses had been mistaken in identifying him.²³⁷

- 179 The physical abuse also continued in the schoolroom. Since the schoolroom was on the premises, and some of the sisters acted as both care staff and teachers, the schooling day would probably have been seen by the boys as a continuation of their life in the home. This contrasted with the experience of children who were being abused in their own homes or in children's homes but who sometimes found attendance at day school offered a welcome relief.
- 180 HIA 204 said that a lay teacher, NL 118, hit him across the face with a whip and left a "terrible mark"; he was told to lie to the nuns about it.²³⁸ On the other hand, HIA 225 considered the use of the cane in the school justified, for example when a teacher NL 63 gave him six of the best for copying a wrong answer,²³⁹ but he considered the nuns' ways of disciplining the boys to be cruel – pulling their hair, grabbing their cheeks and pulling their sidelocks.²⁴⁰
- 181 HIA 132 also said that NL 63 was "fond of the strap" and pulled boys up by the hair if they did something wrong.²⁴¹ NL 63 said that he had expected to be able to teach without using corporal punishment, but had found that he needed to use the strap as it was effective in maintaining control so that he could get on with teaching. He was not required to inform the Principal when he used corporal punishment.²⁴² Generally he was seen as strict but fair.
- 182 HIA 10 said she considered SR 46 the worst nun, because she nipped her and shouted at her in Mass, and used bamboo canes and "a ruler strap, a brown leather ruler with white stitching which she hit us with".²⁴³ HIA 10 further said that SR 46 scrubbed HIA 10's skin with a scrubbing brush till it was red and bleeding, and hit her with a spatula till her sister intervened.²⁴⁴

SR 118

237 SNB 80093.

238 SNB 305.

239 SNB 534.

240 Day 87, p.40.

241 SNB 585.

242 Day 110, p. 20.

243 SNB 749.

244 Day 104, p. 25.

- 183 SR 118 was born in 1900, joined the Order in 1919, and was at Nazareth Lodge first in 1922, then for 25 years from 1929 to 1954 when she left to move to Aberdeen, where she died in 1974.²⁴⁵
- 184 SR 118 was seen as “very much in charge”, and “the most punitive”. HIA 183 said he saw SR 118 wipe HIA 427’s soiled pants “violently and cruelly” in his face.²⁴⁶ We have already noted SR 118’s unacceptable treatment of enuresis.
- 185 In his account to the police, HIA 33 referred to beatings by SR 118:
“I had to kneel in front of [SR 118] and put both hands out and she used the rung of a chair to beat and slap us until our hands bled. This happened every morning during my stay and to other children as well and we all had witness to this. This was her idea of keeping control”.²⁴⁷
- 186 HIA 192 told us of physical abuse by SR 118. He said that she hit him on the legs with a hurley stick to get him up in the morning. (The Order did not accept that a hurley stick would be used).²⁴⁸ He said that SR 118 beat all the boys in the dormitory when the radiator leaked. She beat HIA 192 when he knocked a light with a crozier as altar boy during the Bishop’s visit. As a charge boy he was beaten if one of the boys for whom he was accountable misbehaved, lost clothes or wet the bed.²⁴⁹ He concluded: “She destroyed my confidence”.²⁵⁰
- 187 According to HIA 99, SR 100 never inflicted punishment but supported SR 118 when she punished children. On the other hand HIA 427 said that SR 100 was also very cruel, hitting him on the knuckles or across the legs, with a black strap, sticks or possibly a cane.
- 188 HIA 89 said that SR 118 and SR 100 beat him the most. Things went wrong for HIA 89 on moving from nursery to young boys’ unit.²⁵¹
“[SR 118] would shout or beat us even though we weren’t doing anything wrong. If work wasn’t done right, God help you. You would get battered on the floor. [SR 118] would usually use a hurley stick, an

245 SNB 1904, Day 82, p.33.

246 SNB 522.

247 SNB 1641.

248 SNB 1599.

249 SNB 300-301.

250 SNB 300.

251 Day 83, p.9.

ordinary stick or strap to beat us. [SR 118] was a wicked old woman”.²⁵²

- 189 HIA 204’s report on SR 118’s treatment of bedwetters in the 1930s has been quoted above, and HIA 408 said it involved hitting boys with a strap as they lay naked on the ground, and, if they turned over, putting her foot on their groin.²⁵³ He added:

“[SR 118] was only happy when she was beating you”.²⁵⁴

- 190 HIA 99 said that SR 31 was:

“a motherly figure to the boys” and “gave me the only comfort in that place. Whenever she was there I felt protected, and she showed us affection”.²⁵⁵

Unfortunately SR 186 was often away unwell, and when she was absent SR 118 was in charge, and:

“A gloom came over the whole place”.²⁵⁶

- 191 HIA 87 said that SR 118 could be pleasant, but “The job was sometimes too much for her”. If she was in a bad mood she got rid of her ill-feelings on the boys.²⁵⁷

- 192 The Order acknowledged that SR 118 might have slapped children as a punishment and on occasions she might have lost her temper, but they “refuted” all the more serious allegations and denied that she would have had a hurley stick.²⁵⁸ While allowing for some possible exaggeration, on balance we found the witnesses’ evidence persuasive.

SR 34

- 193 SR 34 entered the Congregation in 1929 and died in 1997. She worked at Nazareth Lodge from 1952 to 1973. In 1960 she became Principal of the school, and remained in this role until the two schools of Nazareth Lodge and Nazareth House were amalgamated.²⁵⁹ As the Principal, SR 34 may have felt that standards of discipline were her responsibility, and she may have acted more firmly than she otherwise would have done in order to assert her control. While she was severely criticised by several witnesses,

252 SNB 487.

253 SNB 220, Day 82, p.37.

254 Day 82, p.38.

255 SNB 278.

256 Day 82, p.82.

257 Day 83, pp.32 to 34.

258 SNB 1904-1905.

259 SNB 1900.

SR 34 clearly had positive qualities.

- 194 HIA 104 said that when SR 34 put him in charge of the tuck shop he let her down by stealing sweets and then denying the theft twice, until she made him empty the sweets out of his pockets.

“She gave me a really bad beating that day because I had let her down. I ended up crawling under the table and she was grabbing me out from underneath the table. She lost it completely and she was kicking me with her feet and boots and hitting me with her hands. I was about seven or eight at the time and I felt really bad about the incident.”²⁶⁰

In oral evidence he added:

“This is the only bad thing I remember SR 34 doing, because overall I adored her, but I think on this occasion she was in a blind rage because of what I had done.”²⁶¹

- 195 HIA 183 said that SR 34 made all the boys kneel in the corridor for an hour, when it was very cold. She realised she had been unfair and gave them all a chocolate; this was an unusual event.²⁶²

- 196 Other witnesses were more critical. HIA 64 wrote:

“[SR 34] was in charge of St Joseph’s group and she was a bad one. She was the worst nun. If you did something wrong, she would take you by your sideburns, lift you up off the floor, drop you and then kick you. She was a big, hefty woman. She weighed about sixteen stone, and we were only six or seven years old”.²⁶³

- 197 HIA 110 described SR 34 as “really bad”, having hit him on many occasions with a stick, a strap or a hand. On one open day he was given threepence or sixpence by a visiting nun, and:

“The next day SR 34 got me by the cheeks with her big nails and lifted me clean off the floor by the cheeks”,

leaving marks on his face.²⁶⁴ He explained to police that SR 34 gripped his cheeks “with the heels of her palms near my jaws and her fingertips near to my eyes”.²⁶⁵

260 SNB 493.

261 Day 85, p.72.

262 SNB 522, Day 84, pp.53 to 55.

263 SNB 479.

264 SNB 501.

265 SNB 60911.

198 HIA 422 said that SR 34 used to pick up boys by the sidelocks and swing them round; she also whipped boys round the legs with a cane.²⁶⁶ HIA 19 described SR 34 as “very wicked”, as she lifted him by the cheeks or the ears and threw him against the wall or on the floor in the classroom. On one occasion she thought he was reading a comic, and she pulled HIA 19 off a bench, trailed him down the passage and kicked him in the face, leaving him black and blue, only to find that he had been reading a Missal.²⁶⁷ According to HIA 132 SR 34 was “a very angry person”, and she hit him with sticks. She also taught him in school, smacking him in the face when his sums were wrong, and pulling him up by his sideburns or cheeks. He was also shouted down by her for showing off if he tried to answer a second question.²⁶⁸

199 When he suffered athlete’s foot badly, HIA 225 cried and was beaten by SR 34 with a bat for crying.²⁶⁹ HIA 427 told us that SR 34

“would have insisted my trousers were taken down when I was being strapped for wetting the bed. After she threw the wet and dirty sheets over me I was subjected to cold baths”.²⁷⁰

HIA 247 was beaten by SR 34 for running away and did not try it again.²⁷¹ He said that the nuns used their waist straps, or cinctures, to beat boys and they hit them anywhere.²⁷²

200 HIA 152 considered SR 34 to be an evil bully:

“She used any excuse to beat me. If you did anything wrong, no matter how trivial, she would give you a time to be in the dining room. You had to line up and had to wait your turn to be hit. She would hit us with a strap”.²⁷³

If the charge boys were disobeyed, they told the younger ones to go to see SR 34.

201 HIA 307 summarised:

“[SR 34] was the most terrifying nun at Nazareth Lodge. She was an aggressive bully and she was the biggest nun. She was always yelling

266 SNB 214.

267 SNB 407-408.

268 SNB 585.

269 SNB 531.

270 SNB 563.

271 SNB 605-606.

272 Day 84, p.119.

273 SNB 515.

at the children and punching us with closed fists. She also boxed our ears. She had a nasty, angry face and seeing her coming up the corridor made you shrink back against the wall to try and not be noticed.”²⁷⁴

- 202 In a considered view of her contribution, DL 40 said that SR 34 had the wrong temperament for the work. She worked 24/7, which he considered unfair, and when she calmed down, she was a lovely person.²⁷⁵ This witness was very appreciative of what the Sisters had done for him, and his comment can therefore be taken to imply that SR 34 frequently lost her temper.
- 203 The Congregation accepted the accounts of SR 34’s abuse offered by the witnesses, but pointed out that SR 34 was “held in very high esteem by many of the former children”, which was evident in the great number who attended her funeral, and emphasised her “warm compassion for vulnerable people”.²⁷⁶

NL 4

- 204 NL 4 considered becoming a nun, like her sister, and twice she commenced her novitiate, but it did not work out. In the course of her career NL 4 worked in various care jobs, including several spells at Nazareth Lodge amounting to between seven and nine years in total.²⁷⁷ She received board and lodging and “a very small wage” of 10 shillings per week at first, and £2 later on from the Sisters. She stayed overnight in staff accommodation in the attic where the staff part was curtained off from the children’s, and later she lived in staff quarters.²⁷⁸
- 205 NL 4 worked to the instructions of the nuns. There were no staff meetings in which she could have contributed or learnt from colleagues. She was given no specific instructions on the appropriate use of physical chastisement. She played no role in the oversight of the children’s care, for example through participation in reviews, communicating with social workers, or having access to the children’s case files.²⁷⁹ NL 4’s roles were essentially practical: getting the children up, overseeing their chores, supervising mealtimes and helping in the laundry, kitchen and parlour.²⁸⁰ She said

