

**Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry**

**Final Submissions by**

**The Department of Justice**

**Module 11**

**St Joseph's Training School, Middletown**

**Martin Wolfe QC**

## **Introduction**

1. The Department of Justice (“the Department”) welcomes this opportunity to provide submissions in relation to the issues arising out of the Inquiry’s examination of the operation of St Joseph’s Training School, Middletown (“SJM”) during Module 11.
2. At the conclusion of Module 7, the Department provided detailed written submissions in relation to the operation of the other training schools in Northern Ireland, namely St Patrick’s, Rathgael and Lisnevin.
3. Having regard to the fact that the nature of the relationship between the Department’s predecessors and SJM was the same as that which existed with St. Patrick’s Training School in particular, it is not necessary to repeat some of the points which were articulated in those earlier submissions.
4. Accordingly, the Department would wish to adopt those general observations contained within the following sections of its Module 7 submissions since they are equally applicable to SJM:
  - a. Obstacles (paragraphs 17 - 31)
  - b. Legislative and Regulatory Framework (paragraphs 32 - 47)
  - c. Training School Rules 1952 (paragraphs 48 - 51)
  - d. Discipline and Punishment in the Training Schools (paragraphs 52 -59)
  - e. Inspection Regime (paragraphs 60 - 69)

## Overview

5. In 1950 SJM was invited by the Ministry of Home Affairs to become a training school within the terms of the Children and Young Person Act (NI) 1950. It is clear that the Ministry and subsequently the Northern Ireland Office maintained a close relationship with SJM throughout the period which is relevant to the Inquiry's terms of reference.
6. The objective of these submissions is to demonstrate that while the Inquiry has received a number of complaints of abusive treatment from former residents of SJM, this facility provided excellent levels of care over many decades for some of the most difficult and challenging children in this society.
7. The Inquiry has been told that approximately 1500 girls passed through the doors of SJM between the years 1922 and 1995 (SJM 22715, para 3), but only 8 Applicants have made complaints to this Inquiry. Four others have made complaints to police or raised a civil claim. These statistics, of themselves, suggest that the vast majority of children at SJM were well cared for by dedicated and responsible religious and lay staff.
8. Of course those who have complained about aspects of their care at SJM deserve to have their grievances considered seriously. The Department repeats the position which it has adopted throughout this Inquiry: those whose circumstances caused them to be placed in a training school deserved to be treated with courtesy and respect, they were entitled to the provision of adequate facilities and resources, and they had a right not to be abused in any way.

9. The Department would condemn without equivocation any person who subjected any child to any form of abuse while they were resident at SJM, or any person who tolerated the abuse of children and who failed to intervene or report it.
10. However, the Department considers that it is important to underline at the outset of these submissions that the evidence received by the Inquiry during this Module strongly suggests that incidents of abuse, if they occurred at all, were truly exceptional rather than the norm.

### **Inspections**

11. The Department's predecessors were required to pursue an oversight role to ensure that training schools such as SJM were operated in accordance with best practice and in compliance with the Training School Rules.
12. There is nothing to indicate that those predecessors were aware of any information such as to give rise to a suspicion that any abuse was occurring, let alone to suggest that there was any basis for thinking that abuse was systemic. It is respectfully submitted that this position is entirely borne out by the evidence available to the Inquiry.
13. The main method by which the Department's predecessors satisfied themselves that SJM was being operated in accordance with best practice and in compliance with the Training School Rules was by maintaining a close relationship with the school through its cadre of inspectors.

14. The supplementary statement of Dr Hilary Harrison documents the nature and extent of the statutory inspections which were undertaken at SJM in the years from 1922 until 1995 (HIA 29274 - 29281).
15. It is clear that inspectors from the Ministry of Health were frequent visitors to SJM in the period up to 1972. It is also clear that while the approach to inspections changed after 1972, inspectors maintained close relationships with all of the training schools and were anxious to ensure that these schools were conducting their work appropriately even if the system of inspection was less formalised.
16. It is also important to note that MOHA was prepared to take action when it found that SJM was not providing a service which could be regarded as modern and fit for purpose. The Inquiry is referred to the correspondence to be found at SJM 28224 - 28231 which demonstrates that MOHA was not prepared to put up with what it perceived to be a failure on the part of SJM to make a number of necessary and progressive changes in the mid-sixties. It took the issues up with Cardinal Conway and through his intervention, managed to procure the necessary improvements which included (indirectly) the eventual appointment of SR 240 to the role of [REDACTED].
17. The Department submits that the evidence before the Inquiry demonstrates that SR240 was a hugely influential and respected figure in the development of SJM and through her critical leadership, the school was set on a course of increased professionalism and rigor which earned the admiration of many in the child care sector.

18. The success achieved by SR 240 was reflected in the observations made during the inspections which took place at SJM from 1987 under the auspices of the Social Services Inspectorate. That success will be examined in greater detail below.
19. Crucially, despite the growing reputation of SJM, the inspection arrangements implemented by SSI did not become complacent. The inspectors subjected SJM, just as they did the other training schools in the youth justice estate, to a commendably thorough series of inspections.
20. In May 1987, for example, three inspectors dedicated a total of 101 hours to the task of conducting a general inspection at SJM, covering all times of the day (SJM 1495). The 1993 general inspection was conducted by three inspectors during the period from 23 June - 1 July.
21. Between times there were a number of regulatory inspections, which were of much shorter in duration and which focused on the state of compliance with a number of key obligations detailed within the Training School Rules. Nevertheless, these inspections appear to have been very much directed at gaining an understanding of how the facility was really operating. The SSI inspector described his approach to the regulatory inspection which took place on 9 July 1992 in the following terms:

*“During the course of the 12 hour visit to St Joseph’s the Inspector had the opportunity to meet with all grades of staff, mingle freely with the young people and visited most parts of the complex. He attended the daily assembly, visited the young people in class, saw them at lunch time and spent three hours visiting them*

*in their house units in the evening. Much informal discussion took place between the Inspector and the young people. It was evident that the young people had been prepared for the visit. They knew who the Inspector was, why he was visiting, and their right to see him privately to raise any issues or concerns that they had. The young people are at ease with adults and this much (sic) in evidence during the visit. There was a desire to 'show off' their rooms. A relaxed atmosphere prevailed in all houses, with the young people engaged in a variety of activities. No matters or complaints were brought to the attention of the inspector" (SJM 2148).*

22. Moreover, it would appear that unannounced visits took place from time to time. For example, the SJM Board of Management documented one such visit in February 1994:

*"Mr Wesley Donnell made an unannounced visit to House 3 on 10 February 1994. His report was circulated to the Board. This report was very favourable to the staff and girls in House 3. Mr. Donnell found everything to his satisfaction" (SJM 1262).*

23. It is submitted that the inspection regimes which visited SJM throughout the period of its operation as a training school, represented a genuine and earnest attempt on the part of the Departments to ensure that children were being well cared for, and that their needs were being addressed.

## **Ethos**

24. Under the leadership of SR 240 management recognised that SJM was a regional facility whose purpose was to address the "*emotional needs, behavioural problems*

*and/or acute educational problems”* faced by adolescent girls whose needs could not be adequately catered for elsewhere in Northern Ireland (SJM 3522).

25. The child-centred ethos of the facility which was said to govern the approach of staff at SJM was documented by management in a set of basic principles:

*“The only reason Middletown or any house unit exists is for the children and to meet their needs as far as possible. We are here to provide physical, emotional, psychological and social care for the girls in our care. The ultimate aim of the girls’ stay in Middletown is to enable them to come to terms with their problems, to slowly accept responsibility for their future and to help them to return to the community as soon as is possible and safe.*

*“....We must never forget that for many of our girls St Joseph’s is home - the only home they have or are likely to have for some time....We will never be “the home” that the good nuclear family provides, but if the over-riding ethos of each unit is one of love, empathy and genuine care then our intervention in each girl’s life will be positive and hopefully healing...”* (SJM 1758).

### **Putting the Ethos into Practice**

26. The services provided at SJM were focused on children who were described by SSI inspectors in 1987 as *“generally disturbed adolescents, some of whom have a tendency towards self-destruction / mutilation and aggressive behaviour”* (SJM 1501).

27. Inspectors also noted that some of the girls placed at SJM came from “*deprived circumstances and several have been assaulted, sexually abused and/or are the survivors of incestuous relationships.*”

28. In the inspection report from 1987 the inspectors provided a series of helpful vignettes in order to illustrate the challenges posed by the children who were cared for at SJM (SJM 1501 - 1503).

29. The challenges posed to the staff by the behaviour of some of the children, and their caring and professional responses was not lost on the inspectors. In their 1987 report the following observation was made:

*“...the staff have to cope with a wide range of need. The girls can be volatile with emotional outbursts which occasionally result in physical confrontations between themselves. Throughout, the staff manage to keep cool heads, engender a sense of calm and never lose sight of the basic concept that no child, no matter how difficult will ever be rejected or transferred to another unit or elsewhere (SJM 1509).”*

30. There appear to have been periods of time when groups of children, set out to be particularly unruly and destructive of their environment at SJM. For example in September 1985 SR 240 reported to the residential / school staff meeting that the previous fortnight had been “*very bad and at times riotous*” in the houses (SJM 25074). It was noted that girls were getting out at night and climbing on to the roof.

