

HIA REF:

Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF SISTER BRENDA McCALL

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1. I, Sister Brenda McCall will say as follows –
2. This statement is provided by the Sisters of Nazareth at the request of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry following a letter dated 17<sup>th</sup> June 2013.
3. On behalf of the Sisters I speak about a number of recurring themes in regard to some of the complaints made to the Inquiry by the various parties who have returned to the Inquiry with concerns about their treatment whilst in the care of the Sisters of Nazareth.
4. It is difficult, bearing in mind the period of time covered by the Inquiry, to deal with a number of these issues accurately for each and every period which has been identified. Understanding of the issues faced by the children, the availability of food and clothes and society in general at the various times, meant that practices could change constantly. We are limited in some respects in replying as there is a restricted pool of memory available to us in trying to deal with these issues. In regard to the investigations that have been conducted by the Sisters and the documentation provided to the Inquiry there are a number of things that can be said.

Use of numbers rather than names

5. There is a suggestion that children were known by numbers and not by their names. Many children recall being called by a number and that this was a demeaning and unfair way of treating them. There is no record anywhere that this was a specific policy or that such a policy was used by the Sisters.
6. The Sisters understand and accept that many items belonging to a particular child would have had a number placed on them. A child's uniform, clothes or other items may have had a number attached to ensure that that child's items were always returned to the same child from the laundry. There is no memory among any of those that we have spoken to of children actually being called by a number. It is possible, and accepted, that when items were returned a number may have been called out rather than a child's name. This would simply reflect the fact that it was the number written on the child's clothing rather than the name.

7. If such a policy had existed this would be a demeaning practice and is not one which we would approve of today. However, we do not believe there was such a policy and practice at any time and we believe that children would have been known by name not by a number.
8. The Sisters cannot accept that the use of a numbering system for identifying items of laundry was a deliberate intention to make a child feel less loved or cared for than they actually were. The Sisters tried at all times to maintain a homely environment and it is evident that the learning of a number to identify a child would be more difficult than actually trying to learn a child's name. Children would have called each other by their names; therefore, the staff and Sisters would have known the children by their names and not by any particular number. There is no indication of this being a specific policy or practice nor is there any suggestion that it was implemented or discontinued at any particular time.

#### Bathing

9. A number of allegations are made concerning bathing and it is suggested that the children were demeaned in various ways because of bathing. These contentions have been made on a number of aspects. There is no memory or recollection of children being required to line up naked and wait for their bath in a line of naked children. Children would have been bathed on a single child basis and it may be that one child was ready before another was finished and had to wait to have their bath. This would not be a regular occurrence and was not a planned procedure. It was never done deliberately nor was it done to humiliate or embarrass a child.
10. The Sisters would not accept that there was any deliberate practice or policy of requiring children to stand in a line with other children without clothing. The Sisters would accept that at certain times, more likely in the earlier days, that once a bath was filled more than one child may have had their bath in the same bath water. There was nothing intentionally demeaning about any such practice and this would reflect the sort of practices that would have been seen in ordinary homes around the country where children were regularly bathed together or where one child would bath in the water left by another sibling. It would also reflect the costs of heating bathing water.
11. The Sisters say in more recent years, children would have been encouraged to bathe on their own. Children would also have access to a bathroom without any restricted bath time.
12. Another major contention is that the Sisters would have used Jeyes fluid, or perhaps some other similar strong disinfectant, as a bathing agent. The Sisters accept that Jeyes fluid or other such strong disinfectants, would have been used in the homes as a cleaning agent and that the bathrooms themselves would have

been washed and cleaned using these substances. These substances have an extremely strong smell and it is accepted that children may well have felt that the bathwater was mixed with Jeyes fluid as a cleansing agent for them because of the lasting smell. The Sisters do not accept that it was a general practice to use Jeyes fluid as an alternative for soap or other bathing agents.

13. It is accepted that, on occasions, Jeyes fluid may have been used to prevent an outbreak of head lice, body lice and scabies. In a situation where a large number of children shared facilities an outbreak of any of these parasitic lice could have been very common and distressing. In these particular circumstances, it may be that a small amount of Jeyes fluid was used occasionally for the purposes of dealing with such conditions but, under no circumstances, as an alternative standard bathing agent.

#### Toys

14. The Sisters are aware of suggestions that toys given to the children by parents, family or other agencies were removed from the children by the Sisters. They do not accept that this was a practice in any institution operated by them. To a large degree the children in the houses did not receive gifts. As few received visits from family, most families would not have been in a position to give the children gifts if they did in fact visit.
15. If there were gifts at Christmas, whether from family, Saint Vincent de Paul or other charitable organisations, these would have been given to the children. They would not be removed from them by the Sisters or any staff. The Sisters do not understand where this memory comes from.

#### Disclosure of siblings

16. There was never any policy of not disclosing the existence of siblings in any house. There may have been occasions when the existence of siblings was not known to the Sisters as it may not have been in the information given when a child was brought to our care.
17. In some cases, for example Temonbacca and Bishop Street, a boy could have been brought to Temonbacca and his sister to Bishop Street by different people. As we did not have central registers or computers, it is possible that the two houses did not know of the siblings.
18. If children were admitted to the same house then they would almost certainly have known their siblings. They may, in earlier years, have been separated into age groups but they would not have been kept hidden from each other.

19. In later years the arrangements changed to have children of the same family placed in the same groups within the home to try to keep them together and maintain a more family atmosphere.
20. It is accepted that as a result of communication difficulties of the time and, possibly as result of inadvertent error in registers, some children may not have known of siblings. In the instances where this occurred the Sisters apologise to these children.

#### Separation of siblings

21. It is noted that there is a suggestion that siblings were separated within the institutions.
22. It was not a specific policy, as far as any investigation can ascertain, to separate the children from their siblings. In earlier years the children would have been managed in age related groups and, therefore, were placed in different areas of the institutions. In later years, the Sisters strived to ensure all families were kept together rather than separate children according to age.
23. In regard to the separation, the children would not have been separated at all times and would have been able to mix at the different socialising times in the Home. However, as would have been the case in normal society, it is typical that different age groups would not merge. This would have included not mixing with siblings during those activities. Activities did take up a large part of the day and, it is possible that, siblings would not have mixed for protracted periods. However this would not have been a deliberate intention of these arrangements or an objective of the Sisters to separate families

#### Family letters

24. Very few children would have received letters from their families. The circumstances in which they came into the care of the Sisters of Nazareth were not happy and, often, there would be no contact at all.
25. In some cases letters may have been received where a family have moved away, a mother or father may have remarried or for some other reason they were not in a position to maintain or re-establish a relationship with a child. If a letter was received along those lines it may have been withheld from a child to avoid causing pain or upset to the child. It was never a policy or approved practice to withhold correspondence from a child. It may be that a letter would be read to a smaller child and then kept by the superior or the Sister responsible for a unit. Nevertheless, this can be considered to be speculation to some degree.

Bed wetting

26. There are various complaints made about how the children were treated if they wet the bed. The sheer number and consistency of these complaints make it very difficult to deny that events such as those described did actually happen.
27. The causes of bed wetting were not known and the connection between bed wetting and the psychological traumas suffered by these children were also not fully appreciated. The anxiety felt by the children as a result of their home history, the reasons leading to them coming into care and the separation from their home life, may have collectively contributed to bed wetting within the homes.
28. As time went on the Sisters have realised that this was not rebellious, mischievous or misbehaviour and medical advice was sought. There are clear memories of a buzzer alarm being obtained to try to prevent bed wetting and to help the children to stop this occurring.
29. When considered in today's society, the Sisters accept that, to embarrass or humiliate a child who had wet the bed was not helpful and may have led to the prolonging of the issue. This was done out of ignorance of the issues behind this problem and a belief that the child could just stop the bedwetting if he or she wished.
30. There is an overlap with an issue concerning bedwetting and bathing and some former residents describe being washed in cold water as punishment for bed wetting. The Sisters would not let a child go to school without making sure they were washed. To allow the child to go out unwashed risked bullying and abuse because they might smell. It is possible there was little hot water but the use of cold water is not recalled by any sister as a punishment for bedwetting.