274 SNB 098.

275 Day 95, p.66.

276 SNB 1901.

277 SNB 80006.

278 Day 113, p.10.

279 SNB 80007.

280 SNB 80008.

that on occasion, when the nuns were out collecting, she had to supervise 80 to 100 children on her own on trips to the Curzon Cinema in Ormeau Road. She was relieved that nothing untoward occurred.²⁸¹

- 206 She worked very long hours, eating lunch while the children were in school and covering the evening period when the sisters were in chapel. She and NL 5 were the only lay staff not to go home at weekends. On Thursdays she had the day off and was taken home by the handyman, returning by bus.²⁸² There were no set hours for residential childcare workers at this time, and when the first lay staff were appointed the Sisters seem to have expected the same dedication to the care of the children that they required of themselves.
- 207 According to HIA 36 NL 4 was seen as the member of staff who could deal with children who were getting out of hand.²⁸³ If so, other staff presumably came to rely on her, and in a large children's home with a proportion of children who may be disturbed and displaying difficult behaviour, the support of such a person may be valued by colleagues. However, the fact that staff needed to maintain control does not excuse physically abusive treatment of the children.
- 208 NL 4 was "the worst member of staff" according to HIA 110. When he wet the bed she threatened to put him in the washing machine. When cleaning was not undertaken to her satisfaction she slapped the boys' faces and legs. HIA 110 said that he feared NL 4, who never showed any love or affection.²⁸⁴ HIA 19 said that both NL 4 and NL 5 separately:
- "used to take us into the laundry and they would lift us and put us in the machine, and close the lids for a few minutes and say they were going to turn it on. They obviously never did, but it left you in fear and squealing, yelling and crying. It gave us nightmares."²⁸⁵
- 209 HIA 56 said that he saw NL 4 rub NL 174's face in the excrement when he soiled his bed one night, to make an example of him.²⁸⁶ He said:
- "Everyone was afraid of her and they cheered in the refectory when they saw her leave with her bags. However she returned about six months later dressed as a nun."²⁸⁷

281 SNB 80008.

282 Day 113, p.37.

283 Day 86, pp.43 to 46.

284 SNB 501-502.

285 SNB 408-409.

286 SNB 466-467.

287 SNB 467.

- 210 HIA 225 at first thought NL 4 nice, as she gave the boys sweets, but his opinion changed when he observed an incident in which DL 157 wet the bed; NL 4 shoved a flannel in his mouth and severely beat him in front of everyone in the dormitory.²⁸⁸ HIA 225 said that DL 157 had a bloody nose and a split lip, and the boys were told to say that he had been fighting. NL 4 denied beating him.²⁸⁹ HIA 225 said that NL 4 punched him on the head and the back, but that his father, who worked as a decorator at the home at that time knocked her over, and she left HIA 225 alone for a while.²⁹⁰
- 211 HIA 183 said that NL 4 “was not suitable for that job because of her vile temper”.²⁹¹ In an altercation she slapped him, he responded verbally and in consequence was denied a weekend trip which had been planned for three months.²⁹²
- 212 HIA 225 described how, when the boys were on holiday at Ballyhoran, they took lemonade bottles from the yard behind a shop to get the money back on them; when she found out, NL 4 “went mad” and later that night she hit the culprits with a small wooden bat as they lay in bed.²⁹³ HIA 147 said that both NL 4 and NL 5 used a PVC bat to hit boys on the thighs for absolutely nothing, and that they also used a stick, which they hid from the nuns. The two lay staff abused the boys while the nuns were absent, praying in the chapel.²⁹⁴ HIA 16 said that NL 4 used a rubber bat to hit him all over. As a result he had “plenty of bruises”, but they were untreated as they were not open wounds.²⁹⁵ NL 4 denied possessing a rubber bat and using it in the manner described.²⁹⁶
- 213 HIA 48 wrote:
- “[NL 4] was the civilian member of staff in charge of our group. She was left in charge of us whenever the nuns were at prayers or in care meetings. She was a wicked one. I used to wet the bed sometimes and she would grab your face and rub your nose in the soiled sheets. She

288 SNB 532.

289 Day 87, p.42.

290 SNB 532.

291 SNB 522.

292 Day 84, pp.55 to 57.

293 SNB 532-533.

294 SNB 32085, Day 87, p.76.

295 SNB 397.

296 SNB 80009.

would beat me as well with her hands or with whatever object she had to hand. She took a stick to my hands. You didn't have to do anything wrong to be beaten by [NL 4] “. ²⁹⁷

HIA 48 said that whenever her mother, brothers or social worker visited, a nun or NL 4 sat in, so she did not tell them about abuse.

“I didn't tell anyone about the abuse anyway because in those days nobody would have believed you. I just kept it all in. You daren't talk about it and even if you did, no one would believe you”. ²⁹⁸

214 HIA 21 was highly critical of NL 4:

“From the age of six years old I suffered systematic physical and psychological abuse by lay staff member [NL 4]. These abuses continued for the next five years. I lived in total fear of her; she dominated my existence.” ²⁹⁹

He alleged that she punched and kicked him, force-fed him, and degraded and humiliated him in front of other children:

“In most cases stew was the main diet, which I had a huge dislike for. I used to hide the stew in my trouser pockets and [NL 4] spotted the stain on my trousers and she asked me what I was doing. I told her I didn't like stew. Her response was to take the stew from my pockets and got me in to the middle of the dining room where she held me down on my knees and pulled my hair so that my mouth opened and she forced the food into my mouth. I was crying and terrified as the food went down my throat. She kicked and punched me and hence I swallowed the food. All the children in the room would have witness this. There were no sisters present during this episode as was the same on many other occasions she abused children. The impact of force-feeding [is that I] would limit my intake, that I became fussy about food ever since”. ³⁰⁰

215 He also said that when on holiday NL 4 stamped on his toe, such that he required hospital treatment. ³⁰¹ On one occasion he attempted suicide “to end the nightmare”. ³⁰² He saw her as cunning and opportunist, abusing boys while the nuns were attending church. On his last day he said to

297 SNB 861.

298 SNB 862.

299 SNB 631.

300 SNB 631-632.

301 SNB 632-633.

302 SNB 633.

her, “Thank God we are escaping from you”, whereupon she kicked and punched him.³⁰³

216 In responding to the allegations NL 4 said:

“I also received no guidance or instructions in relation to the discipline of children. When a child was unruly or misbehaved, I would have sometimes slapped them with my open hand. Normally I would have slapped them on their hands or legs. On occasion I may have slapped them on their bottom. This was a spontaneous thing. I did not use excessive force or cause any bruises or marks on a child’s body. I also used a ruler from time to time to slap a child, but this would normally have been one or two slaps, and again I never used excessive force.”³⁰⁴

217 NL 4 admitted shouting at children, but only smacked them, for example for climbing on windowsills. She felt she had to be strict, “making sure they didn’t get into any harm or mischief”.³⁰⁵ Despite these general admissions, in responding to the evidence put forward by witnesses, she said that most of the specific allegations were untrue. She denied striking any child.³⁰⁶ She also felt that in the course of giving evidence some witnesses had exaggerated or fabricated allegations to put her in the worst possible light.

218 NL 4 concluded:

“I generally have happy memories of my time working with children in Nazareth Lodge. The conditions were far from ideal, resources were limited and I had to work long hours for little remuneration, but I saw it more as a vocation than simple employment. As I said to one of the former residents whom I met, they were hard times for everyone and in particular the children. I am disappointed that a number of former residents have made these allegations against me but I do not believe I used excessive force or was unnecessarily cruel to the children that I helped to supervise.”³⁰⁷

219 NL 4 accepted that on occasion she spontaneously slapped children, which supported the persuasive accounts we received of her applying informal physical punishments.

303 SNB 635.

304 SNB 80007.

305 Day 113, p.52.

306 Day 84, p.60.

307 SNB 80018.

NL 5

220 NL 5 was 88 when she gave evidence. She never married, but after working for some time at Foxes Lodge and a nursery, she joined Nazareth Lodge in 1956 and stayed till the home finally closed in 1999. She said that her work was her whole life. SR 52 knew NL 5, and said she was good at settling in new children, “a gentle efficient lady who was generous with her time”.³⁰⁸

221 NL 5 was clear about her intention to bring up children properly:
“...we all worked hard to raise the children to have good morals and manners, and I was strict about that - without ever feeling it necessary to hit a child”.³⁰⁹

NL 5 was responsible for her own group for some time, and she was very particular about the way the group was run. Her group were called the ‘Dainties’ as they were always well dressed and well behaved. She said she taught them manners and kept them clean.³¹⁰

“I have fond and cherished memories of my life at Nazareth [Lodge] and many happy children went through our hands and have become responsible and decent adults”.³¹¹

Her group was also labelled the ‘Whippets’, a name given to them by DL 40 who made up the rhyme:

“7 little whippets, great and small, and [NL 5] owned them all”.³¹²

222 NL 5 worked from 6am to 10pm every day, sometimes staying until 11pm to lock up after a meeting, and she was resident in the attic at Nazareth Lodge. She worked closely with the sisters; when not working with her group she acted as receptionist, looking after visiting priests, or she made tea for the sisters. She said that the sisters relied on her.³¹³

223 Witnesses from her group said that “after a little bit of television” they were sent to bed earlier than the other groups while the sun was still shining, and that NL 5 was very strict.³¹⁴ She acknowledged that she was strict, and saw herself as a perfectionist, demanding high standards.³¹⁵ She was

308 SNB 1592.

309 SNB 80033.

310 SNB 80040.

311 SNB 80043.

312 SNB 80039.

313 Day 114, pp.70 and 71.

314 SNB 542 and SNB 585.

315 SNB 100009.

conscientious and controlling in her approach to childcare, keeping the children's clothes in a central cupboard, for example, rather than in their individual wardrobes, and making their beds for them while they were in school. HIA 259 said that the group lived in an old oratory which had a lovely sitting room with a lot of toys, but it was all show, and they only had access to the toys at the weekend.³¹⁶

224 The complaints about NL 5's treatment of children may relate to her earlier years in the home, as, according to SR 52, she moved to become a nursery assistant after her group was disbanded.³¹⁷

225 HIA 110 said that NL 5 was not as bad as NL 4, but she hit his knuckles or the back of his hand with the side of a wooden ruler if he made a mistake.³¹⁸ HIA 64 only came across her when she was supervising two groups, and he found her all right at times and at times a "terror" as she "thought nothing of thumping you".³¹⁹ HIA 19 said she hit boys on the knuckles with the edge of a ruler, and was not nice to children.³²⁰

226 When HIA 259 had a bad chest infection she would hit him a smack on the head for keeping her awake with his coughing. He also said that she had a nasty temper, having once stuck a fork in his arm when he did not know how to lay a table.³²¹ If things were not done to her satisfaction she:

"...would fly into a rage and punch you with her fists".³²²

227 HIA 104 said that NL 5 slapped him and kicked him severely for playing football when he should have been serving as an altar boy.³²³

228 Other witnesses were not critical of NL 5's care. HIA 36, for example, said:

"She ruled with a firm hand but she did not cause me any harm."³²⁴

HIA 21 considered NL 5 strict, as she slapped him across the face and lifted him off the ground by his sideburns,³²⁵ but he thought she had been under NL 4's influence³²⁶ which NL 4 denied.³²⁷

316 SNB 542.

317 Day 112, pp.143 and 144.

318 SNB 502, 60915.

319 SNB 479.

320 SNB 407.

321 SNB 543.

322 SNB 544.

323 SNB 493.

324 SNB 427.

325 SNB 636.

326 Day 84, p.107.

327 SNB 80031.

229 HIA 397 said that NL 5 was strict but not cruel; she acted like a mother figure, and he was positive about the way that she had helped to arrange foster care and adoption for him.³²⁸ He contrasted her with NL 19, who had a “rough and abrupt manner” and who stuck her stiletto heel on his hand.³²⁹ HIA 132 said that NL 5 physically abused him. She inspected boys’ underpants regularly and beat boys if they were not clean.³³⁰

230 All in all, nineteen witnesses mentioned NL 5 in their evidence, consisting of sixteen who approached the Inquiry and fifteen who gave evidence to the police, with twelve speaking to both the police and the Inquiry.