31. At the next meeting some improvement was noted. SR 240 suggested that the problems might have been prompted by the fact that *“a lot of children come from Children’s Homes where they have wrecked all before them without being challenged”* (SJM 25075).
32. The SSI inspectors recognised that the staff at SJM were highly qualified. At the time of the 1993 inspection, for example, the majority of staff had qualifications in social work, nursing or teaching (SJM 1760). Some staff had dual qualifications. Only 8 of the 33 staff then employed had no professional or third level qualifications, although many staff members participated in and benefitted from in-service training opportunities. In the 12 months preceding the 1993 inspection, 20 members of staff had participated in a range of training courses which focused on issues such as team building, sexual abuse and how to conduct face to face work with young people.
33. The 1987 inspection report remarked upon the fact that, somewhat unusually, Management Board oversaw appointments of staff to the school and that the Director did not take part in the interview process. However, the inspectors, noting the low turnover of staff, commented upon the strong body of staff that had been assembled:
- “When one looks more closely at the staff group, in terms of suitability, experience, age, maturity, commitment, charisma and the special qualities that appear to permeate many of the residential social workers, it reflects favourably in the Management Board in their understanding of the special needs of the school and of the calibre of staff which can be moulded together to form such an effective group”* (SJM 1508).

34. The Congregation has explained that from 1952 (when SJM became a training school) the numbers of staff required as well as the qualifications which were needed, were determined by MOHA/NIO Staffing (SJM 22719, paras 16-18). The Department is unaware of any expression of concern about the adequacy of staff levels at SJM. Indeed at one point in the history of the school (1956) it was being suggested by the inspector (Ms Forrest) that the number of staff was overly generous and could be reduced (SJM 2037). It is the Department understands that the school had excellent staffing resources at all times, although there might have been periods of pressure such as when there was a requirement to provide 1:1 care when a child was placed in the intensive care unit.

35. It was recognised by management at SJM (at the time of the 1987 SSI inspection) that staff who worked in the assessment unit (House 1) faced particular stresses as it was their task to welcome, settle and assess children who might have come from difficult backgrounds and who might have arrived at SJM with fears of the unknown. The ethos of the assessment unit was described in the following terms:

*“To arrive at a valid assessment of a girl and her needs our first aim is to build a relationship with the girl. The environment is one of warmth, openness, trust and acceptance. Our children come to us with their own very personal history - very often an extremely sad history with deep hurts. Our job is to try and find a meeting point with the child, give space for the expression of feelings, often very negative feelings. Staff therefore have to cope with heavy demands, both emotional*

*demands and time demands, accept ambivalence, help the child to express anger and accept misdirected anger...*" (SJM 1526).

36. It will be noted that during their inspections, the inspectors from SSI spent an extensive period of time within the school conducting interviews and carrying out observations. The inspectors made it their business to engage with the children. In their 1987 report the inspectors reported that they met "*most of the girls at some time during their stay*" (SJM 1503). The following observation is apposite:

*"Some of the girls were poor communicators, but others freely gave their perceptions of life in St Joseph's and compared it with previous placements. Their views were wide ranging but a consistent theme emerging was their high regard for the St Joseph's staff. Generally they were content with the treatment they received in the school and had no complaints"* (SJM 1503).

37. The SSI inspectors (also in their 1987 report) remarked upon the effort made by staff to build relationships with children upon their arrival:

*"Staff greet them with warmth and acceptance and employ skills which put them at their ease. If family, friends or a social worker bring the girl to the school they are encouraged to stay for a while to give her support. When they leave the staff show the girl her room, see that she has all the basic requirements...and introduce her to the other girls in the group. Later in the evening the girl is encouraged to speak to her parents on the telephone to let them know that she is alright"* (SJM 1518)."

38. After a period of assessment in House 1, the inspectors noted that a girl would then be moved to one of the three long stay houses. The inspectors described each of the houses as providing *“nurturing and set limits for their residents”* and noted that *“relationships with staff develop through honest communication, sharing in the daily routines of the house and through the development of specific programmes to meet the individual’s needs”* (SJM 1520).
39. The inspectors explained that those girls admitted into any of the three long term units were *“by definition, some of the most hurt, deprived, rejected adolescents in the care system”* (SJM 1526). They observed that those girls were in many cases the victims of incest, violence, family breakdown and rejection. They may have experienced failure in other parts of the care system.
40. The inspectors referred to the ethos of the long term units as having the objective of creating *“a progressive training programme within a structured yet flexible environment, so that each girl can develop so far as possible...”* (SJM 1526).
41. The inspectors (in 1987) noted that the long term units each had particular characteristics: House ■ had a concentration of girls who had been sexually abused; House ■ dealt mainly with girls who had experienced *“the worst excesses of long term institutional care in other establishments”*; House ■ was said to have the *“biggest concentration of volatile, border line mentally adolescents”*.
42. It is notable that the inspectors identified in the staff of each unit, particular characteristics which were said to best meet the needs of the girls. Thus, in 1987 the

staff of House 3 were said to have worked hard “*to mould an effective team that enables the unit to function in a dynamic way.*” Likewise in House 4 the staff, who included a trained psychiatric nurse, were said to “*deal exceptionally with the girls resident there*” (SJM 1527).

43. The inspectors (in 1987) were overwhelmingly positive about the level of care and commitment provided by staff in each of the units. They emphasised that they had observed the units operating at all times of the day and at weekends. The staff had managed to translate the documented ethos - openness, warmth, acceptance, non-judgmental attitude and movement at the girls pace - into practice. The inspectors commented that relationships between staff and girls was characterised by honesty and trust, but it was also “*supportive and controlling*” when the need arose.

44. SSI inspectors had ample opportunity to achieve a detailed and sophisticated understanding of the relationships which pertained between children and staff during the 1987 inspection. In the report the inspectors remarked that amongst the staff “*there is a total acceptance of the children in the school*” and that the care of the children was the key focus:

“*The level of discussion and exchange that takes place between staff, their availability to the girls and concerns about sharing information indicate that the care of the child is central to all activities in the school*” (SJM 1508).

45. Elsewhere in their 1987 report the inspectors described staff as being “*always available, supportive and involved in the lives of the girls*” (SJM 1516). They remarked

upon the degree of supervision provided by staff which they described as “*essential*” but which was in no sense “*punitive or authoritarian*” in nature (SJM 1516).

46. Overall, the inspectors characterised the school as a “*centre of excellence*” which served as an exemplar to the “*practice of residential care*” throughout Northern Ireland. The inspectors singled out for special praise the leadership afforded the school by SR 240 and her senior team (SJM 1547). They commented that the leadership had “*managed to engender a sense of commitment and service that is worthy of the highest praise*” (SJM 1528). But the inspectors also recognised that the staff as a whole “*were totally involved with the school*” and demonstrated “*a sense of professional dedication and pride in their work*” which was “*reflected in the atmosphere which permeates the campus*” (SJM 1547).

47. At the time of the 1992 regulatory inspection the Inspector professed himself satisfied that the facility continued to provide “*the usual high standard of care observed in previous inspections and regular visits*” (SJM 2157).

48. The position was little different at the time of the next general inspection in 1993. The inspectors identified advantages in the different regimes which continued to exist across the three long term care units:

“*The variation in regimes in the long term care units is a distinct advantage in deciding which unit is best placed to meet the assessed needs of each individual girl*” (SJM 1766).

49. The inspectors noted that the “*common thread running through all unit regimes is one of warmth and belief in the individual*” (SJM 1766). The inspectors drew particular attention to the emotional care which staff bestowed on girls within the units:

*“It soon becomes evident to the observer that promoting the emotional health of girls is an important and integral part of care provision at St Joseph’s. Every effort is made to minimise the fears and uncertainties of each new arrival....Without undue pressure being asserted each girl is encouraged to form a relationship of trust with at least one adult in whom she can confide....There is no obvious “professional distance” between staff and girls, indeed it is not unusual to witness healthy touching contact between staff and girls. Perhaps the underlying mainstay impacting on the emotional wellbeing of the girls is the natural blend of care and control which exists and its constant application”* (SJM 1769).

50. Taking all factors into account the inspectors again concluded (in 1993) that the care provided in SJM was of an “*exceptionally good quality*” (SJM 1770). They attempted to sketch out the reasons for this state of affairs: policies were straightforward and they helped to shape day to day practice; staff were actively aware of the needs of each individual girl and of the agreed approach to meet those needs; timely communication across staff disciplines helped to maintain this consistency of delivery; staff adopted a tolerant and non-punitive attitude towards those in their care; staff were dedicated to their work and supported and encouraged by management to take the initiative and even to take calculated risks on occasions; the strength of the leadership within SJM engendered confidence within the staff and encouraged collective effort and commitment.

51. The regulatory inspection which took place in December 1994 was just as positive. The inspector acknowledged that this was a brief inspection. He had not visited the school before but was aware of the reputation which it had acquired for its work with difficult and disturbed teenage girls. He indicated that many of the positive things that he had heard about the school were confirmed during his inspection:

*"[8.1] The school has many assets: a staff of both practitioners and managers who are dedicated to their task; a range of living accommodation that is pleasantly domestic in style, well maintained and comfortable; school facilities that would be the envy of many teachers in mainstream education and perhaps most importantly, an atmosphere that can best be described as peaceful" (SJM 2308).*

### **Impression Formed By Visitors to SJM**

52. The Inquiry has access to a copy of the "*visits book*" documenting the regular visits by members of the Management Board, and other occasional visitors to the facility (SJM 24294 - 24324, and from 25255 - 25286).

53. The comments contained within these materials, albeit that they are the opinions of interested lay people as opposed to professional inspectors, nevertheless provide a valuable insight into how the school was perceived by those who came to visit it.