Supervision and Staff Ratios

31. The Sisters provided twenty-four hour care with a Sister being responsible for individual groups of children. She would have been assisted by lay staff to aid in the care for the children. We are continuing to seek the existence of any relevant documents in order to make direct comment on the supervision and staff ratios as these would have changed over the periods depending on the number of children in a particular house and the regulations which were in place at any particular time.

Food

32. Over the years the quality and variety of food available changed. At all times the Sisters tried to provide the best quality and nutritious food they could to the children.

33. When looking at the concerns raised by former residents, it is important to be aware that the meals provided to the residents were the same meals provided to the Sisters themselves. There was no separate canteen or food provision for the Sisters. Rather, they got their meals after the children and ate the same meals that had been provided for the children. Some sisters recall missing meals or having very little if there was nothing left over after the children had eaten.
34. Over the years covered by the Inquiry society in Northern Ireland faced the era following the First World War, Depression in the 1930's, the Second World War and rationing. To try and meet the needs of the children, the Sisters baked their own bread when they could.
35. In Derry houses, the farm at Termonbacca was able to produce fresh food which was shared with Bishop Street and fresh bread baked at Bishop Street was sent up to Termonbacca.
36. Children would have been encouraged to eat the food provided as there was no alternative available. It was seen to be in the children's own interest to eat the meals provided. The Sisters accept that this may mean someone standing alongside a child to ensure they ate their meals but do not accept that a child was ever force fed.
37. In the various reports by inspectors supplied to the Inquiry there are numerous references to food supplied to the children and the variety of the menus. The children who spoke to the inspectors seemed to have generally appreciated the food provided.
38. The Sisters accept that not all of the children will have liked all of the food provided and may have bad memories of this. However the Sisters always tried to provide the best food they could afford for the children.

#### Clothing

39. The Sisters are aware of suggestions that the children wore poor quality clothing or that they were dressed differently from other children and that the children faced abuse from their peers because they stood out.
40. At all times the Sisters tried to provide the best quality clothing they could within the scope of the budget restrictions placed on them. The Inquiry has already heard that the Sisters relied heavily on charity and on collections taken up by the Sisters themselves.
41. In Derry, the Sisters were very lucky to have received regular donations of clothing from the Desmond's Factory. They were, and remain, very grateful to Desmond's for those acts of kindness.

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF SISTER BRENDA McCALL

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1. I, Sister Brenda McCall will say as follows –
2. This is the third statement provided by me to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, at the request of the Inquiry to clarify certain information provided in my previous statements.

Bed wetting

3. The Inquiry has sought clarification in regard to the Sisters' understanding of bed wetting incidents and how attitudes altered or changed through the years. Clarification is sought on what advice the Sisters received in respect of this, when that advice was received, from whom that advice was received.
4. To the best of my knowledge and from the information available to me, there was no one piece of information or advice that changed or altered the understanding of bedwetting. Sisters would have been trained in the latter years and therefore would have a better knowledge and understanding of bedwetting.
5. Throughout the periods in which the Sisters provided care to young people and more recently to the elderly, they maintained a close working relationship with the relevant statutory agencies and local medical practitioners. The Sisters would always have spoken to their colleagues from the statutory agencies, inspectors (whether it be children's home inspectors or the education inspectors of any of the schools in which the Sisters worked), or more laterally, in regard to the provision of care to the elderly.
6. ~~Over time, information was passed to the Sisters via statutory agencies, doctors attending at the Homes and from other visitors to the Homes like charitable organisations such as St. Vincent de Paul. The information obtained by Sisters would have developed throughout this time by speaking with these particular agencies, doctors and visitors.~~
7. There is no one incident or contact that any Sister can specifically address with me. A number of the Sisters have spoken of waking children who were known to wet the bed when the Sisters were going to bed, to try to encourage those

children to go to the toilet to reduce the potential for an incident of bed wetting during the night. I am sorry that I cannot be any more specific about a particular incident as there is no information available about a particular course, communication, conference, or documentation provided by any third party which can highlight or indicate a particular piece of knowledge having been passed on. I can however say that the Sisters would always have listened to their advisors and would have taken into account any information passed on to them.

#### Staff Rotas

8. We continue to check all our records to see if staff rotas and records have been maintained. This is not an easy task bearing in mind the period covered by the Inquiry and the time which has expired since the Sisters ceased to provide care in children's homes.
9. In that time the houses at Portadown, Termonbacca and Bishop Street have all ceased to provide care to children. Termonbacca and Portadown are no longer in the possession of the Sisters and have not been for some time. The two houses in Belfast have been demolished. The site of Nazareth House on the Ormeau Road has been sold and developed for apartments and Nazareth Lodge becoming the venue for a new custom built facility for providing care to the elderly. Records have not been retained in a central location and we are seeking assistance from various agencies and parties to relocate as many records as we can.
10. The Sisters have however spoken of times when there would have been very small numbers of staff, if any, in their houses.
11. I have spoken with Sisters who would have said that particularly in the 1960's and early 1970's there could have been two Sisters caring for sixty or seventy boys, leaving one Sister responsible for somewhere in the region of between thirty to forty boys. Staff were employed in the early 1970s when Family Group Homes commenced.
12. In hindsight this was clearly an unsatisfactory situation. However it was the practice at the time.
13. If this practice resulted in some children not having the oversight, care and affection needed by them in the houses, this was not deliberate. The Sisters simply did not have the funding to provide for significant numbers of children. The Inquiry has been provided with copies of the financial registers showing the shortfall in the funding care provided.
14. The Sisters relied very heavily on charity, the goodwill of the local communities and the yearly Church collections to aide them in the provision of their work.

15. When the Sisters now consider the staffing provision of those days, they are aware that it was inadequate. They accept the failings in regard to staffing at that time. The Sisters at that time would have relied heavily on recommendations from the annual inspections which took place. None of the Sisters have recalled any instance or any report in which the situation of the understaffing was raised with them. Had the issue of understaffing been raised it would have led to discussions about increased funding and provision of care staff within the Homes. Such discussions would have been held directly with the relevant supporting agencies such as social services, the education departments or health departments and may well have resulted in additional care and staffing being provided. As it was the Sisters could not have funded the additional staffing on the income they had at the time.

Concessions or admissions by the Sisters

17. It is difficult for any one person speaking on behalf of the entire Congregation to accept, or reject, any allegation which has been made against the Congregation or individual Sisters. Many of the recent allegations have been made against Sisters who have died or who are medically unable to consider or comment upon any of the allegations. It would be unfair of the Sisters to make a finding against any particular Sister when the allegation cannot properly be investigated nor can that Sister respond to these allegations. This is not to say that the Sisters reject any of the allegations made, merely that it is not appropriate for them to make a finding against any particular individual.
18. In regard to certain incidents the Sisters have accepted that there was a description of an incident where a Sister has mentioned one of her fellow Sisters striking a child on the head with a bunch of keys. The Sisters have previously stated that this was not considered acceptable behaviour nor is it deemed appropriate or considered reasonable chastisement. Having considered the Inquiry's request, the Sisters have followed up this statement to clarify the comments made by Sister **SR 147**. Sister **SR 147** is currently in Nazareth House, Hammersmith. Sister **SR 147** would have been in Derry from the 1969 to 1970 period, when she was responsible for collections and generally assisting with work within the Home. She was not specifically involved with the children. She was in Nazareth house, Bishop Street on a number of occasions. Sister **SR 147** has stated that she saw this happen on only one occasion. Sister **SR 147** recalls that Sister **SR 59** hit **SND 451** on the head while she had a set of keys in her hand as opposed to hitting her with the keys. She recalls **SND 451** because she was in the choir and had red hair.
19. The Sisters do recall allegations made against a former employee **SND 38**. The Sisters accepted at the time of the allegations that they could have been true and the matter was appropriately handled. Mr. **SND 38** was ultimately dismissed from the employ of the Sisters. The police were informed and the matter investigated by them.

