

HIA REF: 175

Witness Name: HIA175

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**THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995**

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**WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA175**

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I, HIA175, will say as follows:-

**Personal details**

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in County Down. [REDACTED] had an alcohol dependency sometimes she was able to look after us and on other occasions she wasn't I never knew who my father was.
2. I was thirteen when I went into Nazareth House and [REDACTED] was seven. I had an older brother [REDACTED] who was taken to Rubane in Kircubbin. I had an older sister who did not live she lived with a man in Newry and an older brother who lived with an auntie.
3. I remember the welfare coming down one day and they took me and my younger brother [REDACTED] out of the house and to a court in [REDACTED]. We were made subject to a court order but the judge said that we must be kept together and as a result [REDACTED] was the [REDACTED] to be placed in Nazareth House, he was only meant to be there for a few weeks.

**Nazareth House (16/05/69 – 10/09/71)**

4. I remember the first day that we arrived in the home. Living in [REDACTED] we did not have very much and going to the home I was wearing an adult coat

that was cut to fit me. [REDACTED] and I were sent to the Sacred Heart Group and SR31 [REDACTED] was in charge. The kids in it were making fun of me. I vividly remember us not getting off to a great start.

5. The routine in the home was that you got up in the morning and went down to breakfast in a single file. We had to walk on the right hand side of the corridor. After breakfast we would come back up and do our chores before going to school. In the home you had to go to the chapel every day before breakfast and we always had to say the rosary.
6. The first morning when we were walking down to breakfast I noticed children standing on the left of the corridor with bed sheets over their heads. As we walked I saw my brother [REDACTED] standing there. He had wet the bed and this was the punishment. When we came back up there was a very strong smell and when I saw [REDACTED] I hugged him. He smelt of jeyes fluid as that is what they used to bathe him. It was very hard being taken from your mummy because she couldn't look after you and that is how we were treated.
7. I used to steal sheets from the laundry and at night I would check if [REDACTED] had wet the bed and if he had I stripped his bed so that he would not have to stand in the corridor the next morning. I would hide the sheets so the nuns wouldn't know. It didn't always work because [REDACTED] wet the bed every night. The older girls would come and forcefully move the children that wet the beds.
8. After school we came back and did more chores. One that I remember was using a very heavy buffer to polish the floors. The nuns watched us as we did our chores. My only real dealings were with SR31 [REDACTED] because she was in charge of our group. When we had our chores completed we got our tea and then we would be allowed to watch TV for a short time before going to bed.

9. The beatings happened on a regular basis if you weren't doing the chores correctly SR31 would hit you with the bunch of keys round the head saying you were useless and stupid.
10. I went to school at [REDACTED] on the [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] went to a school in Nazareth House. I couldn't wait to get back after school to see [REDACTED] we would play in the play area at the front of Nazareth House where there were bars. It was frowned upon for a girl to be playing on things like that because she would be wearing a skirt.
11. My mummy used to visit every week on either a Saturday or a Sunday. She would thumb a lift from [REDACTED] and then we were put in this wee hall with seats to see her. Sometimes we would be allowed to go out with our mummy for a couple of hours. After every visit when mummy left SR31 used to take us into a room at the Sacred Heart group. She would tell us how lucky we were to be in the home because our mummy was an alcoholic who didn't want us and the only reason she came to visit was to pass her day. She would say that mummy was very happy to leave us there. The way she spoke about mum has filled me with a hatred of her that has hurt me more than any of the physical abuse I suffered.
12. The food in the home was made up of handouts from places like Marks and Spencer's. You got the same sort of thing every other day it wasn't great but in those days nothing really was. I was constantly hungry.
13. One day another girl and I were up watching Top of the Pops, the Pans People were on and we were dancing. SR31 was coming up towards the room and she was totally disgusted at us dancing. We were brought up to her cell and she had a big chain with keys attached to the bottom and we got that round our heads. We were then made to stand outside her cell for hours until we learnt a lesson. I had to stand outside her cell on a regular basis and every time I would have been beaten beforehand.

14. On one occasion I was sent up to the old peoples part of the home which was at the top of Nazareth House. It wasn't uncommon that we would go up there to bring the old people down to the chapel. However, this time there was a lady who had died and I was brought into the room to help the nun wash her. We then had to put this white thing on it was like a night dress. It was a very daunting experience for a thirteen year old girl. I was never told beforehand what I was going to be doing. I did this on another occasion as well.