54. The records of these visits is commended to the Inquiry as providing clear and honest descriptions of the life of SJM over many years. The observations documented in the records are an authentic reflection of the experiences of those who visited SJM and

found much that was positive about the work that was taking place there. The impression formed during these visits, as reflected in the comments, was that the facility at SJM was providing for the needs of the girls who were resident there, and that the staff genuinely cared for those children and were interested in promoting an atmosphere of harmony.

55. The following report dating from 1956 is typical:

*"I have seen the children of this school monthly for the last 12 months and often during meal times. They are well looked after as regards food and clothing and always appeared to be very happy" (SJM 22261).*

56. A rather more florid tribute was paid by a member of the Board in the course of a visit in 1958:

*" 'Home is where the heart is' - an old saying but one which springs to mind when visiting the St Louis Convent, Middletown. No amount of money can transform bricks and mortar into a home - only genuine warm hearted love can do that and the nuns in charge of the children have an abundance of love and care for their charges. The happy laughing girls going about their work or sitting comfortably at perfect ease watching TV prove what a wonderful work the nuns are doing. No wonder the girls keep in touch with the convent when they leave. They have experienced here a home life which many of them never knew existed" (SJM 25264).*

57. These standards were still being maintained in the sixties. A visit in February 1960 generated the following comment: "*It is a real home they have here, nothing in the least like an institution*" (SJM 25274). In 1961 the following comment was made:

*"The contentment of the children is perfectly obvious. Every attention is given to their welfare and happiness and this brings its own return"* (SJM 25281).

58. A visit by a probation officer in March 1961 caused her to conclude that the atmosphere at SJM was one of "*peace and harmony*" (SJM 25280). A record of a visit by a deputation from the Royal College of Nursing in February 1962 spoke of how "*greatly impressed*" they were by what they had seen (SJM 25284). Members of the Belfast Juvenile Court who visited SJM in 1963 were clearly impressed with what they saw during their inspection of the facility. They recorded that "*it was wonderful to see what you are doing for the girls we send*" (SJM 25286).

59. Visitors did not disregard, and nor did they fail to report, any sign of discord which they came across. During a visit in April 1985 a member of Management Board reported on a resident having what she described as a "*break-down*" (SJM 24304), although the visitor remained "*very impressed*" by what she saw as "*the caring attitude of all the staff*" that she encountered.

60. Another member described coming across a situation where a child had refused to go to school and was only getting out of bed at 10.00am. She referred to the girl as "*not very responsive*" to the efforts being made to encourage her to get to school (SJM 24303).

### The Views of Former Residents

61. It is also very clear that not all former residents of SJM recall their experiences negatively. The Inquiry is referred to the statements of those former residents of SJM who have positive recollections of their time spent in Middletown.
62. SJM 73 was admitted to SJM twice in the seventies. She has recorded that she was very much helped at SJM and has “*very fond memories*” of the place (SJM 29261, para 12).
63. SJM 74 was admitted to SJM in or about 1982 and remained there for three years. She has stated that SR 240 and SR 234 “*were very good to [her],*” and that she does not know where she would be today if it hadn’t been for them (SJM 29266, para 19).
64. SJM 75 was a resident of SJM for two years between 1994 and 1996. She has emphasised that she “*loved*” her time at the school - it “*saved*” her and made her a better person (SJM 29270 para 6, and SJM 29271 para 15).
65. In her statement to the Inquiry HIA 124 recalled the abuse which she suffered in her own home, in Nazareth House and then in Good Shepherd. However, in her statement to the Inquiry she emphasised that “*Middletown was completely different from the rest*”. She was resident at SJM for approximately 3 years from [REDACTED] and has recalled warmly how the staff treated her. She even named her first daughter after two of the nuns in SJM who cared for her (SJM 22210, para 29).

66. In her statement HIA 84 also recalled the abuse she had suffered in Nazareth House. However, as was the case for HIA 124, her experience of SJM was entirely different. HIA 84 was only resident of SJM for [REDACTED] weeks in or about [REDACTED], but she recalls it as “*one of the happiest times of [her] life*” (SJM 22219, para 26).

67. HIA 195 came to SJM in [REDACTED] and remained for [REDACTED] years. She has explained in her statement to the Inquiry that her experience of Nazareth House was a “*nightmare*” (SJM 22224, para 5). However, by contrast she loved Middletown and regarded the nuns at SJM as “*brilliant*” and she remarked that the “*staff members were so good to us*” (SJM 22229, para 21).

68. HIA 175 has said of her time in SJM (1972-74): “*You were made to feel like you were wanted and were treated with warmth and affection which I had never experienced before*” (SJM 22240, para 30).

69. HIA 49 has explained to the Inquiry in her statement how she was abused in various settings including Nazareth House. However, she has expressed how much pleasure she derived from her time at SJM ([REDACTED]):

“*[78] I loved it. I’d never had a hug in my life and I got a hug off SR 240. There was SR 261 and SR 262 who was [REDACTED]. She loved us all. They treated us like human beings and trusted us. The nuns were kind and considerate. [79] I was so happy there and the nuns were so lovely. I wished I had lived there the rest of my life. I was so happy because I was safe*” (SJM 22253).

70. At the time of the 1993 SSI inspection the girls at SJM were circulated with a questionnaire which posed the question, "*What do you think of care in St Joseph's Training School?*" Residents were assured that they did not need to append their name to the completed questionnaire which would in any event be treated on a confidential basis. The questionnaire proceeded to raise a number of wide ranging enquiries about life at SJM, and provided the girls with an opportunity to raise complaints or concerns about every conceivable aspect of their care and living environment (SJM 1604).

71. In the report the inspectors documented the results of the questionnaire in the following terms:

*"Although there were some minor complaints the young people generally were happy in St Joseph's. All had a say in the clothes they wore and the food they ate. With the exception of two girls all felt there was someone in the unit they could talk to. All knew of someone they could complain to if they had a problem or concern. The senior staff were frequently mentioned in this section as the ones to whom the girls felt they could talk which is an indication that senior staff are readily available to young people. Some of the young people wanted more freedom to be able to stay out at night! The "complaints" could be summarised as follows: wished for doors and locks on the bedrooms; St Joseph's too far from home; more cigarettes required please; more weekends please; some felt lonely. On the positive side all felt they were fairly treated and were not picked upon"* (SJM 1764).

72. Related questionnaires were also prepared for parents and guardians (SJM 1609). The inspectors noted that the vast majority of the questionnaires which were returned

(85%) *“made helpful and complimentary remarks about the staff, the friendly atmosphere that prevailed and generally they felt that their children were well cared for and were benefitting from the placement in the school”* (SJM 1772).

73. The inspectors tried to better understand a suggestion made by one parent that they had registered a complaint with the RUC (SJM 1771). The nature of the complaint had not been specified and therefore the inspectors wrote to the address given for the parent to seek further information. However, their letter was returned marked *“not known at this address.”*

74. In the 1994 report of the regulatory inspection, the inspector remarked that he met most of the residents of SJM and that *“they all appeared relaxed and content and made no complaint about their treatment”* (SJM 2999).

75. It is probably the case that not every child will have enjoyed their experience of Middletown. Some may well have been subjected to objectionable behaviours, whether from staff or fellow residents. It is submitted, however, that the descriptions set out above of the care and commitment which the staff generously gave to the children appears to reflect the true ethos of the school and the experience of the vast majority of children who spent time at the school.

### **Facilities and Activities**

76. The care and commitment which staff gave to children at SJM was reflected in the facilities and activities which were provided to them. The records available to the

Inquiry demonstrate that throughout its history the staff of SJM made every effort to provide comfortable facilities and a stimulating range of activities.

77. In one of the earliest available records of a visit by a member of Management Board (from 19 June 1953) it was noted that the “*general atmosphere of comfort and cleanliness [was one which] it would be hard to surpass*” (SJM 25255).
78. Several other visits by Board members in 1953 spoke of trainees preparing for their annual holiday to the Glens of Antrim, of children enjoying themselves in the concert hall, and of children playing in the playground of the school (SJM 25256). In 1959 a member of the Board remarked upon the pleasure which she gained from the “*feast of fun and laughter*” which occasioned her visit to a school concert in April 1959 (SJM 25268).
79. Another visit (undated in the record but possibly 1953) following the installation of new tennis courts, referred to the recreation facilities as being “*second to none*” (SJM 25258). It was said by this Board member that “*the children are catered for in physical education in a manner which could only be done by people wholeheartedly and keenly interested in the welfare of those committed to their charge.*”
80. A subsequent visit (again undated, but probably in the fifties) by a Board member who had evidently visited the facility on several occasions referred to his impression that “*there is always an atmosphere of freshness, something new being done in the interests of the children*” (SJM 25258).

81. A report of a visit in March 1961 referred to the fact that there had been seasonal film shows (SJM 25279).
82. In their 1987 report, the inspectors noted that there were excellent recreation facilities available for the girls at SJM: a swimming pool, a games hall equipped for gymnastics, and a stage suitable for staging plays and concerts were all provided (SJM 1513).
83. Elsewhere in the 1987 inspection report, the inspectors noted the range of activities which children were free to partake in during the evenings:
- “The girls are free to walk, swim, attend the discos, listen to music, talk with each other, play or do whatever appeals to them. Time is spent over the evening meal, the pace of the day is slowed down and staff and girls have the opportunity to talk of serious issues and the everyday events such as TV, fashion, school and whatever is current in the unit”* (SJM 1515).
84. At the weekends the atmosphere was described as *“relaxed and unstructured”* although some housekeeping duties had to be performed (SJM 1516). After those duties were completed, girls were allowed to engage in passive activities such as reading or listening to music, but staff regularly organised shopping trips and outings to leisure centres and forest parks. Birthdays and other special occasions were marked and celebrated (SJM 1524).
85. At the time of the 1992 regulatory inspection report, the inspector referred to the diverse range of stimulating activities which were provided for the children:

*“A wide variety of activities is available within the school. On site indoor and outdoor activities, discos, swimming are all provided. Many of the off campus activities include visits to shops, supermarkets, forest parks and leisure centres. Every year summer holidays are provided with each unit taking a separate holiday away from the school for 1-2 weeks.”* (SJM 2154).