20. The Sisters are aware that Mr. **SND 38** was not prosecuted at the time. That would have been a matter for the police to determine after investigation.
21. The Sisters have also considered the allegations in light of the staffing and rota positions. Whilst they cannot confirm or deny any particular allegation, the Sisters accept that opportunities for bullying or the peer abuse described would have been available. The Sisters could not provide the level of supervision and constant monitoring of the boys that would have been necessary to avoid this type of behaviour. In the circumstances the Sisters would accept that some level of bullying and abuse did go on without the knowledge of the Sisters.

#### Policy on corporal punishment

22. The Sisters did not have any specific record of a written policy document as described or as they understand the Inquiry to be seeking. I have attached to this statement a copy of extracts from the general chapters and visitations that refer to the work of the Sisters within the houses. These general chapters and visitations would have looked at every aspect of the Sisters lives and would have been more aimed at the religious life of the Sisters than the work life of the Sisters. These extracts have been taken to assist the Inquiry in understanding some of the views expressed at these general meetings of the Sisters.
23. When I used the word 'policy' in my previous statement, it was more to reflect modern understanding of the way in which the houses were operated, not to reflect a particular written policy type document or mission statement as would exist in the current times.
24. The 'policy' would have reflected the ethos of the Sisters of Nazareth as a Religious Institutions rather than as a specific operating practice.
25. The Sisters themselves followed a set of rules regarding their religious practices which would have been prepared by the founder of the Order and developed by the Order over the years but were not a set of rules as would be understood in the running of a residential care institution.

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#### Convictions or other prosecutions

26. None of the Sisters to whom I have spoken have any recollection as to the prosecution of any member of staff, either religious or lay staff. The Sisters do not believe that any member of staff, whether that be a Sister, a visiting Priest or lay member of staff who has been investigated, prosecuted and either convicted or acquitted. The police have conducted a number of interviews over the years, all of which the Sisters themselves have fully co-operated in, and more recently, Operation Charwell has led to a number of other Sisters having been interviewed

again. To the best of the knowledge of the Sisters no prosecutions in Northern Ireland have been recommended to date and none have actually been carried out.

27. The Sisters have co-operated and will continue to co-operate with any investigation by the police. The Sisters hope that this current position will maintain and that no person involved with the care of children within the Nazareth Homes, will be found to have acted in a way which would justify a prosecution.
28. The Sisters are aware that some former residents have made allegations of visiting Priests who may have misused their position. Again the Sisters cannot fully comment on on-going police investigations which may prejudice any potential prosecution and would wish to ensure that they are not seen to interfere in any way with such an investigation.

#### Food

29. The Inquiry has asked me to deal with the issues about the food provided to the Sisters. In my earlier statement I confirmed that the Sisters recall that on rare occasions they did have to go without or have their meals rationed to ensure that the children ate first.
30. This information is not based on any one particular report to me or in any written statement that I have available. As a Sister I travelled around various institutions belonging to the Order and spent a lot of time in the company of older Sisters who had been involved predominantly in the care of children in the Homes.
31. In later years when I was Regional for England, Scotland and Wales, I travelled to all of the houses and would have spent time talking to Sisters in these houses. The conversations we had would have covered many topics including the times that they would have spent in various homes both in Northern Ireland and in other areas of the world. My comment that the Sisters recall going without food is a reference to the various conversations I had with a number of Sisters in my earlier days in the Congregation.
32. I was in attendance, as part of Operational Charwell, when the PSNI had made arrangements for a number of Sisters from England and Wales to be interviewed. After those interviews I met with various Sisters and had spoken to them about the allegations which had been made against them. In each case we discussed very specific issues of the allegations and also the general complaints which have become well known, in particular the comments about bathing, clothing, food etc.
33. In the circumstances the position is, based on my general meetings and discussions with the Sisters over many years, that meals were prepared and served to the children. Meals were then served to the Sisters after the children

had their meals. The meals were prepared at the same time in the same kitchen. The Sisters did not at any stage have a better or even slightly different menu than that served to the children. However in some houses in latter days the Sisters meal (the same food as the children) was only cooked after the children's meals had been prepared and cooked.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed *Sister Brenda McCall*

Dated *22/12/2013*

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THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 – 1995

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF SISTER BRENDA MCCALL

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1. I, Sister Brenda McCall will say as follows –
  2. This is a further statement provided by me to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, to assist the Inquiry in my statement of 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2013.
- Family Group Homes
3. Over the years I have lived and spoken to many Sisters who had worked in Termonbacca and Bishop Street; it is from these Sisters I have acquired the knowledge to speak from their experiences.
  4. In Termonbacca, a new build comprising of two separate units were completed. Extensive renovations were carried out in the nursery unit at this time, converting large dormitories to smaller bedrooms.
  5. In Bishop Street, the home was converted into three separate units. The large dormitories had been divided into two and three bedded rooms.
  6. Each unit was managed by a Sister assisted by senior girls in Bishop Street and by staff in Termonbacca.
  7. The catalyst for the introduction of group homes for Termonbacca was the completion of the new build. In Bishop Street, the catalyst was to keep in line with Termonbacca.
  8. These were affordable at this time as we received Grants from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Staffing

9. Before 1972 we accept that staffing in Termonbacca was inadequate.
10. Before 1977, we accept that staffing in Bishop Street was inadequate.
11. The consequences of inadequate staffing would diminish the level of supervision and constant monitoring of the children, as the Sisters would have hoped to achieve. In some circumstances. It is quite clear that peer abuse and bullying may have occurred without the knowledge of the Sisters. Whilst they cannot confirm or deny any allegations, it is appalling and shocking to consider the allegations at hand under the care of the Sisters.

Annual Inspections

12. To refer to the Inspections carried out by the Ministry of Home Affairs under Section 102 of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and later Section 130 of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968.