231 NL 5 said:

“I just feel that I have been stabbed in the back after all my hard work all my life. I thought I did a good job but I didn’t realise these things would come up. I can’t understand it and I never will”.³³¹

Despite ups and downs, she had a happy time there.

“I was very happy in Nazareth Lodge and...I wouldn’t have spent forty years in it if I wasn’t happy...”³³² I thought I gave my life for them and I left Nazareth Lodge that day we locked the front door, and I thought ‘Well, you’ve done a good [job].’ I said to the sisters, ‘Now we have nothing to worry about. We gave all we could to the children and we looked after them and we brought them up morally. We taught them manners and we thought we did a good job. We didn’t think things were going to be said about us like that because those things never, never happened.’³³³ I feel sick that I devoted my life to raising these boys in their time of need only many decades later to be accused of being someone I am not. I worked long hours on little or no salary to help raise many dozens of boys to be decent young men and I was proud of my role in doing that.”³³⁴

232 In both written and oral evidence NL 5 was firm in denying that she had ever hit any boys:

“I should state at the outset that I never smacked or assaulted any child in my care. I deny all these allegations...”³³⁵

328 SNB 226,229.

329 SNB 226.

330 SNB 585.

331 Day 114, p.169.

332 Day 114, p.171.

333 Day 114, pp.171 and 172.

334 SNB 80092.

335 SNB 80031, 80067.

She had warm memories of her work and recalled the round of applause she had received at a reunion of former Nazareth Lodge boys.³³⁶ It is our view that NL 5 did indeed care for the boys for whom she was responsible and she worked conscientiously for them to make sure that her group had the best conditions. It is also our view that the witnesses' allegations are correct, that she was strict, that she lost self-control on occasion, and that she had presumably simply wiped out the memories of the physical punishments she had meted out.

Staff Awareness of Abuse

- 233 Several witnesses have stated that other sisters were present when they were being beaten. SR 208, on the other hand, worked closely with SR 34 for a year, but said she witnessed no beatings:

“[SR 34] was headmistress of the School and could exercise control without any effort”.³³⁷

It is, however, hard to imagine that the abuse by SR 118 and SR 34 was unknown to the other sisters working at Nazareth Lodge at the time.

- 234 DL 269 thought that the nuns would have been unaware of the physical abuse perpetrated by NL 4 and NL 5, and this would be consistent with the observations that they hit boys in the absence of the sisters, when they were in church or spending time in their community.³³⁸ While we accept that the scale of the physical abuse inflicted by the two lay staff was possibly not known to the sisters, it is highly likely that the sisters would have had some awareness of the abuse by the lay staff, either through observing bruising, through any complaints which children made or from comments in casual conversation.

- 235 A number of witnesses had nothing critical to say about the sisters and expressed their appreciation of their dedication to caring for the children. HIA 56 for example said:

“The nuns were good and I have nothing bad to say about them. I was happy with them. They made sacrifices for us. I just suppose they didn't see what was going on. Even today I really miss them.”³³⁹

336 SNB 80034.

337 SNB 1863.

338 SNB 80071.

339 SNB 467.

236 On behalf of the Congregation, Sr Brenda McCall said:

“One of the main elements which has to be accepted is that the Sisters’ general policy of no physical punishment of children was not implemented. There are instances where children were the subject of a physical assault and this is not acceptable when the care of children is to be considered”.³⁴⁰

When asked whether nuns were breaching their vow of obedience in failing to follow the Order’s policy, she explained that the vow related to spiritual matters, not professional practice, and that the policy was understood but not written down. Sr Brenda acknowledged the Sisters’ shortcomings:

“Nuns are only human beings, you know. We are not plaster saints”.³⁴¹

In relation to SR 143’s investigations, she said:

“We are a family and maybe she was trying to protect sister [SR 62]”.³⁴²

Sr Brenda expressed the contrition of the Congregation:

“Not only do we offer an apology now at this stage, I think we need to turn to these people who we have hurt and...humbly ask their forgiveness for our trespasses”.³⁴³

237 Sisters and lay staff who became aware of the physical abuse being inflicted by their colleagues may have felt unable to take action for a number of reasons. They may have seen the physical assaults as no different from the beatings which some parents and some teachers administered. At the most basic level, some staff may have relied upon their more forceful colleagues to maintain order, and may have been thankful that they were prepared to take firm action. If so, these staff would not have wanted to challenge the status quo. Again, they may not have believed complainants. A more complex issue is that the Order was hierarchical, and if the person meting out the punishment were more senior by length of service or role, more junior sisters and lay staff may not have felt able to criticise and challenge; this was not done. Whatever the reasons, the key staff who physically abused the boys were all in post for many years, and they would have contributed substantially to the general atmosphere of the home, apparently unchallenged by their colleagues.

340 SNB 1503.

341 Day 119, p.82.

342 Day 119, p.39.

343 Day 119, p.74.

238 We appreciate that the work was difficult and demanding, and the sisters and lay staff whom we have criticised will have been expected to work long hours with very little time off. They will therefore have been subject to stress, which may have contributed to loss of self-control. However, there were sisters and lay staff who did not resort to physical abuse in order to maintain control. **The physical abuse by staff, particularly on the part of SR 118, SR 34, NL 4 and NL 5, was so extensive that it created a punitive atmosphere. It was contrary to good childcare practice, the policy of the Order and the statutory Regulations under which the home worked. Furthermore the Sisters failed to apply a system of staff selection, supervision and management to prevent or limit the abuse. This was a case of systemic abuse and systemic failure.**

Emotional Abuse

239 The atmosphere of fear generated by the punitive actions of the staff was emotionally abusive. At a time when the boys were meant to be enjoying care and stability in place of their earlier unhappy life experiences at home, to live in perpetual apprehension would have risked causing further damage and preventing them from growing up into confident young people who could make the most of their education.

240 In the earlier decades in particular, the very low ratio of staff to boys meant that few could be given adequate personal attention. The sisters did develop caring and constructive relationships with some boys, but others appear to have survived by keeping their heads down to avoid trouble. The lack of individual attention they received as children may well have affected some witnesses' ability to relate closely during their adult lives.

241 There were also some specific examples of emotional abuse. HIA 307, for example, found the name-calling by the nuns "terrifying":

"We were all called 'sons of whores', a term I never understood except that it was obviously bad and meant we were all very bad children".³⁴⁴

Name-calling was also criticised by HIA 152, as SR 34 called him "button mouth" or "pudding face". The sisters also upset him by their rudeness and the comments they made about his grandparents being poor; they brought him fruit but it was taken off him and he thought it was thrown away.³⁴⁵ His brother, HIA 19 said that NL 5 labelled them "Darby and

344 SNB 097.

345 SNB 515.

Joan". HIA 16 said that both NL 4 and NL 5 called him names, such as "buck teeth" and "rabbit teeth", and they encouraged the other boys to call him names too.³⁴⁶

- 242 HIA 183 said that one day he was unwell and was told to go to bed. No one checked on him or brought him food and he had nothing to eat. HIA 307 said that he was left alone in isolation when he was ill, and that nobody spoke to him for days.

"I felt profound despair, fear and loneliness".³⁴⁷

As mentioned above, the sisters also prevented his former foster mother from visiting and HIA 307 felt that this had had a serious emotional impact on him.³⁴⁸

- 243 HIA 247 saw NL 64, his brother, beaten for bedwetting. Seeing him beaten for something his brother could not control was the worst thing which HIA 247 experienced while he was at Nazareth Lodge.³⁴⁹ His brother was later fostered by NL 285, and his foster mother said that NL 64 used to wake up, pleading for someone to stop hitting him.³⁵⁰

- 244 HIA 423 said:

"There was a lot of physical and mental abuse. The nuns told us that we would go to hell or that we would burn in hell because we didn't have a mummy or a daddy and that they did not want us. We were constantly told that nobody wanted us and that we were dirty. I was always terrified of dying."³⁵¹

- 245 **The name-calling, denigration of parents, lack of care for sick boys, the emotional impact of physical punishment, and the lack of individual care in these examples all constitute emotional abuse as well as unacceptably poor childcare practice, and we consider them to have been systemic abuse.**

Sexual Abuse by Staff

- 246 None of the allegations of sexual abuse involved the nuns, though there were examples in the later years of inappropriate sexual behaviour on the part of some sisters. SR 62, for example, was seen walking in the

346 SNB 397.

347 SNB 098.

348 SNB 100.

349 Day 84, pp.121 to 123.

350 Day 84, pp.122 to 123.

351 SNB 741.

nude through the children’s dormitories, and SR 63 released her from her duties.³⁵² SR 18 was also alleged to have acted improperly, as referred to at Complaint L below. She ceased to work in childcare.

- 247 Seven allegations of sexual abuse were made, of which five related to gardener/handyman. HIA 159 said that in the 1950s a young man, NL 71, abused small boys.³⁵³ We know no more about this allegation and have to conclude that it cannot be seen as indicative of systemic abuse at that time.
- 248 HIA 56, who was at Nazareth Lodge from 1959 to 1968, said that he was sexually abused by NL 116, the maintenance man. HIA 56 pointed him out to SR 47 as the man who had done “dirty things” to him but he could not recall her reaction.³⁵⁴ NL 10, the gardener also abused him in his bedroom, which was the projector room above the main hall, accessed by a stone staircase.³⁵⁵
- 249 In written evidence HIA 147 wrote that NL 10, the gardener took him into the toilets near the concert hall to masturbate him.³⁵⁶ In oral evidence he gave a graphic description of the way that the gardener also buggered him. He felt that he would have survived life at Nazareth Lodge if it had not been for the sexual abuse he suffered, but that this had ruined his life and his children’s lives, making Nazareth Lodge a “hell home”.³⁵⁷
- 250 HIA 36 said that he and another resident HIA 56 were out of bounds when apprehended by the caretaker, who took them to the boiler house, where he made them strip as it was very hot, and fondled them. This happened on three occasions, and once a nun called for them but did not go down the steps in the boiler house and so was unaware of the abuse.³⁵⁸
- 251 HIA 10 alleged that NL 14, the groundsman (who was married to a member of the care staff) had wandering hands and had pretended to tickle her, but had groped her.³⁵⁹ This allegation was denied by NL 14, who pointed out that he was never employed at the home, though he had helped coach the boys in football as a volunteer.³⁶⁰ Her sister

352 Day 112, pp.202 and 205.

353 SNB 594.

354 SNB 466.

355 SNB 465-466.

356 SNB 32084.

357 Day 87, pp.87 to 88.

358 SNB 426, Day 86, pp.21 to 25.

359 SNB 749.

360 SNB 80099.

- alleged that NL 151, another groundsman, had interfered with her on the bus.³⁶¹
- 252 HIA 154 said that a caretaker, HIA 135 abused him, starting with giving him sweets, moving on to mutual touching and then anal rape. HIA 154 was under the impression that the caretaker was aware of what Fr Brendan Smyth was doing.³⁶²
- 253 According to HIA 41 a temporary female member of staff from South Africa lay on the floor, undid her belt and trousers, and asked him to put his hand down her trousers; he found this humiliating and declined to cooperate.³⁶³ HIA 210 said that he was sexually abused twice by NL 67, the Irish Dancing teacher, who fondled him while cleaning HIA 210 after he had soiled himself, and when staying in the teacher's house. HIA 210 said that he told SR 62 that he wanted to give up dancing, and that she punched him on the nose, making it bleed.³⁶⁴
- 254 Fr Steele, who was chaplain to Nazareth Lodge from 1988 to 1990, was convicted of sexual offences against children between 1969 and 1983, but he later admitted further offences and it is not known if any of his offending was against children at the home.³⁶⁵
- 255 HIA 56 and HIA 210 both reported the abuse they suffered, and it is clear that SR 62 was not prepared to believe HIA 210. The refusal to give credence to such allegations or to take action was in keeping with the general disbelief at that time that adults would commit such offences. If action had been taken on the first occasion it might have dissuaded others from abusing the children.
- 256 Otherwise, the Sisters may well have been unaware of the other instances of sexual abuse reported by witnesses. In view of the five instances in which they were involved, it could be argued that the Sisters should have supervised the gardener/ handymen more closely, but there is no reason why they should have suspected them of sexual abuse. Clearly SR 47 should have taken HIA 56's complaint seriously, but we have insufficient information to judge what transpired. We do not, therefore, consider that the Sisters were responsible for systemic abuse in failing to identify the risks posed by the male staff.