86. It is clear that resources were made available to ensure that conditions at SJM continued to meet the highest of standards over time. Thus, at the time of their 1993 inspection the inspectors from SSI remarked upon the fact that the canteen had been *“completely refurbished”* using a colour scheme that *“has created a pleasant atmosphere”* (SJM 1764). Other refurbishment work had been undertaken in the classrooms, and plans were well advanced to refurbish the school library. The swimming pool and the games hall were undergoing major maintenance work at the time of the inspection.

87. In the report following the regulatory inspection in 1994 it was noted that children in each unit had the benefit of going to a different place for a holiday. The inspector recorded that a *“recent innovation”* was the encouragement which was given to some of the older girls to take part in adventure holidays operated by external organisations. He observed that this placed a *“heavy burden on staff who have to transport girls all over Ireland but the benefits are considered to be worthwhile”* (SJM 2304).

88. This commitment to providing interesting activities and a departure from routine was also documented in the record of visits by members of the Management Board of SJM.

For example, during a visit in August 1995 the care and attention which was given to planning activities designed to challenge and interest the girls was noted as follows:

*“I then visited House 3. Again, staff and girls were very welcoming. Here, one girl was ecstatic about her week with Ocean Youth Club. Another girl did drama. An impressive amount of work is put into planning holidays. The staff drive very long distances to facilitate a successful outcome - as Westport, Co Mayo or Wicklow. However, such careful planning and commitment pays dividends...”* (SJM 24298).

### **Promoting a Homely Environment**

89. Another illustration of the determination of staff at SJM to do their best to ensure that the children were secure and happy in their environment can be seen in the quality of the accommodation and the food which was provided.

90. In their 1987 report the SSI inspectors praised the homely, well maintained units in which the girls were housed:

*“The Inspectors found the house units to be bright, airy, clean and comfortable and tastefully decorated throughout. Wallpaper is used extensively in the living area at ground floor level and the walls have been decorated with pictures, hanging baskets, plants etc. Television and radio/tape recorders are provided in each lounge. The girls take pride in their own bedrooms many of which have been personalised with soft toys, posters, pop memorabilia etc* (SJM 1513).”

91. The staff at SJM clearly impressed the inspectors with the efforts which they had made to eschew the trappings of institutionalism:

*“Some of the features for example the fireplace and furniture together with the tasteful use of ornaments, pictures, photographs and the style of the interior decoration creates an atmosphere which could best be described as “homely” (SJM 1514).”*

92. The position was no different 6 years later at the time of the second general inspection in 1993. The inspectors noted approvingly how *“the girls are encouraged to personalise their individual bedrooms and to take collective responsibility for maintaining the hygiene, cleanliness and homeliness of the common areas”* (SJM 1765).

93. This emphasis on creating a home away from home was also reflected in the steps that were taken to ensure that children maintained contact with friends and family. Letter writing was encouraged and children could make and receive telephone calls. For girls whose family links were not strong, staff would engage in *“intensive family work to bring them together again”* (SJM 1520). It was even reported that staff encouraged girls to have their boyfriends pay visits (SJM 1516).

94. The Inquiry did not receive any significant complaints about the food which was made available to residents at SJM.

95. The inspectors from SSI remarked upon the unique (relative to other training schools) catering arrangements at SJM: through the "*excellent services of a cook*" lunches are served in the school canteen (SJM 1535), while in the evening each house unit enjoyed "*a considerable measure of autonomy*" in terms of planning and preparing their own evening meal (SJM 1536).

96. During the 1997 inspection, the inspectors sampled the lunches and evening meals which were available to the children. They had no complaints. Indeed they commented in respect of the food prepared in the houses that,

*"The food in St Joseph's is of an exceptionally high standard and this reflects favourably on those who plan, cook and serve the evening meals in the house units"* (SJM 1536).

97. This standard was being maintained at the time of the 1992 regulatory inspection when the inspector noted that "*the menu displayed showed a good variety of wholesome food*". He added, "*the school has the services of an excellent cook and the food provided is always of a high standard*" (SJM 2153).

98. At the time of their 1993 inspection the SSI studied the menus available in the school canteen and within the individual houses. They concluded that "*there is close liaison between the canteen and the house units to ensure that a proper variety of meals is maintained*" (SJM 1777). The school menu was complimented for providing a "*nutritional range of food*" and the autonomy extended to the individual house units was reflected in the fact that the catering "*reflect[ed] the tastes of the young people.*"

99. During a visit by a member of SJM Management Board in February 1995, which focused on the catering arrangements within the school, the member was left impressed by the quality of the kitchen facilities and of the staff who carried out the cooking.
100. She observed that the cook *“has a good feel for the girls and tries to provide them with the food that they like to eat”* (SJM 24308). It was emphasised that the cook was anxious to promote healthier food choices and it was indicated that *“more and more children are willing to eat fresh vegetables and other sensible foods.”* It was also recorded that some of the trainees benefitted from the opportunity to work with the cook in the kitchen and that the cook was of the view that some of them *“could easily move towards the catering area as a career later on”* (SJM 24309).

## **Assault**

101. The Department acknowledges with regret that a number of Applicants have complained that they were the subject of physical assaults, including excessive use of corporal punishment when resident at SJM: HIA 161, 176, 178, 198, 203, 249 and 376.
102. Some of those who have complained about physical maltreatment (e.g. HIA 176, HIA 178 and HIA 376) have also alleged that visiting priests were responsible for striking certain girls.
103. A number of residents have identified SR 237 as being particularly liable to deal with girls in a physical manner: HIA 178, HIA 203, HIA 249.

104. In her statement HIA 178 described to the Inquiry how SR 237 used to pick on her frequently, and would punish her for petty indiscretions and none. For example, when HIA 178 announced to SR 237 that she had passed a music examination she was slapped on the cheek (SJM 334, para 7). HIA 178 has also complained that the fact that SR 237 abused her was well known in the training school but only on one occasion did a Sister (SR 256) intervene to stand up against the maltreatment.

105. In her statement HIA 249 claimed that she was the subject of beatings from a number of nuns (SJM 069, para 7). She recounted one particular incident when SR 237, believing that she had wet the bed, subjected her to the worst beating of her time there, applying a stick to her bare bottom in what is described as a frenzied attack (SJM 069, para 9). In fact HIA 249 had just received her first period and had not wet the bed.

106. In her statement HIA 203, while recording that SR 237 used to deal harshly with her by using the cane or a ruler to administer punishments, also noted a more generous side to her. HIA 203 had been committed to prison for three months but SR 237 intervened and arranged for hostel accommodation for her (SJM 056, para 15).

107. When she gave evidence, SR 235 recalled that SR 237 was a somewhat austere figure who was strict with the girls. While she was aware that SR 237 kept a bamboo stick, she did not witness her strike any child (transcript day 186, pages 16-17).

108. The Department is conscious that the Congregation does not accept that there was any gratuitous use of violence against children cared for at SJM. Many of those who were said to have been violent were unable (through death or infirmity) to give evidence to defend their reputations. The inspections which were carried out do not reveal any concern that violence against children was an issue which had to be addressed. Punishment books were periodically reviewed, and the use of corporal punishment was viewed as being within acceptable limits.
109. It is the case that corporal punishment was permitted within the terms of the Training School Rules, and that it was used in SJM. The Congregation appear to accept that on occasions corporal punishment was used when it perhaps could have been avoided, certainly applying more modern standards.
110. It is positive that as early as 1969, and certainly by 1972 that "*the management of St Joseph's decided that it did not need to use physical punishment as a means of discipline...*" (SJM 22722) This suggests that management at SJM were progressive in their thinking; mainstream schools continued to use corporal punishment for more than a decade.
111. Furthermore, staff at SJM were formally advised in a document that the use of physical restraint should be used only as a last resort, in order to prevent injury to a girl or others (SJM 3534).

112. It is also noteworthy that others who were resident of SJM have provided evidence appearing to cast doubt on the suggestion that the use of violence towards children was a frequent occurrence.

113. SJM 73 is clear that she did not witness any beatings administered to children while she was resident at SJM during two periods in the seventies:

*“I never witnessed any beatings or hitting. A few times I remember girls needing to be restrained because they were fighting with each other. The Sisters tried to protect us. A lot happened outside of St Joseph’s which affected the girls, including myself. It was those things that were the cause of what went on and anger was taken out on staff. The Sisters were never violent towards us. They were an authority figure but were never aggressive. If there was an issue the Sisters would try and talk it out and separate the girls” (SJM 29260, para 9).*

114. SJM 74 was resident at SJM for three years in the eighties. She recalled that while rules were enforced in the school, no child was physically abused for non-compliance:

*“[12] In St Joseph’s we were expected to follow the rules. This was no different from anywhere else. If we did something wrong we were told off. Sometimes, I would have been sent to my room, sometimes I had my pocket money deducted or sometimes I would have lost out on a cigarette. [13] I was never hit by any of the Sisters nor did I witness any of the other girls being hit. The Sisters were very good to me” (SJM 29265, para 12-13).*

115. SJM 75 recalled that when she was resident of SJM in the nineties it was inhabited by a “*lot of very difficult girls*” who were frequently abusive to staff members. She recalled the methods adopted by staff to deal with such behaviours:

*“The Sisters would have tried to calm them down by sending them to their room. I never witnessed the Sisters slapping, beating or hurting any of the girls”* (SJM 29270, para 10).