1950 "Two school Inspectors from Stormont visited the House and they were very pleased with the accommodation for the boys." Page 80

1957 "The different officials who have visited us from Stormont were very pleased with the boys." Page 115

1961 "Miss Wright and Dr. Simpson from the Ministry of Home Affairs called in July and were very pleased with the children and the work done." Page 132

1962 "Miss Forrest from the Ministry of Home Affairs came during night recreation, was pleased to find the children so well and happy, some at band practice, they played for her." Page 134

1963 "Miss Forrest and Mr Parks came to see the boys place from Stormont. Members of the Child Welfare Council came to see the children. They remarked how well cared for the children looked and hoped we would be able to improve this present building." Page 142

1964 "Dr Simpson and Miss Hill paid us a visit, February 4. Both were very pleased with the boys and most anxious that we would build dormitories as more sleeping accommodation was needed, said they would say so at Stormont and hoped we would get a Grant." Page 143

1967 "Miss Forrest and Miss Hill and Mr Blackburn, Ministry of Home Affairs Stormont came on 15 November to visit the children and discuss the proposed new building. **SR 127**

**SR 127** Superior Bishop Street and Mr Frank Guckian Chairman of Termonbacca Aid Association were also present. It was agreed that the first step would be for the architect to prepare sketch plans and make an estimate of costs." Page 148

1968 "Miss Forrest Minister of Home Affairs, came on September 10 to see the plans of the proposed new building and to discuss same with the Architect, Mr White. Miss Forrest was pleased with the plans and said she would take them to Stormont to have them examined and to get in touch with us as soon as possible. Miss Hill, Ministry of Home Affairs, telephoned that our plans were acceptable, a few minor alterations were necessary and that they would be sending for Mr G White, Architect, very shortly, for a discussion. Mr White went to Stormont where it was decided that it would be necessary to erect a covered way from our kitchen to the new building and to provide a doctor's room in one of the three houses. He has now to draw a more detailed plan and sent a copy of same to the Ministry." Page 155-6

1969 "On 27 November we had a visit from Dr Simpson and Miss Hill from Stormont. We had a visit also from Mr Hume MP."

"In December **SND 504** Children's Officer for Tyrone, called to the children in her care. We had another visit from Mr J. Hume, he spent quite a lot of time with the boys." Page 162

1970 "In November 27 we had a visit from Dr Simpson and Miss Hill from Stormont. They were pleased with arrangements for the children under our difficult circumstances." Page 165

1971 "In February we had a visit from Miss Forrest, from the Ministry of Home Affairs. We received two instalments of our Grant from the Ministry. £5850.00 + £3425.00."

Also in February, "there was a meeting on the site. Everyone present agreed that a completion date in October is certainly possible."

In September, "we received a Grant of £1492.00 from the Ministry of Home Affairs."

In November, "we had a Grant from the Ministry of Home Affairs, £2497.00"  
Page 166-7

1972 In January, "we received a further Grant of £3586.00 for the Ministry of Home Affairs for the building fund."

In April, "we received a further instalment of Grant for the new wing from the Ministry of Home Affairs, £4113.00."

In May "we received a further instalment of Grant from the Ministry of Home Affairs £2065.00"

In September, "we got a further instalment of Grant from the Ministry of Home Affairs £3035.00 and we had a visit from Miss Forrest, Ministry of Home Affairs. She was very pleased with the renovations in the nursery and the new building."

In November, "Dr Simpson and Miss Hill came to visit us and stayed for lunch. They were both very pleased with the new building which was opened on 21<sup>st</sup> November. The Bishop came and said Mass and blessed our new wing."

In December, "we were happy to welcome Miss Forrest, Mr Poulter and Mr J Irvine, from the Ministry of Home Affairs. They were delighted with the new building – thought it was the best they had seen yet. Mr Irvine promised we would get a further Grant of £12,500.00 also to help with running costs, he promised to write to the local Authorities to ask them to pay £11.50p per child per week maintenance for children in their care who were admitted to St Joseph's. We trust this will get a successful hearing at all the meetings to be held to discuss it.

The Children's Officers from County Derry, Omagh and Fermanagh, visited also Mr White and members of the Derry Development Commission with the Chief Welfare Officer." Page 179 - 186

1973 "We are very pleased to receive our further Grant £12,500.00 from the Ministry of Home Affairs for the new building." Page 187

April, "We were pleased to receive a further instalment of Grant £4875.00 from the Ministry of Home Affairs." Page 191

December, "We had a visit from Miss Hill from the Ministry of Home Affairs, she was very pleased with all she saw and complimented the Sisters on how well kept everything was in the different Houses." Page 198

1974 "Miss Forrest and [REDACTED] from the Department of Social Services Belfast, they were very pleased with everything and congratulated the Sisters." Page 201

September, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] from the Western Health Board visited to discuss course on Child Care etc." Page 206

December, "We had a visit from Miss Hill, Stormont. She is very pleased with all the work that is being done for the children." Page 208

1975 "Miss Hill from the Social Services Department visited and spent most of the afternoon and early evening with the children. She was very pleased with her visit and paid special tribute to the work being carried out by the Sisters." Page 210

1976 "Miss Hill visited and spent a very pleasant afternoon. She was delighted to meet the children and complimented the Sisters very highly for their care and work." Page 215

1978 "The newly appointed Director of Social Serviced of the Western Health and Social Services Board, [REDACTED] and his assistant [REDACTED] paid us a visit before Christmas. Sisters and children were busy with decorations and the visitors commented on the happy, natural atmosphere which seemed to prevail in the groups." Page 238

#### Congregational Inspections

13. Inspections were also carried out by the Superior General or the Deputy who reside in Hammersmith, London. These inspections were provided to the Inquiry and included in the History of the Foundation Book as the following:

1928 – Page 13

1931 – Page 18

1933 – Page 28

1936 – Page 36

1943 – Page 55

1946 – Page 66

1948 – Page 74

1951 – Page 81

1955 – Page 101

1956 – Page 110

1959 – Page 123

1962 – Page 137

1966 – Page 146

1969 – Page 159

1971 – Page 169

1972 – Page 185

1973 – Page 189

1978 – Page 225

1979 – Page 241

1980 – Page 251

1981 – Page 257

#### Allegations

14. As established in my third statement, The Sisters do recall allegations being made against a former employee, **SND 38**. The Sisters, **SR 142** and **SR 2** **SR 2** were very open in discussing with me the matters which arouse surrounding **SND 38** and condemned his actions rigorously.
15. On questioning **SR 142** she states that when on holiday in Portstewart with the children, one child called **SND 127** said he felt unwell and so stayed behind when the children went out for a day trip. **SND 127** reported to the police that **SND 38** stayed behind to care for him, but **SR 142** said that this was untrue because **SND 38** was their driver and was with them on the trip. –
16. **SR 142** also recalls a second incident when **SND 127** went for an overnight stay with **SND 38** at his parents' house on Christmas Eve. **SND 127** reported to the police that **SND 38** came into the single bedroom and abused him. **SND 127** was only  years old at the time of the incident.
17. **SND 127** reported these incidents to the police when he was about  years of age. **SND 38** was immediately suspended from our employment and the alleged incidents were investigated by the police.

#### Convictions

In so far as to discuss Fr Brendan Smith, it is true to say that Sisters are appalled at the activities which are now known to have occurred at the hands of Father Brendan Smith. At no time were the Sisters ever aware of the manner in which Father Brendan Smith behaved when he was in any of our Houses.

#### Statement of Truth

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

Signed Sr M. Brenda McCall

Dated 9/05/2014

Council Book

Nazareth House

Derry

1897-1923

60.

January 9<sup>th</sup> 1922.

The Council met to examine and sign the Half Yearly Accounts before sending them to the Mother House; they also voted to pay the monthly bills.

Observance of Rule was spoken of and the members thought it was kept.

SR 112

February 14<sup>th</sup> 1922

The Council met and voted to pay the monthly bills. It was decided to get material for a set of Knickers and School dresses for the children, also 12 new Beds and 3 Cots to meet the constant increase of numbers. It was also decided to get an additional gallon of milk for the extra Babies.

The Superior told the Council she had received a legacy of £100 from the late [redacted] also £50 from his Lordship, from a [redacted] American Priest.

In the month of August 1921, it was decided to fit up the Linen Room, but it was impossible since to do so owing to lack of funds, so to-day it was suggested to get what is absolutely necessary.

Observance of Rule was spoken of and the members thought it was kept.

SR 112

61

March 21<sup>st</sup> 1922.

