

HIA REF: 202

Witness Name: HIA202

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA202

I, HIA202 will say as follows:-

Personal Details

1. I was born on [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]. My mother and father were married and we lived in [REDACTED]. I had [REDACTED] brothers and one sister. Two of my brothers sadly passed away last year. I was the [REDACTED]. My brother [REDACTED] was born after [REDACTED] and I. My home life was not good. My father drank a lot of alcohol and gambled on horses. He physically abused my mother and the children. I used to hide when the rows were going on. On one occasion my mother used the winnings of a bet to buy blankets for us and my father got angry and took his anger out on me. I didn't have a loving home.
2. One day the parish priest [REDACTED] came to our house and I was taken into a room with him and my mother. [REDACTED] said to my mother to put me in the Good Shepherd in Newry for training. The culture at the time was that you never questioned a priest and my mother might have thought it was a good idea. I didn't know what to feel. I believed the priest. I trusted him that I would get trained. I have never known the real reason why I was put into the Good Shepherd. I may have been talking to soldiers innocently and my

mother may have worried. My older sister left home when she was 19 years old.

Good Shepherd, Newry [REDACTED]

3. I was [REDACTED] years old when I was taken to the Good Shepherd in Newry. I think I was put in two weeks before my sixteenth birthday. The Mother Superior was GSC35 [REDACTED]. I also recall a GSC36 [REDACTED]. There was a lot of older woman there and only a few young girls. I was the youngest. I was friendly with girls called [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] and they were a few years older than me. I felt devastated when I first arrived and I was very emotional. I couldn't stop crying for days. No one bothered with me. I felt abandoned and unloved by my family.
4. I slept in a dormitory with other girls. The beds were in a row and faced each other. I stayed in the same dormitory the whole time I was in Newry. [REDACTED] GSC36 [REDACTED] was in charge of my dormitory. She was a nice nun.
5. Our routine was the same every day. We got up early in the morning and went to Mass at 7am and afterwards we had breakfast. GSC37 [REDACTED] was the priest that came in to say Mass. After breakfast we went straight to work in the laundry. I didn't wear a uniform, just the clothes I wore at home. I worked in all parts of the laundry including operating the large rollers. The other women who worked there showed me what to do. There were a lot of old women working in the laundry. I think they had been in the Good Shepherd all their lives. I kept my head down and did my job. I do not remember getting paid for my work.
6. Newry was more relaxed than the Good Shepherd in Derry which I later went to. However I do not recall being allowed out in Newry. I learned to play the guitar. I cannot remember the name of the girl who taught me. The nuns were strict and when we got to watch television the nuns would turn it off when there was kissing. The food was alright. I was never physically abused in Newry.

7. While I worked in the laundry there was a boy who was the delivery driver. He was 19 years old and his name was [REDACTED]. We got friendly and on my [REDACTED] he gave me a Saint Christopher's medal. We liked each other. We danced together at the Christmas dance as the nuns watched. I wore a long blue maxi dress. He gave me a quick peck on the cheek as we walked up the corridor. [REDACTED] was a gentle soul. He told me he was going to ask the nuns if he could take me out. I believe he asked GSC35's permission. Later I was told that [REDACTED] wanted to see me in the parlour. I spoke to [REDACTED] and he told me that the nuns wouldn't let him see me. He then left and that was the last time I saw him.
8. I remember I was in the dormitory when I was told that GSC35 wanted to see me. She told me that something terrible had happened. She said that [REDACTED] had died. He died on 19th January. The nuns told me he had taken a heart attack but I am not sure if I believe them. GSC36 told me that I shouldn't blame myself. I was devastated at the news. I was an innocent girl and [REDACTED] had good intentions towards me. I feel the nuns were cruel in stopping him seeing me. I always think how things could have been so much different. The tragedy of what happened to [REDACTED] has overshadowed my life. I relive it every time I talk about it. It was traumatic and I will never get over it.
9. After this [REDACTED], [REDACTED] and I ran away. They knew I was heartbroken and that I had to get away. We thumbed a lift to Belfast and stayed with a friend of [REDACTED]. We then made our way to Liverpool. The two girls were protecting me. The police found us in England and we were brought back to the Good Shepherd. We were separated when we got back. [REDACTED] was moved somewhere while [REDACTED] stayed in Good Shepherd. I believe she had a baby in the convent after I had left.
10. After this incident I was taken to the Good Shepherd in Derry. I was terrified to go home to my family and I told the nuns that. My mother didn't want me before so I felt what was the point in going home? I do not know why I was

moved to Derry from Newry. I can only assume it was because of [REDACTED] and then running away to England.

Good Shepherd, Derry [REDACTED]

11. I was [REDACTED] years old when I was moved to Good Shepherd in Derry. There was a lot of older woman there. SR49 [REDACTED] was mostly in charge. She was also a cook and she made a lovely shepherd's pie. GSC18 [REDACTED] was very strict. I slept in a dormitory just like that in Newry. I worked in the laundry. There was book which kept a record of pocket money we received. I don't recall this in Newry. I was allowed out in Derry. I was allowed to go home for a weekend a couple of times.
12. In Derry it was a similar routine to that in Newry. We got up and went to Mass at 7am and after breakfast we went to work in the laundry. I felt like I was brainwashed in the Good Shepherd. There was a regimented routine and I had to follow it. It was like being in the Army except with constant religion forced on you. I was never allowed to think for myself. I was made to work and I was only a child.
13. One evening I walked up to a house in the Creggan estate in Derry with another girl without permission. I think she was called [REDACTED]. When we came back SR49 [REDACTED] slapped me across the face and shouted at me in front of everyone. She lost her temper and this was a one off incident. [REDACTED] SR49 [REDACTED] had good points and bad points. I did not witness any other physical abuse while I was in Good Shepherd.
14. After a couple of years I told SR49 [REDACTED] I wanted to leave. I looked at older woman in the Good Shepherd and I said to myself that I would end up like them if I stayed there any longer.

Life after care

15. I left Good Shepherd when I was 18 years old. I got a job in Newry in a dry cleaners and I lived in digs. I never went back home. I went to [REDACTED] near [REDACTED] in England after that and stayed with my brother and his wife. I got a job looking after elderly people.

16. Being away was like a different world. It was hard to adapt to my new environment after living a secluded life. Eventually I got my own home as I wanted to be independent. I found it hard to trust anyone but I had to get on with living my own life. I later moved on and worked in a bakery for a while. I married in [REDACTED] and had two children, [REDACTED] who is 33 and [REDACTED] who is 31. I divorced my husband as he was abusive. I remarried in [REDACTED] and we moved to [REDACTED]. Unfortunately my marriage broke down. I have carried the feeling of abandonment with me since I was a child. My family didn't want me and I end relationships out of fear – fear that the other person will leave me. I have taken the view that maybe I am meant to be on my own. I worked in [REDACTED] for a while after raising my children. I have four grandchildren. I am very close to my son and daughter. They mean everything to me. I now live alone but my children live nearby.

17. I did not receive counselling until my father and mother died in [REDACTED]. I just blocked my experience in Good Shepherd out. I took the view that counselling didn't change anything. It will never bring [REDACTED] back. I think about him every day.

18. Being in Good Shepherd had a devastating impact on my life. I suffered emotional abuse. It messed me up. I felt like I was in prison. I was cut off from the real world and was treated as if I had done something wrong. I should not have been put in there. My siblings were devastated for me and some of them were never told where I was. I find it difficult to talk about my time in Good Shepherd.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **HIA202**

Dated 15 / 1 / 2016