361 SNB 749.

362 SNB 883.

363 SNB 442.

364 SNB 601.

365 SNB 9145-9146.

Fr Brendan Smyth

257 Fr Brendan Smyth was a member of the Norbertine Order and he travelled widely, abusing many children. He was eventually convicted of child abuse and he died in prison. The Order accepts that Fr Brendan Smyth visited Nazareth Lodge, his first contact being a successful week-long religious retreat which he provided for the Sisters in January 1976, when he was accommodated in a room near the parlour.³⁶⁶ Fr Brendan Smyth is the subject of a separate chapter of this report, where the systemic failures concerning his suitability and supervision are addressed. However, it should be noted that while visiting Nazareth Lodge he assaulted both boys and girls, and there are indications in the evidence that SR 46 and Mother Superior had some awareness of the threat he posed.

Physical Abuse by Older Boys

- 258 Several witnesses spoke of physical abuse by older boys. In the earlier decades of Nazareth Lodge, boys remained in the home until they were of working age. The problem was exacerbated because the nuns left the older boys in charge while they worshipped as a community in the evening. Since the nuns relied on the older boys to act as “class boys” or “charge boys”, as they were known, they tended to accept their accounts of incidents, and the younger boys therefore had no means of seeking protection or redress.³⁶⁷ The following examples all indicate the feeling of helplessness which the witnesses experienced in the face of bullying.
- 259 HIA 64 said that on wet Saturdays the charge hands picked out boys to fight each other, mismatching the opponents, until one was beaten or blood was drawn, and so he had to learn to stand up for himself.³⁶⁸
- 260 HIA 204 who was at Nazareth Lodge from 1929 to 1936 said that older boys bullied him and manipulated him to confess to a priest that he had broken a statue of Our Lady, which had in fact been broken by an older boy. He told his mother about the abuse, but she did nothing as she feared that the nuns might discharge him from the home. He respected his mother and so did not tell her about sexual abuse he had also suffered.³⁶⁹

366 SNB 1972.

367 SNB 464.

368 SNB 479.

369 Day 82, pp.8 to 9 and 14 to 15.

- 261 HIA 99 said that older boys threatened to hit them with hurley sticks at night. He thinks this was so that the younger boys would cover their heads with blankets so that they could not see the sexual abuse committed by the older boys. HIA 24 endorsed this view.³⁷⁰
- 262 HIA 427 said that the nuns had older boys as pets, and these pets pulled their hair, hit them against the wall or hit them on the head. They made him so afraid that he soiled himself and they made him eat his faeces. He felt that his hands were tied and no one was there to help him.³⁷¹
- 263 HIA 33 said that SR 118 nominated “class boys”, who were boys of the same age as HIA 33, but were put in charge in the sisters’ absence. They had the authority to punish boys by making them kneel by their beds or in the corridor with their hands above their heads, for example for talking at night in the dormitory or for lying in bed without crossed arms. If the class boys reported misbehaviour to SR 118, she always accepted their word, and boys brought in front of her were beaten with a large belt.³⁷²
- 264 HIA 307 said he was intimidated, belted and bullied by older boys. The nuns knew, but he thought that they might have been scared of the bigger boys. Boys who complained were told:
- “That didn’t happen and if you say that again I’ll box your ears’. One of the worst parts of life was the feeling of helplessness. We had no one to turn to”.³⁷³
- 265 HIA 87 said that there was nobody to whom he could complain. If he told the priest in confession, the priest then told the nuns, and they told the boys, and he was beaten. He alleged in particular that HIA 192 was “an evil boy” and regularly hit him; he woke up with blood on his pillow. He said that he:
- “cannot really blame the other boys because they did not know any better; I can only blame the people that were administering the rules and regulations”.³⁷⁴
- 266 When Rubane was opened in 1953 and boys from Nazareth Lodge were transferred there at the age of eleven, the amount of bullying suddenly dropped, and although there were some instances in subsequent decades, bullying does not seem to have been such a major problem thereafter.

370 SNB 279, 418.

371 SNB 564.

372 SNB 1640-1641.

373 SNB 099.

374 SNB 258.

267 It is unsurprising that there was bullying within a large group of boys, many of whom had come from homes where they had witnessed or experienced violence as a way of dealing with relationship difficulties and asserting power. It was for the Sisters to prevent or at least reduce the bullying and create an atmosphere in which the boys were encouraged to befriend and support each other instead. Since there was only one sister to each group of thirty boys in the early years, this was almost to ask the impossible. HIA 368 said:

“There was a lot of fighting between the boys, so we had to be able to look after ourselves.”³⁷⁵

268 However it was the Order which had offered to take on this work and to continue to run the home despite the abysmal staffing levels. Their solution in the early decades of selecting older boys to act as charge boys or class boys was understandable if the community was to enjoy a brief respite each day to come together, to worship and, no doubt, to benefit from the support and solidarity of the group. **However, it was the use of charge boys which predictably led to the most serious bullying. To rely on the older boys to control the younger ones in this way was a systemic failing.**

269 There was little evidence of peer abuse after girls were admitted. HIA 363, who was admitted to Nazareth Lodge in 1977, said that on her first night in the home two older girls bullied her in the girls’ bathroom to make her curse, banging her head off the sink, until she gave in and said the ‘F’ word.³⁷⁶

Sexual Abuse by Other Boys

270 In the descriptions of physical abuse by older boys above, there are general references to sexual abuse. Eleven witnesses alleged sexual abuse by peers. Of these, six were in Nazareth Lodge before Rubane was opened, when there were numbers of older boys in the home. Four were in Nazareth Lodge in the 1960s, when presumably there were still some older boys who had not been transferred to Rubane. No other witnesses who were boys at Nazareth Lodge alleged sexual abuse by peers from the 1970s onwards, perhaps because nearly all those aged over 11 had been moved to Rubane. One girl made an allegation, probably relating to the 1980s.

375 SNB 657.

376 CLO 1003.

- 271 It was on 3 April 1929 that HIA 204 was admitted and placed in the nursery unit, prior to moving to a unit for older boys run by SR 118. While the nuns were dining or praying the senior boys were in “full control”. The nuns did not enter the bathroom and so the senior boys took advantage of the smaller boys, making them “perform impure acts”.³⁷⁷
- 272 In the 1930s, when HIA 408 was aged six or seven, NL 80 took him to the sewing room on the top floor and made him masturbate him. HIA 408 had nightmares about it and he said that it still upset him. A few weeks later NL 80 stripped and beat him in the toilets. HIA 408 told his brother NL 142, who was in the Merchant Navy, about the abuse, and it stopped.
- 273 HIA 24 said that in the 1940s older boys sexually abused younger boys in the dormitories at night, including NL 46 and NL 39. He was made to masturbate two older boys but he refused to participate in oral sex.³⁷⁸
- 274 HIA 99 was sexually abused by an older boy when he wet the bed. He said that the older boy terrified him.³⁷⁹ HIA 89 said that when he was aged about nine, two older boys, NL 46 and NL 47 who were aged fourteen or fifteen, abused him. He said that he screamed and managed to run away, but afterwards they bullied, slapped and punched him and made his life hell, because he had not complied sexually.³⁸⁰
- 275 HIA 214 was made to masturbate older boys in the dormitory at night and he said he was bugged on two or three occasions by an older boy, which made him frightened to go to the toilet at night, such that he wet the bed.³⁸¹
- 276 HIA 307 said that he suffered sexual abuse many times by older boys in the bathroom; it consisted of fondling and was not penetrative, but it groomed and prepared him for the abuse he later suffered in Australia. When lining up for the baths, the older boys helped the younger boys in and out, and in the process they grabbed their penises or stuck fingers up the younger boys’ backsides in a manner that was “kind of jocular”. There was a supervising sister, but the sisters were frightened of the older boys, and they did not intervene.³⁸² He felt that the nuns were negligent in not doing anything about abuse by older boys.³⁸³

377 SNB 305, Day 82, p.7.

378 SNB 418.

379 Day 82, p.69.

380 Day 83, p.17.

381 SNB 309.

382 Day 84, pp.15 and 16.

383 Day 84, p.17.

- 277 HIA 36 said that HIA 147 tried to abuse him sexually in a large dog kennel that had been used to keep Alsatians, but he threatened to tell his mother and the other boy, who denied the incident, desisted.³⁸⁴ HIA 56 said that he was sexually abused by two older boys under a table on the stage in the hall and in the henhouses; indeed the two boys fought over which should abuse him.³⁸⁵
- 278 HIA 19 said that he was sexually assaulted by two charge boys, that NL 5 witnessed one occasion, and that he reported the incident to SR 47, who brushed it off and would not believe him, as she knew that he did not like the charge boys.³⁸⁶ HIA 355 had recollections that when he was a four-year-old someone, probably an older boy, lay on top of him and ejaculated on three occasions, but did not penetrate him.³⁸⁷
- 279 As with the allegations of physical abuse, some sexual experimentation and some exploitation of younger boys is not surprising. Some of the alleged abusers were named by more than one witness and there is no reason to doubt their evidence. However, it was for the Sisters to provide adequate supervision and reduce the opportunities for abuse, and there were clearly times when supervision by the sisters was non-existent. They should have anticipated that such abuse was likely and arranged for supervision throughout the evening and early night-time when the charge boys were left in control.
- 280 In leaving the care and control of the younger boys to the older charge hands, the opportunities for sexual abuse were increased, and this amounted to systemic abuse.
- 281 HIA 363 described an incident in which a boy invited her to his den and tried to involve her in oral sex. She told his brother, who hit him. The boy got a bread knife and slashed HIA 363's hand, which had to be stitched at Belfast City Hospital.³⁸⁸
- 282 Jim Tracey said that in his eight years working at Nazareth Lodge from 1984 to 1992 he never witnessed abuse by an adult but he was aware of peer abuse, both physical and sexual:

“...and these cases were duly and effectively managed under child

384 Day 86, pp.29 and 30.

385 SNB 466.

386 SNB 406-407,409.

387 SNB 368.

388 CLO 1006.

protection procedures and managed by the Child Case Conference process, chaired by the statutory children's services".³⁸⁹

Inspections

283 Up to 1951 Nazareth Lodge was inspected annually as an industrial school by Inspectors from the Ministry of Home Affairs. A number of inspection reports have survived from this period, generally indicating approval for the quality of care offered.³⁹⁰ From 1951 Nazareth Lodge was registered as a children's home, and it seems that thereafter it was subjected to a lighter touch, with visits, rather than inspections, undertaken by inspectors such as Miss Forrest.³⁹¹

284 Nonetheless Miss Forrest was perceptive and did not hold back from sharp criticisms. She visited on 9 January 1954. Following her earlier concerns, the babies and toddlers were now looked after better, and the older boys had moved to Rubane. Miss Forrest felt that it was the school-age boys who had lost out as a result.