The Council met and voted to pay the monthly bills. During to the increase of numbers and consequent overcrowding of the Church, more ventilation is necessary. The Architect was spoken to about the matter and said it would take over £100 to provide the means of ventilation, so it was decided to leave it off until Dear Mother General returns.

One of the inmates, an old lady, has been giving trouble lately and appears to be of unsound mind, so the question of removing her to the Asylum, was considered to-day, but it was suggested to wait to hear the Doctor's opinion. It was decided to get an extra table and two benches for the Children's Refectory also 24 chairs for the extra beds in the Children's dormitories. It was decided too, to get boots for the Old People, also some pairs to make up for the extra children.

Observance of Rule was spoken of and the members thought it was kept, but the Superior remarked there is a want of generosity amongst some of the Sisters.

SR 112

April 4<sup>th</sup> 1922.

The Council met and voted to pay the monthly bills. As

HIA REF:

Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF SISTER BRENDA McCALL

I Sister Brenda McCall will say as follows –

1. This is a statement provided by me to give some general background assistance to the Inquiry. It is hoped that this will try to give some indication as to the history and development of the Congregation and some of the efforts which are currently being made to assist the Inquiry.

2. The Congregation was founded by Sister Victoire Larmenier who was born in France in 1827. She came to London in 1851 at the age of twenty-four and at the request of Cardinal Wiseman set up a facility to reach out to the homeless and abandoned children. At this time there was no assistance by way of State aid and poverty was a major issue within society. Before she reached the age of fifty Sister Victoire had established eight houses in order to provide assistance and care to young and old who were in a situation of great need.

3. The first home was created and set up in Hammersmith, London and depended entirely upon the generosity of the local people. At present the Sisters of Nazareth have houses in Australia, New Zealand, USA, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Ireland and the United Kingdom.

4. The Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth is governed by a Superior General with the assistance of her council. The council itself is made up of four senior Sisters who are appointed as councillors at the General Chapter. The Superior General and her four councillors reside in the Mother House in Hammersmith but conduct their responsibilities by visiting the various houses around the world. The present Superior General is

**SND 136** who was elected in 2006 and ultimately re-elected in 2012 at the General Chapters held in those years.

5. General Chapters were held from the beginning of the Congregation usually every six years with Intermediate Chapters being held between the General Chapters. From 1950's only the General Chapters were held every 6 years with the exception of an Extraordinary Chapter in 1968, which was convened in response to Vatican II call to Religious Congregations to review their way of life.
6. From the beginning of the Congregation there were Visitations to each branch house made from the Mother House in Hammersmith.
7. Between 1960 and 1970 seven Regions were created to assist with the administration of the organisation. There were the Australasian Region, The Southern African Region, American Region, Irish Region and Northern UK, Eastern UK and Western UK. Due the storage of Sisters and the closure of some homes, it was decided at the Chapter in 2000 to have only two regions instead of three in the UK and in 2009 it was further decided to have only one region in the UK.
8. Each Region is governed by a Regional Superior aided by her Council which amounted to two senior Sisters within a region. The Regional Superior is appointed for a period of three years and has a duty to visit each of the houses within her Region on a regular basis. She also has duties to visit the Sisters personally and in particular to visit the sick Sisters to ensure that they are aware of the on-going consideration and care felt towards them by the Congregation. The Regional Superior is responsible for keeping the Superior General informed of all affairs on-going within her region. The Regional Superior must also make one formal visitation to each house every three years.
9. The general visitation from the Mother House in Hammersmith occurs once every three years as well as a regional visitation also once every three years. Guidelines for the Visitations are set out in the Constitutions and the Visitor must move around all areas of the house, speak with residents including elderly, children, staff and any visitors in the house whom they meet. The Visitor will also check the documentation held by the house such as registers and other documentation required and held to be relevant. These will include inspection reports (by the relevant statutory agencies) and if any recommendations or requirements are made at any inspection, the Visitor will check as to whether these requirements or recommendations have been followed up, whether they are being implemented or in fact have been implemented. If there are any areas of concern the Visitor will carry out and given direction that further steps be taken.

10. During a visitation each Sister will be interviewed by the Visitor and is encouraged to speak openly and honestly to the Visitor about any matter of concern to her in regard to her own position, development or in regard to the running of a house. If any Sister is unhappy or feels unsuited to any of the work or duties she has been given, she is asked to deal with this, to voice it with the Visitor and any such concerns will be considered and dealt with by the Visitor.

11. Sisters have always been free to write to the Superior General at any time about any matter of concern. I personally have never known of a Sister who was considered to be unsuitable for working with the elderly or children in one house, to be removed from that house and placed in a similar apostolate in another house.

12. The purpose of visitation is to strengthen the Sisters in their vocation and to help and support them in any way if necessary. The visitation also hopes to gain an understanding of the running of each house and each community and to bring to the attention of the appropriate person, whether that be the local House Superior, the Regional Superior, Sisters in the community, managers, CEOs etc., of any allegations or concerns or suggestions of unfairness, injustice, abuse or a failure to provide adequate care. At the end of the visitation a Visitor meets with the Superior of the house and her council and reports her findings to them and any follow up steps which need to be considered are discussed. Following that a meeting is then held within the whole community when the contents of the report are presented. The report is then sent to the Superior General in Hammersmith.

13. There is constant communication between the Regional Superiors and the Superior General about the affairs of each house. This communication has improved throughout the years and clearly, with the development of modern communication, is much better now than it would have been previously but it would always have been the case.

14. I have identified material within the General Chapter Books and have arranged for that to be copied and forwarded to the Inquiry. The General Chapter which takes place every six years at present, previously three years, would discuss all of the issues within each of the houses and also would discuss issues of the noviciate, finance and other relevant matters. These records therefore are extremely voluminous and deal with large matters which are of no relevance or concern to the matters before this Inquiry. I have however arranged to have the relevant pages dealing with the houses in Northern Ireland to be copied and these will be disclosed to the Inquiry so that the Inquiry can have an understanding of the nature and type of report which comes before the council at those Chapters.

15. I have also met with the Superior General and a number of the Sisters throughout the UK and Ireland. A meeting was also arranged in Knock where Sisters of all ages who had any information in regard to the houses in Derry and Belfast were asked to deal with the questions and themes which have been addressed by the Inquiry to date.
16. One of the major issues we discussed was the documentation, or lack of documentation, which appears to exist within the Congregation.
17. I have spoken to as many of the older sisters as I can regarding the maintenance and storage of records in UK as well as in Ireland. I will try to set out our understanding of these issues to the Inquiry.
18. The Inquiry is aware through a statement from a Michael Hodgson that he appears to have retained his original records. He has told us that when he left Termonbacca his social worker gave him the records personally. He did not receive them from the Sisters. We believe that when children left, particularly children who were voluntary attendances, their files would have been given to them. I am sure that this was not necessarily always the case but children could perhaps have been given these notes for their own history and record rather than have them retained by the Congregation. This could possibly have also been an attempt to minimise the amount of material which had to be stored by the Congregation.
19. There is agreement among many Sisters that if a child moved from the house operated by the Sisters either into the care of the Social Services or to another house, whether that be run by the Congregation, another congregation or by another institution, that their records would have been forwarded to that Congregation or institution. This would have ensured that a full record of a child's development was maintained so that the new institution would also have had access to those records and would then have retained them. Again it also reduced the volume of material to be stored by the sisters.
20. Particularly in later years copies of records would also have been supplied to the relevant social services where that was appropriate. It is likely therefore that duplicate files would have existed within the home and within relevant welfare and social services departments. Sisters do recall that after a child had been absent from the home for a long period having been returned to their family or moved to another institution some of the records still held by them would have been destroyed. This would have been done for no reason other than to provide space for storage of other records as they had no reason to believe then that the records may be needed many years later. From the information which has been produced to the Inquiry it seems that some of the documentation was provided

directly to the social services and records has been retained by them or in some cases copies of the records have been retained by the relevant social services and welfare departments. There is, unfortunately, no-one currently alive who recalls the closure of either Termonbacca or Bishop Street and therefore first hand evidence concerning the storage or destruction of documents cannot be confirmed. The Sisters would accept that there is likely to be some truth in the description of older documents in regard to children who had long left the care of the Sisters having been destroyed. Documents which were historically important to the Congregation such as the registers, foundation books and documents of that nature were transferred to either Hammersmith or the regional house. These registers have been made available to the Inquiry and the foundation books were also located in storage in Dublin and have also now been provided to the Inquiry. Documents such as annual accounts which may have been retained for a period of years could well also have been destroyed simply as they were not required to be retained by any statute and they have limited assistance to the Congregation in their on-going responsibilities.