116. SJM 75 recalled one incident when she crossed the line and fought with other girls. The response of the staff was similar: she was taken out of the situation, brought to the secure unit and given the opportunity to calm down (SJM 29271, para 11).

117. SJM 74 recalled that the other side of the coin was a system based on points which rewarded good behaviour. She received a lot of rewards including weekends home, shopping trips, new clothes, sweets or extra pocket money (SJM 29266, para 17).

118. The system of sanctions and rewards was notified to staff in a document which clearly set out the expected approach (SJM 3535).

119. In their 1987 report SSI inspectors drew attention to the system of sanctions and rewards and how it operated in practice. They noted that many of the girls who were resident in SJM had a background of uncontrollable behaviour, and had little experience of being held responsible for breaches of discipline. They found that staff in SJM placed an emphasis on “*a relaxed informal milieu*” and the formation of

“*appropriate relationships*” (SJM 1522). The regime was not forceful or aggressive. The inspectors remarked that discipline and order was maintained by:-

“(i) *A framework in each unit which both girls and staff clearly understand.*

“(ii) *The care, supervision and vigilance of staff.*

“(iii) *A unity between staff and girls and a mutual support in implementing policy.*

“(iv) *Contractual arrangements with individual girls.*

“(v) *A weekly meeting with the girls to assess individual and group progress.*

“(vi) *Loss of privileges in terms of pocket money which is related to a mark system*”

(SJM 1522).

120. As it was described at the time of the 1992 regulatory inspection, “*In practice the emphasis is on reinforcing and rewarding good behaviour*” (SJM 2155).

121. The same intelligent approach to discipline prevailed at the time of the 1993 inspection. The inspectors noted that the policy continued to promote the need to establish good relationships as a means to maintaining appropriate standards of behaviour:

“*Influence on the behaviour of girls is effected in the main through consistently warm and sound personal relationships. Discipline is maintained within a policy of balanced reward and sanction related to behaviour. The main controls are the vigilance of the staff and the consistency of team responses to each girl and her needs*” (SJM 1765).

122. In her opening to the Inquiry, Senior Counsel made reference to an entry in the punishment book which stated, "*dress of disgrace.*" The entry appeared to date from the nineteen twenties (SJM 26854). The implication would appear to be that a child who behaved badly would be required to wear a particular garment. However, no Applicant to the Inquiry referred to it as an extant punishment, and none of the witnesses who gave evidence on behalf of the Congregation knew of its existence.

123. It is a matter for the Inquiry to assess the evidence to determine whether any particular allegation of physical assault is true. The key issue, perhaps, is whether there is evidence to suggest that physical beatings of children was systemic. The Department takes the view that there is no such evidence. At its height, a small number of Applicants allege that they were the subject of unjustified assault, while others complain about what they perceive as the unnecessary or excessive use of corporal punishment.

124. It is submitted that SJM was far from being a brutal place, and that residents were generally treated kindly, with patience, understanding and with respect. If any child was the subject of unreasonable force the Department would condemn such actions without hesitation.

### **Emotional Abuse**

125. A number of Applicants have suggested that they were the subject of various forms of emotional abuse.

126. HIA 176 and HIA 376 have each complained that they were the subject of offensive or demeaning remarks from SR 237. However, SR 235 in her oral evidence to the Inquiry denied that she had ever witnessed such behaviour from staff. She remarked that to treat children in this manner would have been counterproductive, and contrary to an ethos which was focused on trying to create a sense of ease and happiness for the girls (transcript day 186, page 18).

127. In her evidence, SR 234 confirmed that staff did not, in her experience, denigrate the children by calling them names (transcript for day 186, page 44). Taking her lead from SR 240, she was very conscious of the fact that the place really was “*run for the children*” and her evidence to the Inquiry suggested that this was the ethos that influenced all of the activities of the staff (transcript for day 186, page 43).

128. One Applicant has mentioned in her statement (although she did not give evidence before the Inquiry) that much of her hair was cut off during the admission process: HIA 249 (at SJM 067 at para 2).

129. The same Applicant (HIA 249) is the only former resident of SJM to complain about being placed in a cold bath when she arrived at SJM (SJM 067 at para 2). In her statement she also complained that residents were not permitted to talk in the refectory.

130. One Applicant has alleged that she was deprived of food as a form of punishment: HIA 376. This Applicant also complained that one Sister in particular, SR 243, would upset the room if it was not properly cleaned and tidied to her high standards.

131. Another Applicant - HIA 203 - has complained that she was forced to eat food that she did not like. HIA 203 has also alleged that it was part of the regime at SJM to put the girls to bed at too early an hour. She complained in her statement that the standard arrangement was to be put to bed at 7.00pm (SJM 054, at para 6). In her oral evidence, when it was suggested to her that there were a range of evening activities which girls could participate in, and that bedtime was shortly after 9.00pm, she answered by saying that this was rarely the case (transcript for day 184, page 16).
132. In 1987 the inspectors reported that girls go up to bed, after supper, at 10.00 pm - 10.30pm. There is a typographical error in the report, but the intention seems to be to suggest that lights go out half an hour later. The inspectors went on to report that "*in general there is a degree of latitude in bedtimes for example if there is a particularly interesting programme on TV they are allowed to stay up to see the end of it*" (SJM 1515).
133. HIA 178 has complained that she had presents taken off her, and was on occasions punished for minor misdemeanors by being compelled to kneel on the floor for an excessive period of time.
134. The Department would regard any such behaviour, if it occurred, as unacceptable, and contrary to the best interests of children. However, the weight of the evidence received by the Inquiry, particularly in relation to the period following the appointment of SR 240 to a leadership role at SJM, establishes that the school was a place of refuge for children and not a place where they were routinely abused.

## **Bullying**

135. The Department considers that the evidence demonstrates that while episodes of bullying were inevitably part of life at SJM, just as they would have been at any school in the country, the issue appears to have been well controlled and episodes of prolonged or serious bullying appear to have been quite rare.
136. Only a small number of complaints of bullying have been registered with the Inquiry: HIA 161, HIA 176, HIA 376.
137. The report of the 1994 regulatory inspection noted that staff at SJM recorded events of importance. The inspector remarked that there were very few incidents recorded, certainly by comparison with children's homes. He concluded that it was likely that the best explanation for the fact that there were relatively few serious incidents of friction between the residents was "*that the type of care given at St Joseph's minimises such outbursts*" (SJM 2300).
138. A consideration of the record book for the period from September 1993 to the date of the inspection on the 6 and 7 December 1994 revealed that there were no more than four significant skirmishes between girls: on the 22 September there was a fight involving some of the girls; a row on the 7 March 1994 led to a fight between two girls, and one was taken to hospital; on the 16 April 1994 one girl reportedly tried to drown another in the swimming pool; on the 20 May 1994 there was an incident (which is not otherwise described) when a girl was placed in the intensive care unit (SJM 2301).

139. In her statement to the Inquiry SJM 73 recalled how Sisters would step in if children were fighting with each other, and attempt to restrain the aggressors (SJM 29260, para 9). Moreover, if SJM 73 encountered problems with any of the other girls, she was aware that she could go to staff members, and on occasions she did do this and was helped (SJM 29261, para 11).

140. In her oral evidence to the Inquiry SR 235 emphasised that staff were always ready to intervene to prevent fights, often intervening before a situation deteriorated (transcript day 186, page 23). Personally, she did not have to intervene to break up fights but she did have experience of working with girls to de-escalate tensions.

141. SJM 75 also recalled in her statement how staff would intervene to stop girls from fighting. It was not something that was tolerated:

*"I was put in the lock up once because of fighting with the other girls. The door was not locked. There was a member of staff with me at all times. It was a good place to calm down..."* (SJM 29271, para 11)

142. SJM 75 has also recalled that the only issues she ever had were with other girls - not with staff. She was able to go to a staff member, such as her key worker, if the issues with the other girls were causing a problem for her (SJM 29271, para 14).

143. In her evidence to the Inquiry SR 235 explained how she engaged straightforwardly with girls if they came to her with a problem of whatever nature, or if she sensed that they had a problem. She might, for example, take them out of school for a short period

of time, or sit down with them at night for a discussion (transcript for day 186, page 9-10).

144. The Department submits that bullying was not a significant problem at SJM, and that staff were adept at addressing issues before they deteriorated. It is not surprising, however, that tension and fights occasionally occurred between the teenage girls who made up the population of SJM.

145. It is perhaps more surprising that such problems were not of a greater magnitude, and the SSI inspector who considered the issue was probably correct to suggest that this is likely to be a reflection of the sound approach of the staff. Staff members appeared to be well attuned to what was happening under their watch, and provided a ready ear to those children who wanted to discuss any difficulty that they were experiencing with peers.

146. It is also apparent that where physical fighting occurred between girls, staff adopted sensible strategies to calm the situation and to repair any damage.