15. Our chores included working with the elderly in the old people's home. My job was to wheel the old people to the lift and take them down and then somebody else took over. I remember there was a man but I cannot remember his name. I remember this oldish man in particular who was resident in the home. There was a big corridor and he used to run from side to side trying to block you. He seemed to live there and spent his day walking up and down the corridor. If he caught you he would hold you really tight and his hands would be everywhere it was frightening. When I look back on it now I think that there must have been something wrong with him.

16. I remember a really nice lady from [REDACTED] visiting us a few times each year, she was a social worker and she used to bring [REDACTED] and I into town to buy clothes. One day when we came back we were met by **SR31** [REDACTED] she was very nice to us in front of the lady and then told us to go to our dormitory. Later she came in and took the stuff from us. I remember seeing one of the other girls wearing one of the dresses I had got. We never got them back. I told the welfare lady but I'm not sure that she said anything to **SR31** [REDACTED]

17. I do not remember any inspectors coming to the home but I know that there were often visitors. When visitors were coming we would be made clean the home in preparation.

18. I recall that one day my sister came and brought [REDACTED] and I to [REDACTED]. We went to a football game and she had entered my name in a competition. This man arrived at the home with the prize and it was a signed ball with the Down team signatures on it, I was presented with it but I never got to see the ball again and I don't know where it went.
19. One day my mum took us on a day trip to [REDACTED] and we were so excited. We were away all day and when we got back we were about half an hour late. SR31 [REDACTED] was waiting on us and when mum left she hit me and [REDACTED]. I think I was about fourteen at that stage. I always told my mum what was happening to us but I would tell her not to say anything for fear of the repercussions.
20. In the home [REDACTED] and I used to be sent to a family in [REDACTED] on holidays. I remember it because the man was disabled and had a wee blue disability car that only held one person. They used to make us eat porridge both in the morning and at night. Anthony didn't like porridge. I remember one morning the woman was making Anthony eat the porridge, which was the same bowl that he hadn't eaten over the previous few days and I had enough, I got him by the hand and told her he is not eating your porridge and we are going. We took off through the fields and they were shouting at us. They called the welfare and they came down. I told them that we were not staying as [REDACTED] didn't like porridge and he was not eating it. I was always protecting him and I think that came from our family situation and carried right through into the home. We were brought back to Nazareth House.

### St Joseph's Baby Home

21. When I was fifteen I left school and went to work in St Joseph's baby home. I am not sure how long I actually spent there. I was in the toddler section where we had to get the toddlers up out of bed, put them onto potties. I had some training from [REDACTED] on one occasion. It was in order to deal with one particular little boy. He had a medical condition and when he had a dirty bum something came down his back passage. We would have to lift him off the potty, put him on the worktop beside the sink and make sure our hands

were warm. We then had to push that bit back up into the wee boy's passage. On thinking about it I didn't realise how dangerous it was I had no experience.

22. I lived in the baby home during my time there and got paid £3 a week from the nuns. This then had to cover my meals but often because I was so busy I would be late getting to the dining hall and there would be no food left.

23. I remember there being a long driveway up to the home and it was scary late at night in the dark. Men used to hide behind the trees and jump out because they knew it was all girls living there. One night a man tried to come through my bedroom window.

24. When I was fifteen I wanted to go out with the other girls to the parish disco. I was told not to go but I went anyway and was given a warning. I went again on two further occasions and I was put out of the baby home and into the Good Sheperd. At this stage I think [REDACTED] had moved to Nazareth Lodge and he was eventually fostered out.

#### Good Sheperd Belfast (1971 - 1972)

25. In the Good Sheperd I lived in Merrion House one of the hostels it was on Carolyn Road. It was separate from the house. There were two buildings one was for unmarried mothers and I was in the other bit. Many of the girls worked so they left the home but I didn't have a job so I cleaned certain parts of the hostel from half six in the morning. When I was finished I would go over to the big house and work in the laundry. My working day was usually from about seven in the morning to seven in the evening. The food was cooked by SR196 and it was paid for out of my wages. At the weekend I was allowed to go home to my mummy who was living in Belfast but it was only either a Saturday or a Sunday I always knew what lay ahead when I was coming back.

26. The first time that I came back from my home visit I was told to go into what seemed like a dormitory but it was more like a hospital ward with an old fashioned curtain round it and take all my clothes off. SR196 came in with what appeared to be like a jam jar and a paint brush. She then proceeded to paint me all over with this stuff that was really stingy. I asked her what it was for and she said it was so I didn't carry anything in from being outside. The stuff was slapped onto the entire body and private parts she made us stand with our legs open and our hands in the air. I soon stopped going home. I'd say that I endured the same procedure about three or four times.