"We saw little 5 and 6 year-olds sitting in a row with bare legs and feet waiting to get washed before supper. A slightly larger child stood facing them, hissing at them to 'stay quiet'. Some of this stillness and quietness was probably for the benefit of the visitors, but what an unnatural state of affairs! About half a dozen of these 'little shrimps' were making up the beds with the help of the one nun in charge. Two unfortunates who had soiled their pants were standing dressed in underpants only, on the tiled floor of the bathroom, waiting to be cleaned up and looking very miserable. What is needed here is really fundamental reorganisation so that these little creatures can have some individual loving care instead of being dragooned."³⁹²

285 The Hughes Inquiry was critical that the only SWAG report extant for Nazareth Lodge for the period 1973 to 1983 related to an inspection carried out in 1983 which was after the abuse in Kincora came to light. It accepted that Social Work Advisers had visited the home on four occasions within that ten year period but found the level of inspection to be unsatisfactory. The Department of Health has acknowledged that its predecessor bodies failed in this respect. **We agree with the conclusion of the Hughes**

389 SNB 2201.

390 SNB 1963, 13649, 13708.

391 Day 117, p. 29.

392 SNB 16116.

Inquiry and consider the lack of inspection of Nazareth Lodge in that period amounted to a systemic failing by SWAG to ensure the home was meeting statutory regulations and providing proper care.

- 286 Victor McElfratrick was an inspector with the Social Work Advisory Group when he and Norman Chambers conducted an inspection of Nazareth Lodge from 10 to 12 October 1983. At this time the home was registered for 58 children, but it was accepted that it was unlikely that the number would exceed 40, and one of the four units was closed.³⁹³ It was noteworthy that 25 of the 36 children then in the home were members of sibling groups and with one exception the families had been kept together in the same groups.³⁹⁴
- 287 There was thought to be much room for improvement, with poor staffing levels, rigid management, petty rules, lack of individual work with children, and a preoccupation with cleanliness.³⁹⁵ There was no record of important events, and therefore no details of monthly statutory visits.³⁹⁶ Only one sister was qualified in residential childcare, and hers was the only unit where the running of the group could be considered “residential social work”, involving primary workers for the children and letting the lay staff read the case files.³⁹⁷ It was recommended that staff should be seconded for Certificate in Social Services or Certificate of Qualification in Social Work courses.³⁹⁸ The management style of the home was autocratic; three sisters were each in charge of a unit and they tended not to consult with their lay staff, who had little opportunity to influence practice, which limited their job satisfaction.³⁹⁹ All the care staff were female, and the inspectors felt that the appointment of men as male role models would help.⁴⁰⁰ The staff did not eat with the children as they found the food (which was prepared in a central kitchen) unappetising. The inspectors found this practice institutional and recommended changes.⁴⁰¹

393 SNB 50494.

394 SNB 50508.

395 SNB 9148.

396 SNB 9149, 50516.

397 SNB 9148.

398 SNB 50507.

399 SNB 50503.

400 SNB 50506.

401 SNB 50513, 50514.

- 288 There are two versions of this report. The first is what Victor McElfrick referred to as an “aide memoire”, though it reads like a draft report.⁴⁰² The full report, which contained nineteen recommendations, was signed by Norman Chambers, who had discussed the contents of the report with Victor McElfrick on 17 or 18 October. It contained a number of criticisms, such as the undue amount of staff time spent on practical tasks, the lack of male staff, the gulf between the sisters and the lay staff, the small number of parents visiting and the practice of sisters eating separately from the children.⁴⁰³
- 289 There are, however, several discrepancies between the two versions, with the second version generally toning down or omitting the sharper criticisms of the first. An observation that the nuns’ religious duties were “intrusive” and “paramount”, for example, was omitted, and the description of the emphasis on chores in one of the groups as “excessive if not obsessional” was toned down.⁴⁰⁴ All but one of the lay staff were resident and they worked between 56 and 70 hours a week, often doing split shifts, with poor living conditions and low pay.⁴⁰⁵ By this time residential childcare workers in the statutory sector had much improved conditions and pay. The lack of individual care and the absence of independence training for adolescents were also noted.⁴⁰⁶ Of the three sisters responsible for the groups, one was seen as competent and social work trained and “this was evident in her approach to the residential task”; one was newly arrived; and one “had little understanding of residential social work and her ideas are largely irrelevant to the statement of aims and objectives”.⁴⁰⁷
- 290 Victor McElfrick could not explain the discrepancies, nor how the Sisters were to become aware of the Inspectors’ concerns if they only received the gentler revised version.⁴⁰⁸ Norman Chambers said that lengthy lists of recommendations could be overwhelming, so that his practice was to focus on critical issues and seek to encourage good practice.⁴⁰⁹ His opinion, however, was that:

402 SNB 14316-14322.

403 SNB 50492-50521.

404 SNB 14317.

405 SNB 14321.

406 SNB 14322.

407 SNB 14322.

408 Day 111, pp.76 to 78.

409 Day 117, p.89.

“Nazareth Lodge appeared to be caught in a time-warp of institutional practice, while at the same time some other voluntary children’s homes were actively promoting the professionalisation of residential child care, bringing it more into line with field social work standards of practice.”⁴¹⁰

Dr Hilary Harrison said that following discussion the aide memoire “may have been justly modified”.⁴¹¹

291 Retrospectively Victor McElfatrick thought that the report should perhaps have been more critical of the lack of a log, which prevented any assessment of the Sisters’ compliance with the requirement for external monthly visits. He also felt that the inspectors should have been more specific in ensuring that volunteers were cleared by the Board responsible for a child who was being visited.⁴¹² Norman Chambers felt that the monthly visiting requirements should also have been clarified.⁴¹³

292 The inspectors:

“did not come across any harsh treatment of the children or unacceptable methods of discipline.”⁴¹⁴

This observation was significant in view of the dispute about the investigation of complaints made in the following years by children who had been in Nazareth Lodge at this time, (see the next section of this chapter). However, they did suggest that the home would have to make changes if it were to meet the needs of adolescents with difficult patterns of behaviour, who were likely to be their clientele in future.⁴¹⁵

293 The normal practice was for a letter to be sent to the head of home, to which SR 143 responded,⁴¹⁶ followed up by a meeting with the inspector. However, short of deregistration SWAG had no sanctions which it could apply to enforce its recommendations.⁴¹⁷

294 Felicity Beagon was an inspector from 1987 to 1994, and she inspected Nazareth Lodge on five occasions from 1988 to 1992, on each occasion considering the purpose of the home, the resident group, the staff, the

410 SNB 9159.

411 Day 118, p.19.

412 SNB 9149.

413 SNB 9157.

414 SNB 9148.

415 SNB 50521.

416 SNB 50406-50411.

417 Day 111, p.105.

premises, compliance with regulations, monitoring arrangements, the complaints procedure and the home's financial position.⁴¹⁸ She inspected the records, such as the menus, the fire drills book and the punishment book, as well as meeting the children informally.⁴¹⁹

295 She found the home to be run satisfactorily with a good standard of care, despite a high staff turnover. The per capita rate agreed with the Eastern Health and Social Services Board was raised from £287 to £450 to increase staffing levels and salaries for the secondment of staff to take Certificate in Social Services courses.⁴²⁰

296 Felicity Beagon was concerned about the institutional nature of the premises and she recommended that the three groups should be located in smaller units in the community. She never received any complaints from children or staff.⁴²¹

297 Marion Reynolds inspected Nazareth Lodge between 4 and 11 January 1993, taking 58 hours over the inspection.⁴²² By this time the three units within Nazareth Lodge were looked on as separate homes. Marion Reynolds had worked primarily with the Eastern Board where there had been a range of small homes and she therefore found the large homes institutional, but attempts had been made to personalise care. She said:

“...the Sisters had made considerable effort to personalise the homes, to make them domestic in nature, and they had done that as much as they could, given the structure of the building and the premises that they had, but I felt that because of where policy was going, these homes were in transition. They had been very large. They were reducing in size and to me it was inevitable at some stage in the future these homes would no longer have a function, but in the meantime they should operate in a way which was as domestic as they could make them...”⁴²³

298 Marion Reynolds noted a number of key issues:

- A plan to have four specialist units
- A plan for each unit to have intake function

418 SNB 9001.

419 SNB 9002.

420 SNB 9002.

421 SNB 9003.

422 SNB 9036.

423 Day 114, p.12.

- Doubts about admitting younger children short-term
- The inadequacy of staffing, without leeway for problems and to cover summer holiday
- Central lighting control
- Variability in the log
- Differences in delegated powers
- Unrecorded complaints
- Access to phones
- Admission criteria
- Sleeping arrangements concerning a known abuser sharing a bedroom with an abused child
- The lack of night staff for abused children
- The need for Team Leaders to have time to manage.

299 Although it was said that Castle Priory staffing levels had been adopted, her main concerns were with aspects of the staffing where she felt that cover was too thin to deal with crises, summer holidays and night-time cover without undue reliance on the sisters. Staffing was not inadequate, but was not ideal.⁴²⁴

300 In oral evidence, Marion Reynolds spoke about the differing personalities of the three sisters who managed the units; one of the problems in the structure was that other staff felt that there was a gap between the sisters and themselves and that they had too little delegated authority.⁴²⁵ Her recommendations caused concern at the Nazareth Lodge Management Committee in view of the cost of the additional staffing required.⁴²⁶

301 After the 1994 inspection it was said of Nazareth Lodge:

“It works on a one-to-one basis, trying to nurture and stretch children to the best of their ability. Nazareth Lodge provides high standards of physical and emotional care for children - it emphasises treating children as individuals. It delivers a high level of primary care and work in social and personal developments despite the adverse structure and layout of the building.”⁴²⁷

424 Day 114, pp.53 to 54, SNB 15330-15331.

425 Day 114, pp.44 to 45.

426 SNB 9041.

427 SNB 13877.

- 302 As the conclusion of a formal inspection, this was high praise, and it is significant that very few allegations have been made to the Inquiry about this period. Although the buildings were still far from ideal, the quality of care appears to have been good.
- 303 In October or November 1995 Judith Chaddock conducted a brief inspection of Nazareth Lodge, including an examination of the monitoring system and the operation of the complaints procedure. The framework for this report consisted of a number of children’s rights, which were considered in turn.⁴²⁸ None of the Boards appear to have had concerns about the home at this time.⁴²⁹

Investigation of Complaints

- 304 It is significant that we have information concerning only one complaint from the records of Nazareth Lodge’s earlier decades, two from the 1970s, and ten in the decade from 1984 to 1995, a period when good standards of care had been established. While the grounds for some of the complaints verged on the trivial, some were important, and two investigations raised points of principle. They are addressed below in date order.