### **Chores**

147. The Department notes that a number of Applicants have complained that when they were resident at SJM they were required to engage in excessively tough manual labour: HIA 176, HIA 178, HIA 203, HIA 249 and HIA 376. It

148. In the 1987 SSI inspection report the following observation was made:

*“The ethos of St Joseph’s provides the opportunity for the girls to take an active part in the day to day running of the house units. Staff assist and supervise the girls with the preparation of food in the units i.e. breakfast, evening meals and suppers during the week and throughout the weekends and holiday times. In addition staff supervise the girls with washing their personal items of clothing. The girls are involved in the day to day living in the units and this is an important concept. Instead of setting independence training aside as a module that children should pass through at some stage in their “in care career”, they are involved in having to cope with the real life domestic situation from the day of admission to the school” (SJM 1508).*

149. In the 1987 report it was also noted, *“As there are no domestic staff in the house units the upkeep of the premises falls mainly to the girls living there. Clearly those “services” are performed to a very high standard (SJM 1514).”*

150. In her statement SJM 73 recalled that when she was resident at SJM in the seventies she was certainly given chores to do, but the tasks were not excessive:

*“We were given different chores each week. Once we did our chore that was it. We were never forced to do chores or made to clean all day. It was exactly the same as what we have done at home” (SJM 29260, para 7).*

151. In her statement SJM 74 recalled that when she was resident of SJM for three years in the eighties she was required to carry out a number of chores in the unit where she lived. These would have included waxing the floors, cleaning, mopping,

preparing meals, washing up in the kitchen and preparing or cleaning out the fire. The chores were varied week to week. She had no complaint to make about these arrangements. She commented that she was “*okay with the chores, it was the same as I would have done at home*” (SJM 29265, para 9).

152. In her statement to the Inquiry, SJM 75 remarked upon the fact that the requirement to carry out chores helped to promote a sense of independence and prepared her for moving on:

*“I didn’t mind doing the chores. It was similar to what I would have done at home. The Sisters would have checked to make sure that we had done our chores but they never tried to be difficult. The chores we did changed every week. It set me up for moving out”* (SJM 29270, para 8).

153. It is submitted that the arrangements at SJM whereby the girls were expected to carry out these chores were perfectly acceptable. This was not a situation in which children were exposed to harsh labour, or exploited. By obliging the girls to carry out some basic tasks, staff were teaching them valuable life skills: they were promoting discipline and independence.

### **Excessive Emphasis on Religious Observance**

154. The Inquiry has been told by two Applicants that there was an excessive emphasis placed on religious practice and observance: HIA 203 and HIA 376.

155. It is of note that Rule 31 of the Training School Rules provided that each day should begin and end with a prayer; Holy Days should be observed in such manner as the Board of Management deemed appropriate; and where adequate arrangements could be made, religious instruction should be provided in a manner suited to the age and capacity of the pupils.
156. The SSI inspectors referred in their 1987 report to the Christian ethos of the school and on the fact that “*due attention is given to the performance of religious duties*”. They noted that girls were expected to attend Mass on Sundays and feast days, and they observed that prayers were said at morning assembly and before meals and that girls were encouraged to pray at night before retiring to bed. However, they did not suggest an excessive emphasis on religious observance (SJM 1540).
157. In their 1993 report the SSI inspectors stated explicitly that notwithstanding the fact that SJM was “*strongly influenced by a religious order, religion does not seem to be over-emphasised in the daily life of the school*” (SJM 1770).
158. The report of the regulatory inspection of 1994 noted that a prayer was said at morning Assembly and that girls attended Mass on a Sunday. However, formal prayers were not said at the end of the day, although each house was said to have its own way of marking the end of the day. The absence of evening prayers would tend to suggest that certainly at the date of that inspection religious observance was not excessive (SJM 2303).

## Cigarettes

159. Some Applicants have raised concerns about how cigarettes were utilised at SJM.

HIA 176 complained that her cigarette habit or addiction only started because she was given access to cigarettes when resident there, whereas HIA 198 complained that cigarettes were used as a bargaining chip.

160. The Department submits that by the standards of today the tolerance of smoking amongst the age group which inhabited SJM appears rather bizarre and perhaps reckless. However, this was an era in which there was less emphasis placed on the health risks of smoking, and in which many girls had acquired a smoking habit before being admitted to SJM.

161. SJM 73 has recalled that she had a smoking habit by the time she entered SJM in the seventies (SJM 29261, para 9). She has remarked in her statement that the Sisters were not happy with girls smoking but they didn't try to stop them. However, she also remembered that the Sisters rationed the cigarettes to five per day.

162. SJM 74 also recalled that when she arrived at SJM she was a smoker and that smoking was part of life at SJM in the eighties - "*all the other girls smoked too*" (SJM 29266, para 16).

163. She has stated that the Sisters did not encourage her to smoke, and "*would have encouraged [her] to stop*" but the habit was already too deeply established for her to give up.

164. During their inspections of SJM, SSI inspectors commented upon the fact that many of the girls were regular smokers, albeit that they had entered the training school having already acquired the habit (see for example in the 1987 report at SJM 1525). It was noted, positively, that staff strictly limited the number of cigarettes to 5 per day, and inspectors commented that the restriction placed on the availability of cigarettes “*is perhaps better than ‘free smoking’*”. The inspectors recommended that consideration should be given to introducing measures targeted at incentivising non-smoking.

165. It is submitted that the Department’s predecessors, through their recommendation, did their best to address the smoking issue. However, this was a complex matter and it is submitted that the management of SJM would have found it virtually impossible to persuade girls to give up cigarettes where the habit was already so deeply ingrained.

## **Education**

166. It is observed that a number of complaints have been raised about the standard of education available to the girls at SJM. HIA 161, HIA176, HIA 178 and HIA 249 have made known their dissatisfaction with the educational provision.

167. However, contemporaneous records suggest that the education provision at SJM was of a good standard. In their 1993 report, the SSI recalled the views expressed by the inspectors from the Department of Education at the time of the educational inspection in 19989/90: the DENI inspectors had commented on the good relationship that existed between staff and girls, and they had expressed the view that this would undoubtedly lead to the promotion of higher levels of self-esteem and self-confidence (SJM 1773).

168. The SSI noted that in the three years prior to their inspection the vast majority of the capital budget had been devoted to improve the educational side of SJM. The school building had been completely refurbished in order to provide a "*pleasant stimulating environment*" and a new science block had been constructed.
169. Moreover, the inspectors took the time to carry out observations from which they concluded that the necessary environment existed within which "*the young people have the opportunity to learn and develop intellectually*" (SJM 1773).
170. These observations were consistent with the output from the school. Following a visit by a member of the SJM Management Board in August 1995, the following report was made of a meeting with a member of the teaching staff:

*"We discussed her recent successes in examinations....To May '95 results were as follows:*

*AEB passes - 327*

*RSA passes - 43*

*I understand that a recent visit by a DENI inspector resulted in his request to introduce some of [the teacher's] teaching packages to other schools. Very impressed with [the teacher's] exam results, teaching methods and commitment to her job. Congratulations offered on behalf of the Board" (SJM 24300).*

171. Teachers were said to “*keep abreast of educational trends by attendance at INSET seminars*” and this was enhanced by visits to the school by Education and Library Board officials 2-3 times per term (SJM 24311).

172. SJM 75 was resident at SJM in the nineties. [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]. [REDACTED].  
That situation changed at SJM: the classes were small, it was easier to learn and [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] She has characterised the educational arrangements as “*an enjoyable experience*” (SJM 29271, para 15).

173. In her oral evidence to the Inquiry SR 247 recalled that schooling at SJM was organised so as to cater for each individual’s needs. In that sense, the educational provision differentiated in accordance with the individual requirements of the girls (transcript day 187, page 23).

174. It is submitted that the evidence suggests that the criticism of the educational provision at SJM has been overstated. There may be many reasons why any particular Applicant may not have achieved educational success during their time at SJM. Certainly, the teaching staff and the school facilities provided an excellent opportunity for those who wished to make progress with their education.

### **Sex Education**

175. The Inquiry has received several complaints that girls were not adequately prepared for the onset of puberty, or provided with adequate sex education: see for example the statement of HIA 249 (SJM 070, at para 10).

176. It is noteworthy that HIA 249 is the earliest Applicant as concerns SJM. She was resident there in the period from [REDACTED]. The Inquiry might be prepared to observe that even in the domestic setting discussions around sex and physical and sexual development would not have been particularly sophisticated or advanced in that era, if those issues were discussed at all.
177. It would appear that as with thinking elsewhere in society, education in relation to sex and physical and sexual development progressed over the years at SJM.
178. The SSI inspectors noted at the time of their 1987 report that there was a twofold approach at SJM. Firstly, the inspectors found that general sex education was delivered by the teacher responsible for instruction on social and life skills. However, the inspectors did not comment on the quality of this teaching or the content of the material which was delivered. Secondly, girls were referred for medical advice where it was required for any particular matter, including contraception.
179. When she gave her evidence to the Inquiry on day 186, SR 235 acknowledged that discussions around puberty, for example, might not have been well handled during the earlier years of the institution. However, as the institution developed the formal part of the education process was delivered in the school setting, while girls would have had access to their house mother to discuss individual concerns (transcript for day 186 at pages 15-16).

## **Absconding**

180. The Inquiry has been concerned in previous modules about the degree of absconding associated with certain of the youth justice institutions. While absconding was also a feature of life at SJM it does not appear to have been a significant problem.

181. The SSI inspectors in their 1987 report appeared to be of the view that staff were doing their best by means of constant but unobtrusive supervision, to prevent children from endangering themselves whether by getting involved in fights or disagreements, by injuring themselves or by absconding (SJM 1517).