27. When I moved from Nazareth House I was never given the opportunity to see [REDACTED] who was in the Lodge although I asked on many occasions.

28. In the Good Sheperd I recall an episode where SR196 and a priest were in room. They made all the girls line up and individually they brought us into the room. They made the girls swear that they were virgins. I rebelled against them and would not conform to what they want. I believe as a result I was sent to Middletown.

29. I never had any contact with social services when I was in Good Sheperd. I think the court order stated that I was to stay in care until I was eighteen and I believe it was the same order of nuns that were responsible for our care.

#### St Josephs Middletown (1972-1974)

30. When I left Good Sheperd I went to St Josephs and I was so happy there. There was a lovely nun called SJM11 she was so nice and made you feel that you mattered. You were made feel like you were wanted and were treated with warmth and affection which I had never experienced before.

31. I was never in trouble with the police before being sent to Middletown and I stayed there until I was seventeen.

32. The training I got in Middletown helped me to get a job we did different tasks and were given a small amount of money. They helped me to get a job at an old people's place in Holywood County Down. It was also run by nuns but again they weren't very nice. I lived and worked there for a short period of time.
33. One day when I was coming into Belfast to visit my mum I was at a wee cafe near the train station in Great Victoria Street. I was having a cup of tea and I got talking to this lady and asked had she any jobs. She gave me a job even though I had no experience. I moved back home which I wasn't allowed to do. The welfare called a few times but my mum said I wasn't there. The final time they called my mum said that I was nearly eighteen and that I was doing well and they left me alone.

#### Life After Care

34. One of my friends had a brother and I started dating him. I fell pregnant very quickly and I moved in with him in Belfast. I had been living with my mum but she was an alcoholic and would have parties with different men in the house. I eventually moved out and not long after that she died in a house fire.
35. I was with my partner for twenty two years and we had [REDACTED] sons together. He was very abusive to me and I was constantly seeking refuge in Women's Aid. I kept going back to him as it was the easiest option but now I am away from him and have a great relationship with my sons. I never drank due to the impact that alcohol had on my life in the early years.
36. The relationship I have with my siblings was very much hindered by my time in care.
37. The education we received has hindered any potential job opportunities that I had.
38. I suffer from [REDACTED] and one of my sons stays with me every night due to the heavy medication that I take.



39. I have been seeing a psychiatrist since 1994 and I believe that my difficulties stem from the time I spent in care. I am currently waiting on a referral to a specialist as I have [REDACTED] it may be attributable to being hit round the head with the bunch of keys.

40. I reported these matters to the PSNI in 2010 but I have not heard anything from them.

41. I am also taking civil action against the Sisters of Nazareth.

42. I believe that an apology should be forthcoming from both the Order and the State as they were responsible for my care. I also feel that a memorial would be a fitting tribute to those that have not had their voices heard.

**Statement of Truth**

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed HIA175 [REDACTED]

Dated 25/6/2014

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behaviour she said that a close friend of HIA 175 had had a fatal accident at work and possibly HIA 175 was very upset about this. He thought it wise not to insist on her returning for a couple of days to give her an opportunity of getting over the shock. I visited HIA 175 and arranged with her that she would return to the hostel after the funeral.

22.2.72 HIA 175 refused to go back and said she was not going back to slave in the laundry as she had been doing. This was the first indication that she had felt like this about her work there. She would not consider going back and working outside. I explained it was impossible for her to remain at home but if she would not return we would have to take action. She ignored this threat and said I could do what I liked about it.

At this time we had been advertising for lodgings for adolescent girls and I thought it might be worth considering this for HIA 175 as a final alternative. When I brought up the subject with her she was interested in pursuing it. On this basis her temporary stay at home was tolerated.

11.4.72 I arranged for HIA 175 to visit the lodgings before the final move was decided upon. Having visited the family concerned she made trivial objections to the proposed move and on the basis of this refused to accept this as an alternative. After lengthy discussion of possible alternatives she finally agreed to return to the hostel on the 17.4.72. However she refused to go to the hostel when the time came and I was left with no alternative but to remove her to a place of safety under Section 59 Children and Young Persons Act K.I. 1968 - St. Joseph's Training School, Middleton.