Complaint A

- 305 In May 1927 NL 161 was hit with a stick (his version) or a strap (the Mother Superior’s version) for bedwetting. A medical certificate indicated that his hands were swollen and there were marks on his thighs consistent with a beating with a strap. The police concluded that there was no doubt that NL 161 had been severely beaten but the evidence was insufficient to support a prosecution for cruelty. An inspector from the Ministry of Home Affairs visited Nazareth Lodge and interviewed the boy, who was in hospital. He “pointed out with some care” that it was an “acknowledged fact” that punishment was ineffective as a way of dealing with bedwetting, but it appeared to be the sisters’ normal response. NL 161 also soiled, which the inspector felt was perhaps deliberate.⁴³⁰

Complaint B

- 306 In June 1976 NL 57, who was the sister of HIA 41, told her social worker NL 187 that SR 62 had hit her, but NL 187 did not believe her, as she

428 SNB 13816.

429 SNB 9137.

430 SNB 13659-13668.

thought that NL 57 and SR 62 had a good relationship. NL 187 recorded the allegation and informed her senior.⁴³¹ NL 57 stayed at Nazareth Lodge for a further five years, but it was only in 1990 that she complained to the police that SR 62 had punched her in the mouth and eye. The police investigated, and SR 62 denied hitting NL 57.⁴³²

Complaint C

- 307 While on a work placement at Nazareth Lodge in 1984 NL 162 raised three complaints. First, she witnessed a residential social worker NL 163 putting soap into the mouth of NL 157 for swearing, which made him retch and vomit. NL 162 reported this to the Eastern Board who, together with SWAG, interviewed the boy. SR 143 conducted an internal investigation and the residential social worker said she had acted “playfully”, and that SR 52 had rubbed shampoo on NL 157’s mouth for the same reason. Both staff were reprimanded and the incident was reported to the Eastern Board and deemed closed.⁴³³
- 308 Secondly, NL 162 said that children who had misbehaved were placed in a cloakroom infested with cockroaches. The SWAG inspector found that the room was light and airy and the infestation had been treated, though there was a sitting room which was more suited to time out.⁴³⁴
- 309 Thirdly, NL 162 reported that a major retailer passed on unsold food to the home. Upon investigation, this was considered acceptable.⁴³⁵

Complaint D

- 310 HIA 210 was fostered on leaving Nazareth Lodge on 9 August 1981 after eight years in the home. NL 190 was his social worker from 1978 to 1982, which covered the greater part of the period to which his allegations referred, but she said she had no recollection of the issues of which he complained at the time, although HIA 210 said that he had told her that SR 62 had hit him with a stick.⁴³⁶ NL 180 then took over as HIA 210’s social worker.⁴³⁷ While in foster care he suffered severe nightmares which awoke his foster carers, and he disclosed mistreatment at Nazareth Lodge to his foster carers about November 1984.⁴³⁸

431 SNB 7180.

432 SNB 62431, 62455-62474.

433 SNB 9160-9161.

434 SNB 9161.

435 SNB 7372, 9142, 9162, 18977-19012.

436 SNB 6069-6071.

437 SNB 6083-6085.

438 SNB 42231.

311 NL 180 interviewed HIA 210, first on his own and then with his senior social worker (NL 191) on 21 February 1985.⁴³⁹ HIA 210 alleged that he had been hit by SR 62 with a vacuum cleaner hose and with a stick; he had been locked in a cupboard and in a bathroom overnight, and he had been given a cold bath for complaining to a social worker.⁴⁴⁰ It was felt that the substance of his complaints could have explained his nightmares. On 3 April 1985, HIA 210's brother was interviewed; he had some difficulties remembering, but while he did not corroborate some of HIA 210's complaints, his recollections were not discrepant.⁴⁴¹ The events in question were already between four and twelve years earlier.

312 NL 180 believed there was "some substance" in the allegations.

"When [HIA 210] was telling the actual incidents, ...he seemed to relive part of them. He was also, I think, generally an honest child. He wasn't one that could create elaborate deceptions".⁴⁴²

From this point responsibility for investigation moved up the line from the social worker to the senior staff.⁴⁴³

313 The senior social worker's report was dated 11 April 1985.⁴⁴⁴ She too believed the allegations credible and reported the allegations to NL 223, Principal Social Worker.⁴⁴⁵ He in turn wrote to Bob Bunting, Assistant Director, on 30 April 1985, noting that other Boards or units might be involved.⁴⁴⁶ By this time SR 62 and NL 66, against whom HIA 210 had made allegations, had both left Nazareth Lodge, so that there appeared to be no immediate risk to children.⁴⁴⁷

314 NL 223 and the senior social worker interviewed HIA 210 on 21 June 1985. After consultations involving Bob Bunting, the Director of Social Services and the Chief Social Work Adviser, the Director asked NL 223 to write to SR 143, then Mother Superior of Nazareth Lodge, which he did on 27 June 1985, detailing eight specific complaints and suggesting that SR 143 and he should speak to two members of staff who knew HIA 210, NL 146 and NL 147 (one of whom had left by this

439 SNB 6086-6091.

440 SNB 6081.

441 SNB 6081.

442 Day 104, p.53.

443 SNB 6085.

444 SNB 6089.

445 SNB 6087.

446 SNB 6091.

447 SNB 6084-6085, 7015.

time) about their time in the unit.⁴⁴⁸ NL 223 interviewed them, and while their memories did not corroborate HIA 210's allegations, he felt that the allegations were credible and warranted fuller investigation.⁴⁴⁹

- 315 NL 223 felt that the Department should have investigated the complaints, as he had:

“no power to interview staff, access to Nazareth House records or for that matter interview children from other Boards or Districts”,⁴⁵⁰

and on 18 February 1986 he wrote to Bob Bunting, stating:

“I honestly believe that I can take this matter no further as I do not feel that I have the authority to deal with any of the issues that this incident now raises and I would ask to be freed from any further involvement in this issue until matters of accountability have been clarified.”⁴⁵¹

Perhaps because of pressure of work, there was no response to this letter until 30 April 1986.⁴⁵²

- 316 The Department suggested at one point that some of the complaints could have been seen as relating to child protection, such that the police should have been involved. Child protection procedures had been drawn up first in 1972 and revised at intervals, though it was not until 1991 following the publication by the DHSS of *Co-operating to Protect Children* in 1989⁴⁵³ that a Joint Protocol was agreed. Under the procedures in force in 1985, police were to be notified of abuse, and a case conference was to be held involving the police, who were to notify the Board of any intended action. It was felt at this time that the evidence was not strong enough to warrant involving the police.⁴⁵⁴ The Department's recommendation to involve the police was therefore not immediately followed up. When offered support in approaching the police in February 1987 HIA 210 declined.⁴⁵⁵
- 317 Indeed, one of the contextual problems for this Inquiry was that, following a consultation paper in October 1983, the Department had issued a draft Complaints Procedure in August 1984 and a final version on 30 April 1985. This was published as DHSS Circular HSS (CC) 2/85 and

448 SNB 6079-6080.

449 SNB 7016.

450 SNB 7019.

451 SNB 7028, 7032-7033.

452 SNB 6924-6925.

453 SNB 9168, 9286-9293.

454 SNB 7480.

455 SNB 7017.

it was applied in the voluntary homes (with one exception) from May 1985. However, the trade union NIPSA declined to co-operate in its implementation in the statutory sector without safeguards for residential childcare staff.⁴⁵⁶ Following widespread consultations and negotiations, a model procedure drafted by the Northern Board was eventually agreed for use throughout the province. The Hughes Report commented on the necessity for a Complaints Procedure⁴⁵⁷ but in the event it was 1991 before the Procedure was fully implemented, possibly delayed by the time required to train staff.⁴⁵⁸ The draft Complaints Procedure did not, in any case, specify the way that investigations were to be carried out, leaving it to the Boards to decide on the processes which suited them best, while reflecting a number of key points of principle which had been laid down.⁴⁵⁹ It was, for example, up to Directors of Social Services and heads of voluntary bodies to decide whether to involve the police in the event of allegations of criminal activity. Where allegations related to voluntary homes, the heads of the agencies and Directors of Social Services were expected to collaborate.⁴⁶⁰

Complaint E

- 318 While the enquiries concerning HIA 210 were proceeding, NHB 136 a social worker working for the North and West Belfast Social Services, had some concerns about Nazareth Lodge, but discussion with SR 52 satisfied her. However, in her work with an 18-year-old former resident, NL 145, who had been in Nazareth Lodge from 1979 to 1985, she learnt of physical abuse perpetrated by SR 62, who had retired from childcare by this time.⁴⁶¹ Colleagues who had visited the girl when she was resident had been unaware of the abuse, though NL 145 insisted that she had tried to tell social workers, but no one had taken her seriously.⁴⁶²
- 319 Following preliminary investigation by the social worker, (as the complainant was only disclosing by stages), NHB 136 reported to NL 223, who on 26 November 1985 informed Bob Bunting and Robert Moore, the Director of Social Services in the Eastern Health and Social Services Board, who took the matter up with Mr P.J. Armstrong, Chief Social Work Adviser for

456 SNB 9043.

457 SNB 7037-7046.

458 SNB 7019.

459 SNB 7039, 9043.

460 SNB 9044.

461 SNB 6267.

462 SNB 6266, 7030.

the Department of Health and Social Services. The Department argued that it was for the Board to investigate, in view of their responsibility for the girl's welfare. The Board argued that SWAG was responsible as the allegations could have amounted to general malpractice and physical assault. Dr McCoy, Senior Social Work Advisor decided that there were insufficient grounds to investigate.⁴⁶³ In any case, formal inspections of Nazareth Lodge had taken place in October 1983 and January 1986 and they had found no "adverse comment on the harshness of the regime".⁴⁶⁴

Complaint F

- 320 HIA 210 had referred to NL 97, who was in the care of the Northern Board, and the Director of Social Services of the Eastern Board therefore wrote in June 1985 and arranged for NL 223 to interview him.⁴⁶⁵ NL 97 corroborated the allegations made by HIA 210 and NL 145, saying that SR 62 had picked on him and HIA 210 and that SR 62 had beaten them with a wooden spoon and a bamboo cane, on one occasion banging his head against a wash-basin and causing him to bleed. NL 97 also expressed affection for SR 62.⁴⁶⁶
- 321 The Director wrote to the Chief Social Work Adviser on 30 April 1986, saying:
- "There can no longer be any question that the information we now have available from three former residents amounts to alleged general malpractice and in some instances physical assault by [SR 62]".⁴⁶⁷
- 322 SR 143 investigated in 1986. It should be noted that by this time it was five years since HIA 210 had left Nazareth Lodge and more than a year since he had first disclosed his complaints.⁴⁶⁸ SR 143, then the Mother Regional, did not speak to any young person nor to the professionals who had talked with the complainant. She interviewed six people who had been members of staff during the relevant period, and she put the issues raised by HIA 210, NL 97 and NL 145 to them. The former staff all denied witnessing any of the incidents with one exception. NL 66 had seen SR 62 hit HIA 210, who was misbehaving, with a wooden spoon in the kitchen. SR 62 acknowledged that this happened on a few occasions. SR 143