21. Checks have been made in regard to the daily accounts books and whether these would have been held by the bursar in Hammersmith but this does not appear to be the case either.

22. The Sisters would accept that there must have been records retained for contributions made by welfare societies, charitable donations, requests or other records of that nature as well as any payments by local families for the care of their children. Those records would have been used to prepare annual reports and, the Inquiry will note from the Chapters that accounts were part of the report prepared to the General Chapter. We cannot locate the registers which would have been used to formulate the day to day accounts and only limited accounts material has been located in regard to annual reporting. That documentation will also be provided to the Inquiry.

23. It is a matter of regret to the Sisters that the records for every child were not copied and retained as this would have been of assistance not only to the Inquiry but also to the Sisters in responding to some of the requests which are now made of them by former residents looking for information about their lives, claimants in civil actions and to give a more detailed response to the issues raised in this inquiry.

24. The Sisters will continue to look through the various houses to determine if any further documentation can be found.

25. It has been noted that there are no specific files of correspondence between the Sisters and any statutory agencies, correspondence between the Sisters and specific

Bishops or dioceses and that correspondence between Superiors, Sisters and those agencies is located in different areas. We have located correspondence in the files relating to specific Sisters and also correspondence in the personal belongings of Superior. We are going through all of that material to identify any information which could be of assistance to the Inquiry and which relates, whether we consider to be of assistance to the Inquiry or not, to Termonbacca, Bishop Street or Belfast and that material will be forwarded to the Inquiry for their own consideration. The process of archiving the material belonging to the congregation is a relatively new process and we are finding material in houses which is being added to the archives all the time.

26. The work in identifying material is on-going and will be seen as an on-going duty on the Sisters to assist with the work of the Inquiry.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed Sister Mary Brenda McCall.

Dated 28/02/2014

Ministry of Home Affairs,  
Stormont, Belfast.

D/FC

Nazareth House, Bishop Street, Londonderry.

On the 27th of September we visited Nazareth House, Bishop Street, Londonderry, and were shown over the premises by Sister SR 24. We also interviewed Sister SR 9 Principal of the Primary School. Rev. Mother had just left for her annual vacation.

There were 139 children in residence, 4 under two years of age, 32 in the Nursery Group (11 attending school), 98 of school age and 5 over school age. Five girls are the financial responsibility of Co. Londonderry Welfare Authority. The children under two years of age were accepted by Rev. Mother as an emergency measure, as they are members of families accommodated in other sections of the Home. While we think Rev. Mother had probably little option at the time in accepting the children, this Home is not suitable for the care of children under two years of age. When we discussed this with Sister SR 24 she said they hoped to be in a position to discharge these children quite soon.

The majority of the children in residence attend the Primary School in the Home. Two girls attend Thornhill Secondary School and one Londonderry Technical School. One girl obtained her Junior Certificate examination in June. Two residents are the responsibility of the Special Care Authority. We think it is imperative that [redacted] be removed. She still has to be kept in the Nursery Group and it is obvious that her presence is detrimental to the welfare of the other children in the Home.

The children appeared to be in good health and well cared for, apart from one girl confined to bed, who struck us as being singularly apathetic and unresponsive. We were assured that she had already been examined by the Medical Officer, who was keeping her under observation.

Sister SR 24 showed us over the premises, which were in good order and pleasantly decorated throughout. A new school-meals kitchen and servery is being erected adjacent to the dining room. Rev. Mother General during her visit to the Home last year had recommended the dividing of the older girls into three groups. One sitting-room has already been furnished in a room formerly used as a classroom and it is proposed to build two further sitting-rooms between the new meals-kitchen and the school. The sitting-room already provided is pleasantly decorated and furnished and is equipped with television and radio. We think the provision of two similar rooms will be a great benefit to the children. Work has commenced on the building of the new chapel.

A. We inspected the statutory records. We were concerned that fire drill is being not carried out. Sister said she was awaiting directions regarding this from the local fire officer. We advised her to contact him immediately regarding this matter and we intend to make a further enquiry about this within the next few weeks. The "events of importance" book shows that the girls have enjoyed numerous outings and films during the year. Sister SR 9 also informed us that it had been possible to arrange for all girls of school age to spend their summer holiday with private families.

Although this is a large institution, improvements continue to be carried out to make it as homely as possible for the children in residence.

Signed HW my/s

Date 2/10/60

HIA REF:

Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF SISTER BRENDA McCALL

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I Sister Brenda McCall will say as follows –

1. In response to the inquiries made by the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry in a letter of the 21<sup>st</sup> May 2013, the Sisters would wish to put on record a number of responses.
2. The Sisters were involved in running a number of institutions across Ireland during their time. In Northern Ireland, the Sisters were involved in six different institutions. There were two in Derry, Termonbacca and Bishop Street, one in Portadown, and three in Belfast. Of the three in Belfast, two were operated entirely by the Sisters, Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge, and one was owned by the Diocese of Down and Connor but was managed and maintained by the Sisters at St. Joseph's Babies' Home.
3. Each house would have been run on a semi-autonomous basis with the superior in each house being responsible for the house. Whilst these houses were on a semi-autonomous operation, the congregation would have ensured that all houses were run within the ethos of the Sisters of Nazareth.
4. There were regular visitations, referred to in the earlier statement provided by the Sisters, where a senior member of the Congregation would visit and speak with the Sisters and look at all aspects of the operation including the religious observance, as well as the management and maintenance of the Homes.
5. In discussions with the Sisters, and from experience, some of the superiors would have been stricter than others and may have placed different emphasis on different aspects of the running of the House, the Congregation and religious observance. There is, therefore, no standard response which would cover exactly how each House was run at any particular time.
6. A general daily routine for the Sisters would have depended on their role or duties within the Congregation. Some would have been based entirely in the convent; involved in daily prayer and also in making charitable collections upon which the Congregation relied heavily in order to provide for the Institutions being run by them.