#### REMARKS

From the 22.12.71 to the present time there has been a marked deterioration in HIA 175 behaviour and attitudes. Initially she was quite co-operative with us and was not immediately antagonistic to suggestions proposed by us. Also she took a great interest in her brother's welfare and kept in touch with him. Lately she was more concerned about expressing her anti-authority feelings and general hostility towards the Welfare Department until the stage was reached where there was absolutely no co-operation from HIA 175 in any plans that were considered for her.

HIA 175 always maintained that she wanted to be at home with her mother and this was the reason for her persistent absconding from the hostel. I was sympathetic towards this natural wish and consequently very tolerant in my attitude to her. It became clear that [redacted] was physically and emotionally unfit to undertake the care and control of HIA 175 and that she was doing very much as she pleased when at home. This freedom made her more aggressive and she gradually began to flout authority more openly as time went on. I have also noticed a recent breach in the relationship between [redacted] and HIA 175. HIA 175 has expressed very bitter feelings towards her mother. Her employment record has been poor. When she left the hostel on the 19.2.72 she managed to get work for herself but this lasted for a very short period and she has been unemployed since. I was also concerned about the company she was keeping and felt that she was very much at risk in this environment.

[redacted] 5.4.72

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31. I was never in trouble with the police before being sent to Middletown and I stayed there until I was seventeen.

C.S.

## Down County Welfare Department PROGRESS REPORT

Child's name HIA 175 (d.o.b. [redacted] age in years [redacted])  
 Home address [redacted] Authority responsible Down  
 Foster parents name and address Good Shepherd Hostel  
Ballynaveigh, Belfast.

Date placed 30.11.71 ~~Resided with foster parents~~ / under supervision Committed Sec. 63  
 S & YF Act 1950  
 16.5.69 at Newcastle  
 J. Court.

Dates of visits since last C.S. (underline those on which child was seen).

<u>8.12.71</u>	<u>5.1.72</u>	<u>15.1.72</u>	<u>18.2.72</u>	<u>10.3.72</u>	<u>12.4.72</u>	<u>13.5.72</u>	<u>23.6.72</u>	
<u>9.12.71</u>	<u>6.1.72</u>	<u>16.1.72</u>	<u>21.2.72</u>	<u>14.3.72</u>	<u>14.4.72</u>	<u>19.5.72</u>	<u>26.6.72</u>	
<u>20.12.71</u>	<u>8.1.72</u>	<u>26.1.72</u>	<u>23.2.72</u>	<u>25.3.72</u>	<u>17.4.72</u>	<u>25.5.72</u>		
<u>21.12.71</u>	<u>10.1.72</u>	<u>1.2.72</u>	<u>4.2.72</u>	<u>7.4.72</u>	<u>20.4.72</u>	<u>5.6.72</u>		
<u>22.12.71</u>	<u>11.1.72</u>	<u>11.2.72</u>	<u>2.3.72</u>	<u>11.4.72</u>	<u>28.4.72</u>	<u>12.6.72</u>		

**CHILD**

**Personality/behaviour (in relation to foster parents, age peers, social worker and other significant adults):**

HIA 175 is a very difficult person to get to know. She has a quiet, reserved personality and does not converse easily. She has no hobbies or special interests. Attempts were made to stimulate an interest in dressmaking but she did not follow this up. On the whole she is apathetic and has a very diffident approach to life. When at home and among her friends she is a little more vivacious. It is possible when on her own she is quite a lively companion as she is well liked by the girls in the hostel and by her friends in her neighbourhood.

However relations are very strained between HIA 175 and ~~her mother~~ She does not see me in the role of helper/advisor but as an obstacle to her return home. During the nettled periods in the hostel she can be quite reasonable and appears to accept that I am trying to help but this is only temporary. At the first indication of a conflict of wishes the resentment flares up and she becomes irrational. It is impossible to reason with her when she is in this state.

**Health (remark any recent visits to family doctor)**

HIA 175 health on the whole has been very good. She had a recent attack of ~~illness~~ for which she attended the doctor. However with medication this did not take long to clear. It was thought that she contacted it while at home.

**Progress at work/school (remark any social worker contact with school/employer)**

HIA 175 progress at work has been very erratic. She has been reported at times to be quite a good worker but when she is unsettled in the hostel her work deteriorates badly. She has missed work on several occasions when she over-stayed her leave at home, at such times her work has also been slipshod.

**Interests and special events (include religious observance)**

HIA 175 has no special interests. Her one aim in life is to be at home with her friends and family. Little is known of her activities when at home. She does not take an active part in activities in the hostel except the occasional appearance at the Club Disco. She attends Church while at the hostel.

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