463 SNB 19030, 19032, 19050-19054.

464 SNB 9139.

465 SNB 7016-7017.

466 SNB 7032.

467 SNB 7017, 7034.

468 SNB 6061.

considered her enquiries to have been “exhaustive”.⁴⁶⁹ Her conclusions did not satisfy the Board. It was 1987 before the correspondence on the issue came to an end without further investigations having been concluded.⁴⁷⁰

- 323 The Eastern Board Director of Social Services was dissatisfied with this investigation and arranged for all three complainants to be informed of the outcome and promised support if they wished to contact the police.⁴⁷¹ On 17 February 1987 Bob Bunting informed SR 143 that NL 97 and NL 145 intended to contact the police, though HIA 210 did not wish to.⁴⁷²
- 324 The length of time which these investigations took before they were concluded was noted by John Duffy in his evidence. He felt that the Complaints Procedure had not differentiated the responsibilities of the parties involved clearly. Paragraph 17 of Circular 10/1983 stated that Boards had to satisfy themselves about the standards of care being provided for each child they placed in voluntary homes.⁴⁷³ However, it was the Department which registered and inspected the homes, and up to late 1985 inspection reports had not been made available to the Boards. Social workers could only assume that as registration had not been withdrawn, standards must have been satisfactory. In satisfying themselves about the standards of care they could only reassure themselves about the suitability of the home in terms of the gender and age of its residents, its siting and facilities, and their own experience from previous contact and informal comments gleaned from colleagues. Social workers were not in a position to make the sort of detailed inquiries which would be made in inspections.
- 325 Although joint liaison between police and social services had already been in evidence from the early 1970s onwards it was not formally set out in Joint Protocol procedures until 1991. John Duffy told us that had the Joint Protocol procedures been in place at this time the police would have been required to participate in joint interviews, thought would have been given to contacting other children who might have been affected and the whole matter would have been resolved more speedily.⁴⁷⁴ As it was, although the investigations ended, matters were not resolved but ran into the sand. Dr McCoy acknowledged that it would have been better

469 SNB 7376-7377, 51778-51781.

470 SNB 19055-19058, 19068.

471 SNB 7017.

472 SNB 7036.

473 HIA 5713.

474 Day 117, pp.19 to 20.

if everyone had got round the table.⁴⁷⁵ Indeed, there was a suggestion that a meeting might have been held between SWAG and the Eastern Board on 20 October 1986, but no notes of the meeting have survived.⁴⁷⁶ The inspection undertaken in January 1986 was carried out in the full knowledge of these historical complaints but did not report any concerns about the current nature of the regime in the home. The DHSS Child Care Policy Branch therefore supported Dr McCoy's conclusion that no further action was required.⁴⁷⁷

326 It is our view that the Board was correct in its analysis. Three former residents had made allegations and had corroborated each other's accounts. Two Boards were involved. The allegations were serious, even if SR 62 had retired, and there were general issues involved, such as the quality of supervision and management. The Boards were not in a position to question the Mother Superior and Mother Regional. SWAG on the other hand was the registering and inspecting body and had the authority to investigate this matter. Passing the responsibility onto the Boards was in our view inappropriate, and the nebulous outcome of the enquiries was unsatisfactory. It should be stressed that in general, working relations between the Boards and SWAG appear to have been good. **It is our view that in this instance the Department failed to accept its overarching responsibility for ensuring that the safety of children in residential care was maintained. We consider that this was a systemic failing.**

327 The Department of Health responded to this finding as follows:

“However, the Department wishes to stress again in the strongest possible terms that the investigation of historical allegations of child abuse was not a matter for Departmental Social Work Advisors within SWAG or Inspectors in the SSI. As noted above, this case concerned historical allegations made by children who were no longer in the home about staff who were no longer there. This type of investigation was neither suited to or appropriate to the role of SWAG which had to be concerned about current standards of practice in the home and whether the home should continue to be registered.”

328 We find this line of argument unacceptable. In having an over-arching responsibility for social services the Department was accountable for all

475 Day 117, p.91.

476 SNB 100230.

477 SNB 9045.

aspects of the provision of the services, including historical concerns. There is, of course, the question as to when complaints would be deemed historical, and the line of argument put forward by the Department could be used to dismiss any complaint or practice concern which was not current. The residents and the staff had moved on in this instance, but questions remained whether other children might have been affected, why the home's management failed to be aware of the problems, and what action they had taken to prevent a recurrence, for example. The Boards could only seek the co-operation of the Order, and did not have the authority to press the questions which needed to be put. Only the Department, in the form of the Inspectorate, had that authority.

Complaint G

- 329 NL 269 was a residential social worker who worked at Nazareth Lodge from September to November 1992. He complained to Marion Reynolds, SSI Inspector, by phone about a number of issues of varying levels of importance. He felt he had to resign from the Lodge because of unsatisfactory responses from his Team Leader and Sister Superior when he had raised childcare issues.⁴⁷⁸ Notes were taken of his call and read back to him.⁴⁷⁹
- 330 He was asked to put his complaints in writing, but did not do so, and Norman Chambers, Assistant Chief Inspector, told Marion Reynolds to take no further action. She told us that she was not happy with this decision, as ignoring complaints was contrary to her practice. Nonetheless she wrote to NL 269 to say that no further action was being taken.⁴⁸⁰ It happened that Marion Reynolds had been undertaking an inspection of Nazareth Lodge and most of the issues raised by NL 269 had in fact been addressed in her report.⁴⁸¹
- 331 NL 269 complained of the following:
- An incident of overtly sexualised behaviour not reported to social services
 - The adequacy of sleeping-in arrangements
 - An incident concerning drugs
 - Residential staff needing permission to contact field social workers

478 SNB 9162.

479 SNB 19070-19071 and SNB 9039-9040,

480 SNB 9515.

481 SNB 9162-9163.

- A former resident who had abused a child and who had run of the house
- Staff being frightened
- Boys being left accessible to an abuser who was mother’s cohabitee
- The absence of a role in the home for qualified staff
- The management of his concerns.⁴⁸²

332 Dr Kevin McCoy said:

“The matters raised by [NL 269] were of a serious nature and should have been followed up with the home. There was no protocol either within the SSI or the wider Department that required such concerns to be conveyed in writing before being acted upon.”⁴⁸³

Complaint H

333 At the 1992 inspection of Nazareth Lodge it was reported that one complaint had been made since the previous inspection – a mother alleging that her child had been beaten by staff. The child had been restrained by the staff. The incident was thoroughly investigated, recorded and explained to the parent, who withdrew her complaint.⁴⁸⁴

Complaint I

334 In 1993 three concerns were raised involving NL 260. First, in March he complained that confidentiality had been breached as another resident had approached him about abusing girls. Secondly, in April he said that SR 18 had locked him and another resident out until 2am. Thirdly, in May his social worker, NL 275, found him alone in his unit, as SR 18 had not taken him out with the others because of his behaviour.⁴⁸⁵ One concern was whether such matters needed to be dealt with formally through the formal Complaints Procedure, which was now in operation.

Complaint J

335 As a social worker, NHB 137 supervised two young people at Nazareth Lodge. In 1995 NL 164 made a number of comments which could have been considered complaints, some of which impressed as being too trivial to be dealt with through the formal complaints procedure. He said that SR 18 had “poked” him, but he did not want to complain as he had provoked

482 SNB 9163-9165.

483 SNB 9144.

484 SNB 15252, 100252.

485 SNB 7373.

her. He alleged inappropriate sexual behaviour by another resident, but swift action had been taken. He had been locked in the kitchen by SR 18. Most seriously, SR 18 had put him off the minibus for misbehaviour, which had resulted in a 10-mile walk home. NL 170, a residential worker, wrote detailed reports of these incidents for SR 52 and Judith Chaddock, Inspector.⁴⁸⁶

Complaint K

336 Around the same time NL 168 complained in August 1995 of an incident in the office of Nazareth Lodge in which a staff member NL 227 restrained her. The residential worker in turn alleged that NL 168 had headbutted her, and the police were called. The investigation of NL 168's complaint was hampered when she and her mother consulted a solicitor who advised them not to comply with the Complaints Procedure.⁴⁸⁷

Complaint L

337 Soon afterwards NL 170 left Nazareth Lodge. She worked there from January 1994 to September 1995. While she was at the home, she made complaints to the Mother Superior, the social worker attached to the home NL 169 and NL 35; indeed she prepared a written report for SR 52, the Mother Superior, who told her to tell no one of its contents. She informed a social worker NHB 137, who she said asked her to tell him nothing more as there was nothing he could do.⁴⁸⁸ HSCB have indicated that this account was at odds with NHB 137's contemporaneous records, which indicated that when NHB 137 spoke to NL 164 he told him that he did not wish to make any complaint, that NL 170 told him she did not wish to speak to him about the complaints, that she did not provide a report about the incident, even though he reassured her that any complaints would be investigated.⁴⁸⁹

338 Two months after she had left, as nothing had happened, NL 170 wrote to Judith Chaddock, an inspector. In all, NL 170 made fifteen complaints about Nazareth Lodge concerned with pay and conditions and a variety of childcare issues, confirmed in a letter dated 19 December 1995. NL 170 said she felt alone and isolated in raising these issues.

“I had never worked in such an environment where there was silence, power and authority, all of which surrounded the nuns”.⁴⁹⁰

486 SNB 17967-17977.

487 SNB 7373-7394, 49376.

488 SNB 7488.

489 SNB 6096-6097.

490 SNB 7486.

When she gave evidence to us NL 170 added to her complaints about SR 18 and alleged she had seen her lying naked on her bed surrounded by boys in their pyjamas and that there were also suspicions about her relationship with a former residence who lived in the independence unit.

- 339 Judith Chaddock notified each EHSSB Trust which had a child placed in the home by letter about the complaints she had received from NL 170, and copied her letter to the Regional Supervisor requesting the Regional Supervisor to investigate and report back.
- 340 NL 170's complaints were investigated internally by the Order, together with those made by NL 168 and NL 164. The Nazareth Lodge Management Committee set up a Complaints Subcommittee, with three members - Mother Hilary, Mrs McNally, who acted as Chair, and Alan Chard, a Programme Manager in Down Legacy Trust, as an independent observer. The complainants and SR 18 were interviewed and she made a partial admission, which gave the complaints some validity.⁴⁹¹
- 341 The working group presented their report on 4 March 1996 (after the end of this Inquiry's remit) and was questioned closely by the Management Committee. Alan Chard felt that they were defensive; he was required to leave after the presentation of the report, and so was unaware of their conclusions.⁴⁹² SR 18, who had been the subject of many of the complaints, decided to withdraw from childcare.⁴⁹³ Copies of the Management Committee minutes were circulated to the Trusts, but the full report was not shared and the minutes did not include responses to individual complaints, nor the rationale for action taken.⁴⁹⁴
- 342 According to Dr Kevin McCoy, the Department was unaware of any report on this investigation reaching the Inspectorate at this point.⁴⁹⁵ However, in December 1995 Judith Chaddock wrote to the Regional Superior concerning several complaints about SR 18, attaching NL 170's handwritten reports.⁴⁹⁶ The investigation of these complaints was complicated by numerous additional allegations made by NL 164, which he withdrew when visited by an investigating social worker, and by complaints made by NL 260. Since three children were involved, each

491 SNB 7377.

492 SNB 7049.

493 SNB 7049.

494 SNB 19320-19321.

495 Day 117, p.142.

496 SNB 17967-17977.

placed at Nazareth Lodge by a different authority, the correspondence covering these events is unusually detailed, continuing after the end of the Inquiry's remit. It is laid out in full in a report by John Duffy.⁴⁹⁷

- 343 The investigation undertaken by the Nazareth House Management Committee Subcommittee demonstrated that in this instance the policy for agencies to undertake internal investigations of complaints was unsatisfactory, proving to be defensive, secretive and ineffective. The policy had been followed, but none of the people who needed to know the outcome was provided with the necessary detail or the rationale for the Congregation's conclusions. As part of the Warning Letter process the Department responded that:

“It would be inappropriate to regard voluntary organisations generally as being any less capable [than statutory trusts] of undertaking such responsibility now or at the time in question.”