7. Some of the Sisters would have been trained and qualified teachers. They would have risen around 6am, dressed and had Morning Prayer or meditation for about half an hour. They would then attend Mass followed by breakfast and would then have gone on to their appointments as teacher for their normal daily work.
8. In the evening the Sisters would then follow the routine of the Rosary and a light supper followed by prayer and bed around 9.00 pm. Many of the teaching Sisters would also have assisted with the children in the morning and in the evening to supervise mealtimes, home works and general oversight of the children.
9. The Sisters who were responsible for attending to the children would normally have had some form of early year's child care qualifications. They would rise before the children for their own prayer and would then be available to assist in getting the children up and dressed to serve their breakfast and make sure that they were then sent out to school wearing their appropriate uniforms. When the children were not with the Sisters in the Home, they would have had other duties to deal with such as supervising the children who may not have been at school because they were ill or too young, ensuring that the accommodation was appropriately tidied, cleaned and maintained as well as their own religious duties. They would supervise the mealtimes, homework and recreation activity of the children.
10. The Sisters are using and accepting the widest definition of abuse when they respond to the queries raised by the Inquiry. They accept and understand this to include all aspects of physical, emotional, psychological and sexual abuse.
11. Over the recent years a number of former residents have come to the Sisters, both North and South of the border and as a result of the Ryan Commission in the South of Ireland, regarding complaints and recollections of their time within the care of the Sisters. Many tell of unhappiness in their time and this is a matter of deep regret to the Sisters.
12. In some of the cases, the former residents have made direct contact with the Sisters and have arranged to come and meet with them and discuss their time in care. Some have made indirect approaches and have either accepted responses through intermediaries or have eventually come to meet with the Sisters directly. Of these many of them describe a time where they did not feel that they were loved and cared for and that the Houses were not a warm happy place to be brought up.
13. It is a matter about which the Sisters feel very deeply as it was always their intention to provide a safe place for the young people in their care and it is a matter of deep regret to them that any child did not feel loved or cared for.
14. As a result of discussions and investigations over the recent years, including the Ryan Commission, claims brought to the Sisters' attention through intermediaries or directly and in light of this Inquiry, the Sisters do accept that on

occasions the standard of the care provided to the children may not have reached an acceptable level. There are instances when a particular Sister may not have acted in an appropriate way or when the children were not protected as well as the Sisters would have wished.

15. One of the main elements which has to be accepted is that the Sisters' general policy of no physical punishment of children was not implemented. There are instances where children were the subject of a physical assault and this is not acceptable when the care of children is to be considered.
16. Unfortunately the passage of time means that many of the Sisters who may have been involved in the care have died and therefore cannot be approached to give their information. Others are ill and are also unable to assist because their memories are not what would be required to give responses to some of these allegations.
17. One of the Sisters has recalled an incident where she saw a child being 'rapped' on the head by a Sister. This Sister was using a bunch of keys in her hand when she struck the child. The incident was immediately reported to the Superior. The Sister cannot recall the identity of the Sister who had rapped the child on the head with keys nor can she recall what led to the child being dealt with in this way or what steps were subsequently taken by the Superior. She can, however, recall that she did report this incident immediately, as she did not consider this to be an acceptable way to proceed.
18. On a number of occasions recently, and in the not too distant past, the police have asked to speak to a number of Sisters in light of some of the allegations which have been made. The police investigations were initially on a case by case basis but have now been co-ordinated under 'Operation Charwell'. On every occasion in which the police have asked to interview a Sister, arrangements have been made and the Sister has made herself available to be interviewed. The allegations in these individual cases are consistent with the general nature of the allegations made to this Inquiry.
19. What is accepted is that there were occasions when a Sister has let her frustrations overcome her self-control and has acted in an inappropriate manner. The exact circumstances why or when any of these incidents occurred cannot be dealt with in a very wide ranging way and will have to be looked at separately.
20. The Sisters themselves accept that the responsibilities they took on were taken on in a voluntary way and therefore they cannot, and do not, seek to use this as an explanation or excuse for any misconduct.
21. The Sisters had a long working day and dealt with a large number of children in each of their individual units. Many of the children themselves would have been from troubled backgrounds and had issues to deal with.

22. In dealing with such children it is possible that a Sister or lay staff member may have lost their temper and may have reacted in a way which is not acceptable in light of the beliefs that the Sisters hold.
23. The Sisters would also have to accept that, within any group of children, particularly when there are mixed ages, there may be the risk of bullying within a group. It is likely that there will have been instances when some of the children may have been unreasonable and unfair when dealing with other children and this behaviour would also not have been acceptable. However, the Sisters do have to accept that they could not keep an eye on the children for the entire time and these issues of abuse between peers may have led to some children having an extremely bad time and they may feel that the Sisters should have been in a better position to look after them.
24. This is a matter of regret as the Sisters would always wish to provide a safe place for the children placed in their care.
25. In regard to issues of sexual abuse, there have been very few allegations of that nature made against the Sisters until this most recent inquiry highlighted a number of further complaints.
26. These are matters about which the Sisters are extremely upset but have little information to give or assistance that they can provide to the Inquiry. These are new allegations and they are only recently coming to terms with them. None of the Sisters have any memory of this type of abuse being discussed with them or of receiving any training or warnings from any other agency about this behaviour or how to monitor and watch for it. They have no records of any advice on how they should have handled this type of behaviour if it did come to their attention.
27. If any child was subjected to any form of physical or sexual abuse, the Sisters feel deeply sorry for this and do feel that they should apologise to anyone who feels that they have been let down by the Congregation.
28. Returning to the police interviews, and most recently Operation Charwell, a number of Sisters have in fact been interviewed.
29. None of the Sisters have ever been charged with any offence following any of the interviews which have taken place regarding allegations about care provided to children in Northern Ireland.
30. In these circumstances, there are no Sisters who have faced any form of trial nor has anyone been convicted of any offences within Northern Ireland.
31. We have asked our solicitor to provide a schedule to the Inquiry of all of the cases in which they have been involved and to facilitate the Inquiry's Investigations in that regard. We believe that this may in fact have already been done.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed Sister Brenda McCall

Dated 31/10/2013

HIA REF:

Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 – 1995

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF SISTER BRENDA MCCALL

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1. This witness statement is written in response to a specific letter dated Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February in regard to the Children and Young Persons (Voluntary Homes) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1952 and the Children and Young Persons (Voluntary Homes) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1975.
2. In regard to the above named I have spoken with the archivists within the congregation and have also spoken to Senior Sisters including the Mother General and other Sisters who were both in Belfast and Derry during the period.
3. As far as I can identify no single person was appointed to visit either Termonbacca or Bishop Street in either of the Belfast Houses and it would appear that monthly investigations were not carried out in accordance with the legislation. The Superior of each house would have been responsible for the conduct and running of the house. That responsibility would have covered all duties within the house, care for the children and the elderly, the spiritual and physical wellbeing of all residents including the Sisters. The Superior of each house would have acted in the best interests of all under her control to the best of her ability.
4. The memory of Sisters generally, not specifically of Termonbacca, Bishop Street, Nazareth House or Nazareth Lodge would have been of a Superior carrying out a daily visit to all areas of the Home. This would have involved the Superior speaking to and visiting the convent area and the Sisters involved there, laundry, kitchens, childrens and elderly care areas within the houses. There would not necessarily have been any record of that save for mentions which may have arisen in Council Books or Reports which would have gone to the general chapter. I believe copies of the relevant Council Books, foundation books and general chapters have now been copied and will be forwarded to the Inquiry if they have not already.
5. A Superior was appointed to each house by the Mother General and the General Council for a set period of time.