182. The Department would submit that in any particular case, there is not necessarily any relationship between a decision to abscond and suffering abuse. For example, SJM 73 recalled that she absconded from SJM on numerous occasions. She explained that she *“was not running away because she disliked St Joseph’s”* but she did so because she wanted to attend civil rights protests and to wanted to see her family (SJM 29261, para 10).

## **Medical and Dental Treatment**

183. A small number of Applicants have raised concerns about the adequacy of the medical treatment available at SJM: HIA 178 and HIA 249.

184. In her statement to the Inquiry HIA 178 explained how she was born with a condition called [REDACTED] (SJM 333, at para 3), and how she is now aware that while she was taken for medical appointments at least one was missed, and she

cannot remember being told to perform any particular exercise to address this disability (SJM 338, at para 15).

185. In her statement HIA 249 recalled that when she was ill she was left in her dormitory. She was not provided with medicine nor brought to a doctor (SJM 71, at para 15), although she does recall being brought to a hospital on one occasion after injuring her arm.

186. It is notable, however, that inspections from this era (HIA 249 was resident in Middletown from [REDACTED] until [REDACTED]) praised the institution for how it cared for children with particular health problems. For example, HIA 249 had [REDACTED] which, inspectors noted, was being cared for "*particularly well*" (SJM 1333).

187. The inspectors from SSI have documented the exemplary health care which was available at SJM in later years: a thorough examination was provided upon admission and again upon leaving the school; each girl was the subject of a quarterly inspection; the school was the subject of a quarterly inspection with a focus on hygiene and diet; a local GP was appointed as medical officer and he visited SJM weekly or as required to see girls who were sick (SJM 1532). A qualified nurse was employed at SJM to cater for minor ailments, and she was responsible for arranging dental appointments and for dealing with any requirement for hospital attendance (SJM 1533).

188. The 1992 regulatory inspection noted that the "*long established medical arrangements continue[d] to function in the school*" and that a daily medical record was

maintained. The inspector was shown a copy of this record which included details of the illnesses, medical complaints and treatments (SJM 2156).

189. At the time of the 1993 inspection the SSI inspectors again focused their attention on health care arrangements, and noted that satisfactory medical, nursing and dental care was provided to the girls (SJM 1778).

### **APRU**

190. The children and staff at SJM also had the advantage of input from the Adult Psychological Research Unit (APRU). A clinical psychologist from APRU was in attendance at SJM on two days per week in 1987. The inspectors from SSI noted that the *“skills of the psychologists are particularly valuable when they are working intensively with emotionally disturbed girls.”* The inspectors noted that the psychologists concentrated on helping such girls to understand their behaviour and on developing strategies to *“help them to adapt”* (SJM 1535).

191. By the time of their 1993 inspection, a psychologist from APRU was in attendance at SJM on 4 days per week, although a plan to increase to 6 days had not been implemented because of budgetary considerations (SJM 1768). The inspectors spoke of the *“vital contribution [which APRU staff made] to the life and work of the school”* and they commented that the residential staff placed *“a high value on the work of the psychologists and the support provided to them for their own work”* (SJM 1768).

## **Intensive Care Unit**

192. It is clear from the various inspection reports referred to in the foregoing that the facilities at SJM were excellent and that the school was well resourced. The Department was also responsive to the changing needs of the school.

193. Thus, when the Management Board of the school sought funding in 1987 for the provision of an intensive care unit (SJM1586 - 1587), the Training School Branch of the NIO responded promptly and positively (SJM 1577).

194. The statement of SR 234 (SJM 165 at para 17) has suggested that it was the NIO who required SJM to have a secure unit. However, the correspondence would tend to indicate that the NIO was responding to the needs and requests of SJM. The letter from SR 240 on behalf of the Management Board of the SJM put the position as follows:

*“It is the view of the Board that the provision of a small Intensive care Unit is an urgent need and I have been directed to request an urgent meeting to investigate the feasibility of setting up such a Unit” (SJM 1587).*

195. Within 12 months of SR 240 writing in these terms, the feasibility study had been completed and the expenditure for the Unit had been approved.

196. SR 234 has explained the function of the intensive care unit:

*“The ICU at St Joseph’s was used by staff for very short intensive periods of assessment and treatment through counselling and psychology therapies where the behaviour of the girls could not be managed within the house environment. A girl would also have been admitted to the intensive care unit if she came back to St Joseph’s in the middle of the night and we did not want to disturb other girls in their house. When this happened a girl went back to her own house in the a.m.”* (SJM 165, para 17).

197. SR 234 went on to explain that a girl was never left alone in the ICU.
198. The 1993 SSI inspection paid a particular focus on the use of the intensive care facility which had opened at SJM in October 1990 (SJM 1767).
199. The inspectors remarked that the unit was used infrequently: there had been 31 admissions in the 30 months since it became operational. The inspectors were satisfied that the unit was used appropriately to accommodate girls who had returned to the school under the influence of drink or drugs, or who were otherwise unsettled or disruptive. They commented that policy governing the use of the unit was *“unambiguous, clearly understood and implemented”* (SJM 1767). The inspectors suggested that the low incidence of using the unit was an *“indication of a staff tolerance and their ability to defuse difficult behaviour on a daily basis.”*
200. During the regulatory inspection which took place in December 1994 further reference was made to this unit (albeit using the nomenclature of *“secure accommodation”*). The inspector noted that it was unfortunate that the use of secure

accommodation was *“not covered by the current Training School Rules or any other legislation in spite of its proliferation in recent years”* (SJM 2306).

201. Nevertheless, the inspectors appeared to be satisfied that the unit at SJM was being used appropriately and not abusively. Its purpose was described as being *“intended to meet the needs of emotionally disturbed girls for only quite short periods.”*

They went on to note the following:

*“Every time the unit is used, even though the girl may not be locked in, full reports are prepared giving details of the situation, who was involved and the decisions that were taken. These reports were made available to the Inspector”* (SJM 2306).

202. The Inquiry received evidence from HIA 198 who was required to spend a prolonged period of time in the intensive care unit because of the particular risks that she presented to herself. In her evidence to the Inquiry HIA 198 complained that she received no specialist treatment or intervention during her time in the children’s care system, after she first revealed (to another institution) that she had been the victim of sexual abuse (transcript, day185, page 5 and page 9). However, it is the Department’s submission to the Inquiry that it is clear that a wide range of people went to very great lengths to assist HIA 198 with the difficulties which she evidently faced.

203. HIA 198 was significantly harmed before she arrived at SJM. During her time in [REDACTED] (from [REDACTED]) she absconded 30 times, and had attempted 13 overdoses (6 of which were life threatening), before being placed in SJM on [REDACTED] [REDACTED] (SJM 192).

204. The records relating to HIA 198's time in the intensive care unit at SJM are available to the Inquiry from page SJM 24658. The Inquiry is also referred to the detailed statement of SR 234 in this regard (SJM 166, paras 19 - 25).

205. Those records and the statement of SR 234 highlight the intensity of care which was provided to HIA 198, and the concerns which were exhibited in connection with her behaviour. Within 2 days of her admission to SJM she had absconded, and was therefore returned to the unit when she was apprehended. When she absconded again and brought back to the unit she refused to enter the room, and it required the intervention of police and staff to move her to the room (SJM 24668).

206. HIA 198 was placed in the intensive care unit on a continuous basis from ■ until ■ (when she was admitted to the Early Treatment Unit of the Craigavon Hospital) because she had continued to abscond from SJM and take tablets (SJM 201). SR 234 has expressed regret that HIA 198 was caused to spend such a long period of time in the unit, but it is clear that management at SJM "*had no other way to keep her safe*" (SJM 169, para 25). It is also clear that HIA 198's case was unusual and exceptional in that respect.

207. The records suggest that there was ongoing consideration given to whether it would be safe to admit HIA 198 to an open unit (House 1) but she agreed with staff that if this happened they "*wouldn't see her for dust*," although she later intimated that she would try not to run away (SJM 24681 and 24685).

208. Within the intensive care unit HIA 198 displayed a range of challenging behaviours to staff: she ignored staff (SJM 24665); she hid cigarettes and matches (SJM 24662); she threw bed linen out of the window (SJM 24668); she was verbally abusive and aggressive (SJM 24668 - 9); she threatened staff with a plastic beaker which she had broken, and proceeded to try to harm herself with it (SJM 24668 - 9).

209. There can be little doubt that HIA 198 presented as a complex case. The evidence before the Inquiry suggests that much time, effort and expertise was devoted to attempting to address her problems during her time at SJM. Despite her evidence to the Inquiry that no one ever sat down with her to talk about her problems (Transcript for day 185, page 29) it is clear that she was involved in an ongoing programme of work with APRU (see for example at SJM 198 - 199). The records relating to her time in the intensive care unit refer to visits by Dr. Michael Barbour of APRU (SJM 24691) and of the frequent attempts by care staff to talk with her.

210. HIA 198 also suggested that the health services available to her during this time in her life were poorly directed. For example, she suggested that she was under the care of adult psychiatric services, and that services weren't "*child friendly*" (transcript for day 185, at page 31).

211. This evidence appears to be wholly inaccurate. HIA 198 was under the care of Dr. Noel McCune who was Adolescent and Child Psychiatrist at Craigavon Hospital at the time. Ultimately, she was admitted under his care to the Early Treatment Unit ('ETU') at the Craigavon Hospital (SJM 202), when it became clear that she would not settle in SJM. She was discharged from the ETU to Shamrock House (Rathgael) when she

refused to return to SJM. It can be seen that even after refusing further help from SJM, the Sisters from SJM continued to take an interest in her case. For example, on the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] SR 234 attended a case conference at Rathgael which discussed her case (SJM 204). It was emphasised at that meeting that it would be important for SJM to maintain contact with HIA 198 because of the potential for a phased return to that facility (SJM 205)

212. It would appear from the records, and despite her assertions to the contrary, a team of people were making every effort to provide HIA 198 with appropriate care, and to try to identify answers to her complex problems. It is submitted that this was typical of the culture and ethos of the staff at SJM.