We question that judgement; for a voluntary organisation with a thin management structure to be able to undertake an independent inquiry is unrealistic. The principle of ‘being a judge is one's own cause’ applies.

We acknowledge that the Department was breaking new ground in drafting the Complaints Procedure at this time but we are critical that it included that agencies should undertake internal investigations of complaints and we are critical of the Sisters for conducting the investigation secretly.

Complaint M

- 344 On 23 June 1995 Bob Bunting notified Norman Chambers that two retired priests were living at Nazareth Lodge. On investigation it was found that they had separate access and that any contact with the children was most unlikely.⁴⁹⁸
- 345 The number of complaints which were investigated during this decade should not be interpreted as a symptom of poor residential care. The inquiries did identify some physical abuse and other unacceptable conduct, particularly on the part of SR 62 and SR 18, both of whom left the work. The main message, however, is that throughout this period, the investigation of complaints improved. Children were probably being encouraged to voice their complaints. Social workers clearly took complaints seriously, though

497 SNB 7381-7389.

498 SNB 9170-9171.

the process following initial identification of a complaint proved at first confused and time-consuming.

- 346 It was only with the eventual adoption of the Complaints Procedure and the creation of the Joint Protocol for investigating child protection matters that satisfactory systems were set up. If anything, the main problem once the Complaints Procedure had been implemented was that trivial issues, such as squabbles between staff and children, were notified as complaints, and then often withdrawn. Nonetheless, for all the deficiencies of the systems, the contrast with earlier decades is sharp. Complainants were now being heard and refusal to believe that abuse was possible was a thing of the past.

Conclusions

- 347 During the period covered by the evidence of witnesses there were considerable developments in residential childcare, both in the standards of care expected and in the way care was delivered at Nazareth Lodge.
- 348 At the start, in the 1940s and 1950s, times were hard and there was limited money, so that staffing was minimal and food was basic. The situation at that time was summarised by the Inspector Kathleen Forrest in April 1953, writing about the four homes run by the Sisters of Nazareth:
- “The children in these four homes especially have nothing like a normal upbringing. They must feel unloved as it is just not possible for the number of staff to show affection to such large numbers of children...I find these homes utterly depressing and it appals me to think that these hundreds of children are being reared in bleak lovelessness. This is not meant entirely as criticism of the staff, but their task is impossible. ...In short I think we must press for complete overhaul of the whole set-up of these homes and assist them in every way possible.”⁴⁹⁹
- 349 If the drastic action proposed by Kathleen Forrest had been taken by the Ministry, it is quite probable that the number of applicants to the Inquiry would have been greatly diminished, but, as described in Chapter 5, it seems likely that the Department decided on minimum intervention.
- 350 By the end of the period, with the Health and Social Services Boards financing the children’s care, staffing was much improved, though never generous, and living standards were much better. It is significant that the

499 HIA 1464.

number of allegations of abuse made by witnesses was greatly reduced in the later years.

- 351 Because of the limited resources available to the Order and because of their initial unwillingness to approach the statutory authorities for finance, the Sisters were slow to make improvements in staffing and living conditions, which were markedly better in state-funded establishments such as training schools and local authority children's homes. In consequence the children in Nazareth Lodge were enduring physical standards of care and a shortage of staff to whom they could relate in resolving their problems, which they would not have experienced if they had been in homes run by other agencies.
- 352 Finance for children in voluntary residential care could have been available from the implementation of the Children Act 1950, but no action was taken for over twenty years. This shortage of finance could therefore have been obviated much earlier. **We therefore conclude that the shortage of finance and its consequent impact on staffing levels and physical standards of care amounted to a form of neglect and constituted systemic abuse. Although both central government and the welfare authorities bore some responsibility, this was primarily the responsibility of the Sisters of Nazareth.**
- 353 For some children the quality of care was acceptable and a number have fond memories of the nuns. They saw Nazareth Lodge as home and some have maintained close links with individual sisters and with their peers. Some have expressed appreciation of the dedication of the nuns, who took them in when their own families could not - or would not - care for them, and who spent their lives in the work, often without any respite.
- 354 It is against this background that the range of views expressed by witnesses has to be seen. HIA 87 said that his time at Nazareth Lodge made him independent and gave him self-respect. As a result he was able to make decisions and take a long-term view.⁵⁰⁰ HIA 159 appreciated the solidarity experienced with his peer group in the face of bullying by older boys.

“But there was support there from your friends when you were punched or kicked by older boys, slapped or strapped by the nuns and when you fell and hurt yourself - a caring arm, a laugh and a joke, and it was soon all friends together in whatever game we were playing. Yes, we

500 Day 83, p.52.

did cry a lot at times, and laughed, for we knew that no one would look after us but ourselves”.⁵⁰¹

HIA 247 said that Nazareth Lodge had “A tough regime, but not all bad.”

355 HIA 56 was at Nazareth Lodge in the late 1950s and 1960s, and he said:

“I never had any complaints about the nuns. The nuns were good and I have nothing bad to say about them. They made sacrifices for us. I just suppose they didn’t see what was going on. Even today I miss them.”⁵⁰²

356 Others were highly critical. HIA 159 felt that “Large homes have had their day.” HIA 24 said that he did not think that homes were proper places in which to bring children up, as they did not learn anything about life, and when they were outside, they were lost. They had to learn from scratch without any help. In the homes they were not treated as individuals, but controlled as a group.⁵⁰³ HIA 87 said:

“I feel that I was mistreated and humiliated in the home, which has left me psychologically and emotionally scarred to this day”.⁵⁰⁴

He still had nightmares about beatings, and he had found both the Order and the Church obstructive when he was seeking to contact his relatives.

357 HIA 183 said “I do not remember any love or stimulation”.⁵⁰⁵ HIA 307 said:

“My life in Nazareth Lodge was bleak, harsh and cruel. The nuns were at best indifferent but more often were sadistic bullies who spoke with harsh loud voices in scornful, dismissive tones. They were quick to strike out and provided no reassurance or comfort to a small frightened child”.⁵⁰⁶

358 That there was serious physical and sexual abuse, with strong connotations of emotional abuse, is clear. Having made allowance for possible exaggeration and faulty memories, the detail and sheer volume of these allegations, together with the strength of feeling of the witnesses, makes them credible, despite the denials by members of the Order. It may be hard to understand how nuns who had dedicated their lives to serve the disadvantaged should come to abuse vulnerable children so cruelly. It is

501 SNB 32189-32190.

502 SNB 467.

503 Day 83, pp.87 to 88.

504 SNB 261.

505 SNB 522.

506 SNB 097.

for this reason that the children's parents, the police and doctors did not believe their allegations; it was unthinkable that nuns would do such things.

- 359 In trying to understand how the abuse came about it has to be acknowledged that the boys could be mischievous, disruptive and challenging. Having, in many cases, come from broken families where they had experienced violence and poor parental care, it was not surprising if their own behaviour was also disturbed. Yet society's expectations were that the Sisters would contain, control and care for these children.
- 360 Some of the punishments could be interpreted as the attempts of sisters to retain control of their group of boys. The pressure that they were under through a dire shortage of staff has been acknowledged. It seems, however, that the only mechanism they knew for controlling children was to punish them and repress their misbehaviour. Their status, both within the home and in the wider community, gave them considerable power over the children, and the corruption which power can bring is well known.
- 361 The types of punishment described were unnecessarily cruel, they were contrary to the Order's Rules, and they breached the Children's Homes Regulations.
- 362 In attempting to provide a balanced summary, it has to be recalled that Nazareth Lodge was open for 112 years and that 2,909 children were admitted in the course of its history. Although the number of witnesses was larger than for most other homes we have examined, they were nonetheless only a small proportion of the children who passed through Nazareth Lodge. In criticising the abuse and unacceptable practices, the good work done by many of the nuns who dedicated their lives to caring for children in difficult circumstances should not be overlooked.

Summary of Findings

- 363 The following are the findings concerning Nazareth Lodge.
- (a) **By the 1980s the bathing system used at Nazareth Lodge should have been abandoned long before and its continuation represented systemic abuse.**
 - (b) **When Jeyes fluid was first developed in the late nineteenth century it was used for many purposes, but by the 1950s it should not have been used in baths or for hair washing. This practice was well out of date and in our view its use amounted to systemic abuse.**

- (c) There was no justification for SR 118's cruel conduct in dealing with enuretic boys, which amounted to systemic abuse.
- (d) We accept that force-feeding took place and it constituted systemic abuse.
- (e) We consider the Sisters' failure to pass relevant information about a child's time in Nazareth Lodge, even if little was known about their lives before coming into the care of the Sisters of Nazareth, was unacceptable and showed a lack of care and consideration for each child's individuality, development and well-being which we considered amounted to a systemic failing.
- (f) Taking account of all the aspects of daily life in the home, for the most part they constituted poor, out of date childcare practice, and we consider this was systemic abuse. (Para. 164)
- (g) The physical abuse by staff, particularly on the part of SR 118, SR 34, NL 4 and NL 5, was so extensive that it created a punitive atmosphere. It was contrary to good childcare practice, the policy of the Order and the statutory Regulations under which the home worked. Furthermore the Sisters failed to apply a system of staff selection, supervision and management to prevent or limit the abuse. This was a case of systemic abuse and systemic failure.
- (h) The name-calling, denigration of parents, lack of care for sick boys, the emotional impact of physical punishment, and the lack of individual care in these examples all constitute emotional abuse as well as unacceptably poor child care practice, and we consider them to have been systemic abuse.
- (i) It was the use of charge boys to supervise younger boys in the absence of the sisters which predictably led to the most serious bullying. To rely on the older boys to control the younger ones unsupervised was a systemic failing.
- (j) In leaving the care and control of the younger boys to the older charge hands, the opportunities for sexual abuse were increased, and this amounted to systemic abuse.
- (k) We agree with the conclusion of the Hughes Inquiry that the frequency of inspection was unsatisfactory and consider the lack of inspection of Nazareth Lodge in that period amounted

to a systemic failing by SWAG to ensure the home was meeting statutory regulations and providing proper care.

- (l) It is our view that in this instance the Department failed to accept its overarching responsibility for ensuring that the safety of children in residential care was maintained. We consider that this was a systemic failing.**
- (m) We acknowledge that the Department was breaking new ground in drafting the Complaints Procedure at this time but we are critical of the Department for this aspect of its policy and of the Sisters for conducting the inquiry secretly.**
- (n) We conclude that the shortage of finance and its consequent impact on staffing levels and physical standards of care amounted to a form of neglect and constituted systemic abuse. Although both central government and the welfare authorities bore some responsibility, this was primarily the responsibility of the Sisters of Nazareth.**