213. A similar approach appears to have been adopted in the case of another resident, SJM 65; the management at SJM agreed to continue to work with her despite her complex needs and her propensity to self-harm, and the impact on the staffing resources of the school (SJM 2092).

214. It is also the case that SJM and the Northern Ireland Office were open to the prospect of finding appropriate medical services for children outside the jurisdiction, in suitable cases where the need was identified. This was confirmed by the evidence of SR 234 who referred to one case of a girl being sent to accommodation in England from SJM (transcript day 186, page 69).

215. The papers before the Inquiry reveal a number of instances in which particular medical interventions were sought and obtained in Great Britain when the expertise

was not available in Northern Ireland: see SJM 24377 (refers to a proposal to make funding available for a place at Meadowcroft Psychiatric Intensive Care Unit in Birmingham); SJM 24516 (refers to the funding of a place at the Gardiner Unit in Manchester).

### **After Care**

216. A small number of Applicants have contended that they were discharged from SJM without adequate preparation: HIA 176, HIA 178 and HIA 203.

217. However, the Department submits that the evidence before the Inquiry suggests that staff at SJM took seriously their responsibility to prepare the girls for life after care. In their 1987 report the inspectors referred to "*an ongoing programme of independence training*" which included budget training and help with finding work. They referred to the "*considerable demands*" which were placed on a senior field social worker "*in trying to arrange accommodation, finding jobs, trying to re-integrate the girl with her family again*" (SJM 1527).

218. Elsewhere in the 1987 report, the inspectors remarked upon the resourcefulness of the staff at SJM in locating employment for girls who were ready to leave the facility, despite the unemployment problems in the wider economy. SJM had been "*quite successful in making arrangements locally and further afield*" in finding employment for the girls (SJM 1531).

219. In their 1993 report the inspectors focused on the use of the hostel facility which was available within the SJM campus (SJM 1767). The inspectors found that this

facility “*provided opportunities for independence training*” and served as a “*stepping stone from the supportive life in a long term unit in the school and for those girls heading for independent accommodation in the community.*” Despite the criticism from some that there was no effort made at SJM to prepare girls for life after care, the inspectors praised the “*flexible regime*” adopted within the hostel which was “*suited to preparing girls for accepting self responsibility*” (SJM 1767).

220. The inspectors (in their 1987 report) also remarked upon a notable aspect of SJM, which was the frequency with which former residents of SJM would return to the facility for respite or just “*as a means of escape for a time from the pressures of family life or when they face rejection*” (SJM 1528). This is a powerful testament to the security and care which the findings of the inspectors suggest was the pervading atmosphere at SJM.

### **Summary of Key Submissions on Behalf of the Department of Justice**

- The passage of time, the authorised destruction of documents or their accidental loss, as well as the non-availability of witnesses has acted as an impediment to a full and accurate investigation of many events, practices and policies relevant to SJM and the Department and which are of interest to the Inquiry.
- Only a very small proportion of those whose circumstances caused them to be placed into the care of SJM during the period relevant to this Inquiry have raised any complaint of abuse, and a smaller number again have brought forward complaints to this Inquiry.

- There is strong evidence before the Inquiry from a number of former residents at SJM, which speaks to the good care which they received there from what they described as dedicated and loving staff.
- Only a very small proportion of the very many people who have worked at SJM have been implicated in the complaints which have been made, whether to the Inquiry or to other agencies.
- The work of the overwhelming majority of staff who served within SJM was focused on addressing the difficulties faced by children within the care of that institution, who often presented with very challenging behaviours.
- Some of the complaints which have arisen in this Module do not relate to abusive conduct on the part of staff employed at SJM. Rather in some cases the complaints raise concerns about bullying by fellow trainees, and in some cases by clergy who had access to the training school premises.
- The Department's predecessors as well as the Order of St Louis did not receive any contemporaneous complaints from any of the Applicant's to this Module of the Inquiry. Only one applicant to this Module raised any complaint before the Inquiry commenced its work. There were many vehicles by which persons concerned about their treatment at SJM could have registered contemporaneous complaints.

- The absence of contemporaneous reports or complaints coupled with the passage of time is likely to have impaired the quality of the evidence available to the Inquiry when considering any particular complaint. It may also have the effect of depriving the institution or the person(s) implicated in the complaint(s) of the evidential advantages which might have flowed from an earlier report or complaint.
- The documentation relating to visits and inspections at SJM over several decades, both private and official, testifies to the commitment, dedication and skill of the staff, the harmonious and respectful relations between staff and trainees, and to the high quality of material and facility provision.

#### Services Provided

- The services available to children within SJM (eg. the provision of an intensive care unit and the psychological services available through APRU) were regularly excellent, well-resourced and often innovative and ground breaking.
- While one applicant complained that the intensive care unit was unsuited for her needs, there was evidence that it was a much valued facility which was used to address the challenges posed by frequent absconders or those who self-harmed.
- While the Inquiry received some complaints of inadequate medical and dental care, there is other evidence to demonstrate that medical and dental care was available when the situation required it, with trainees not infrequently brought to see relevant practitioners.

- If necessary services were not available in Northern Ireland for the treatment of behaviours or conditions, funding was made available by the Department (NIO) to ensure that those services were accessed in Great Britain on a case by case basis.

### Oversight

- The Department (MOHA and NIO) ensured that SJM was the subject of frameworks of regulation and inspection, and that they had the benefit of professional systems of advice and assistance to inform improvements in practice.
- The Department (MOHA) took steps (in 1965-66) to ensure that issues of underperformance at SJM were appropriately addressed.
- While the Department (MOHA and NIO) provided financial support and regulation, the staff at SJM were directly answerable to a Board of Management which was afforded a high level of autonomy by the Department.
- The Department provided additional funding as and when required in answer to direct requests from the Director of SJM. The training school at SJM was regarded as generously staffed, resourced and equipped.
- The enactment of the Training School Rules set out the clear structures and standards to be followed by the management and staff of SJM in relation to the care of the children placed under their control, and this was supported by a system of inspection.

- It is clear that inspections were carried out on a regular basis at SJM by inspectors from the Ministry during the 1950s and 1960s. During the 1970s and into the early 1980s officials from the Social Work Advisory Group (SWAG) were a frequent presence at SJM and were responsible for providing challenge, guidance and advice. From 1987 the Social Services Inspectorate (SSI) was responsible for carrying out a series of intensive inspections at SJM.

### Culture

- The staff at SJM were appropriately lauded in a number of reports for their professionalism and their commitment to their work with children who often had complex and challenging needs. The staff at the training school at SJM engaged in a variety of diversionary work with children, and offered them a range of valuable opportunities (music, drama, needlework, sport, cinema, vacations etc) which would not necessarily have been available to them at home or in the community. There was an emphasis on avoiding any sense of institutionalisation. The relatively few complaints that have been received by the Inquiry is testament to the fact that this was a well-run facility.

### Complaints and allegations of abuse and bullying

- The Inquiry has received allegations of physical and emotional abuse, and that bullying was widespread and tolerated. Those responsible for carrying out inspections, as well as social workers and other staff present at SJM did not suggest to the Department (whether MOHA or NIO) that there was any such concerns.

- There were no contemporaneous complaints. There is no independent corroboration for any of the complaints which have been advanced before the Inquiry. No member of staff at SJM has ever been charged with any offence in relation to children under their care.
- The Department notes that the witnesses who gave evidence on behalf of the Order of St. Louis have denied that trainees were physically, verbally or emotionally abused, or that bullying was either widespread or tolerated. They have denied all allegations of wrongdoing. If any form of abuse occurred, whether as alleged or at all, the Department would unhesitatingly condemn it.
- While absconding was not a significant problem at SJM, staff worked assiduously to prevent it, and were proactive in looking for trainees who left the premises without permission and sought to secure their return as a matter of urgency.
- Corporal punishment was phased out at SJM many years before this was required by legislation. Discipline was maintained using a progressive points system which rewarded good behaviour with the provision of treats and privileges, and sanctioned poor behaviour by removing or reducing privileges.
- When corporal punishment was used it was appropriately documented, and documentation was made available to the Ministry.
- While some have made made complaints about the poor standard of educational provision, the inspection reports generally reflect positively on how the educational needs of trainees were met, and many were successful in obtaining qualifications.

- While some have made complaints about the chores which they were expected to carry out (cleaning, cooking etc) SJM operated on the basis that everyone had to take appropriate responsibility for the environment in which they lived, and the better evidence is that trainees were not expected to carry out any more housework than might have been required of them in their own homes.
- The Inquiry has received some complaints about the separation of siblings. Those who have given evidence on behalf of SJM have indicated that there was no official policy of separation, and that if separation occurred it was for good reason. However, and in any event, the few siblings who passed through SJM were not prevented from seeing each other and indeed they had ample opportunity to engage with each other during the course of any day.

#### Aftercare

- SJM has received some criticism for how it prepared trainees for release. However, the evidence before the Inquiry was that staff took after-care seriously: accommodation and employment was arranged; facilities for after-care were developed in Belfast; and staff kept in touch with trainees after they were discharged and many corresponded or came to visit.