6. According to the most recent constitution a Superior will have shown "..... skills and leadership and have experience in the Apostle(ministries within the house) she must be able to engender serenity at confidence and to instil resolution. She is to show kindness, with firmness, understanding and respect towards all. So these Superiors must be particularly professed."
7. A further review of the constitutions would also refer to a Superior and suggests that a Superior "... must show herself to the Sisters as a worthy representative of God and of the congregation. By example, by exhortation, by humility and by inventive resourcefulness she is to inspire the Sisters fidelity to their vocation, to community living and to the Apostolate".
8. A Superior would have been expected to ensure that the children were well cared for, had good nutritious food, that there was development for their personality and to endeavour to provide a "homely" atmosphere and to maintain an appropriate general routine for the children. The nature and quality of the accommodation, the general décor of the house amongst other things would have been noted and would have been commented on by a Superior. Children and staff would have been free to speak to the Superior at any time.
9. In later years a Superior to a particular house would have been able to speak to the Regional Superior who would, if necessary, then speak to the Superior General if any matters needed attending. In earlier years the Superior would have had to go directly to the Superior General as there would not have been a Regional. In addition to the Superiors own daily visits and walks around the house there would have been visits from the congregation by way of Visitations, records of which have been referred to the Inquiry previously, as well as visits by Government Inspectors and other appropriate persons and we believe copies of some of those State inspection reports have also been available to the Inquiry
10. Reports may well not have been retained by a particular house following closure and may have been held in another house or in the Regional House when regions were created. A particular Superior may have retained a copy of those reports in her own records but that was not a rule and would reflect the particular superior.
11. Visitors books would also have been retained in each of the houses and visitors would all have been expected to enter their names and dates of visits in each of those books. None of these books have been located but we will continue to search all houses to see if any can be found.

**Statement of Truth**

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

Signed Sister Mary Brenda McCall

Dated 28/2/2014

J.M.J.+.

REPORT ON VISITATION.

St. Joseph's Home,  
Termonbacca,  
Derry,  
6th - 11th December 1980.

Council Meeting in connection with the Visitation held on 10th December 1980.

Presided over by :- [REDACTED] Regional Superior.

Members present:- SR 97, Superior, SR 23  
Councillor and SR 1 Bursar.

Observance of Rule and Religious Spirit:- There is a good Religious Spirit in the house and the Rule is kept to the best of the Sisters' ability. The Office is recited with devotion and the prayers and spiritual exercises are punctually attended. A Confessor has just been appointed to hear the Sisters' Confessions, until now they had to go out to confession. Recreations are bright and cheerful.

Bursar's Remark's and Bursar's Stores:- The Bursar has no difficulty in getting all that is required for the smooth running of the house and has a good supply of all that is necessary in the stores. Wine and spirits are under proper control.

Sisters' Part:- The Convent is well kept and the Sisters' rooms are neat and tidy.

Chapel:- The Chapel is devotional and kept in good order. Sacred Vessels and Vestments are well cared for and everything pertaining to the Chapel is in perfect order.

Linen Room:- There is an adequate supply of everything for the needs of the Sisters. The habits are neat and made according to regulations.

Books ordered to be kept:- The Account books and registers are neatly written.

ST. JOSEPH'S HOME, TERMONBAOGA,

Date 5th. Sept. - 11th. Sept.  
1962.

COUNCIL MEETING in connection with the Visitation held on 11/9/62.

Presided over by Reverend Mother General.

Members present SR 93 SR 136 The Bursar

was called in. SR 93 SR 86

SR 86 was also present.

Observance of Rule and Religious spirit:-

There are two helpless invalids in this Community of nine members; the

care and attention which the former receive is a striking proof that

a true spirit of charity exists. The Rule is kept; the Spiritual

Exercises are punctually attended; the Office is said with devotion.

Bursar's Remarks & Bursar's Store:-

The Bursar said she is quite satisfied, that she has no difficulty in  
obtaining all that is necessary. The food is excellent, plentiful and  
well-cooked; the menu is varied.

Sisters' Part:-

The rooms are clean and everything in keeping with the religious life.

Chapel:-

Sacred Vessels, Vestments and Altar Linen are carefully kept. One

HIA REF:  
Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 – 1995

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF SISTER BRENDA MCCALL

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1. I, Sister Brenda McCall will say as follows –
2. This is a further statement provided by me to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, to assist the Inquiry following queries raised around my statement of 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2013.

Family Group Homes

3. Over the years I have lived and spoken to many Sisters who had worked in Termonbacca and Bishop Street and many other houses operated by the Sisters of Nazareth; it is from these Sisters I have acquired the knowledge to speak from their experiences.
4. The family groups commenced around 1972. In Termonbacca, a new building comprising of two separate units were completed. Extensive renovations were carried out in the nursery unit at this time, converting large dormitories to smaller bedrooms.
5. In Bishop Street, the home was converted into three separate units. The large dormitories which had existed previously had been divided into two and three bedded rooms.
6. Each unit was managed by a Sister assisted by senior girls in Bishop Street and by staff in Termonbacca.
7. The catalyst for the introduction of group homes for Termonbacca was the completion of the new build. In Bishop Street, the catalyst was to keep in line with Termonbacca.
8. These were affordable at this time as the Sisters received Grants from the Ministry of Home Affairs.

Staffing

9. The Sisters always tried to provide the best care with the staff and resources available to them in both Termonbacca and Bishop Street.
10. The Sisters provided the best level of supervision and constant monitoring of the children as best they could. It is clear that in some circumstances peer abuse and bullying may have occurred without the knowledge of the Sisters. Whilst the Sisters cannot confirm or deny any specific allegations, it is dreadful to consider the allegations at hand occurred whilst under the care of the Sisters. At no stage did the Sisters accept or condone any type of abuse by way of bullying or sexual abuse.

Annual Inspections

11. To refer to the Inspections carried out by the Ministry of Home Affairs under Section 102 of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and later Section 130 of the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1968.

1950 "Two school Inspectors from Stormont visited the House and they were very pleased with the accommodation for the boys." Page 80

1957 "The different officials who have visited us from Stormont were very pleased with the boys." Page 115

1961 "Miss Wright and Dr. Simpson from the Ministry of Home Affairs called in July and were very pleased with the children and the work done." Page 132

1962 "Miss Forrest from the Ministry of Home Affairs came during night recreation, was pleased to find the children so well and happy, some at band practice, they played for her." Page 134

1963 "Miss Forrest and Mr Parks came to see the boys place from Stormont. Members of the Child Welfare Council came to see the children. They remarked how well cared for the children looked and hoped we would be able to improve this present building." Page 142

1964 "Dr Simpson and Miss Hill paid us a visit, February 4. Both were very pleased with the boys and most anxious that we would build dormitories as more sleeping accommodation was needed, said they would say so at Stormont and hoped we would get a Grant." Page 143

1967 "Miss Forrest and Miss Hill and Mr Blackburn, Ministry of Home Affairs Stormont came on 15 November to visit the children and discuss the proposed new building. Mother **SR 127** Superior Bishop Street and Mr Frank Guckian Chairman of Termonbacca Aid Association were also present. It was agreed that the first step would be for the architect to prepare sketch plans and make an estimate of costs." Page 148

1968 "Miss Forrest Minister of Home Affairs, came on September 10 to see the plans of the proposed new building and to discuss same with the Architect, Mr White. Miss Forrest was pleased with the plans and said she would take them to Stormont to have them examined and to get in touch with us as soon as possible. Miss Hill, Ministry of Home Affairs, telephoned that our plans were acceptable, a few minor alterations were necessary and that they would be sending for Mr G White, Architect, very shortly, for a discussion. Mr White went to Stormont where it was decided that it would be necessary to erect a covered way from our kitchen to the new building and to provide a doctor's room in one of the three houses. He has now to draw a more detailed plan and sent a copy of same to the Ministry." Page 155-6

1969 "On 27 November we had a visit from Dr Simpson and Miss Hill from Stormont. We had a visit also from Mr Hume MP."

"In December, Miss Gillespie, Children's Officer for Tyrone, called to the children in her care. We had another visit from Mr J. Hume, he spent quite a lot of time with the boys." Page 162

1970 "In November 27 we had a visit from Dr Simpson and Miss Hill from Stormont. They were pleased with arrangements for the children under our difficult circumstances." Page 165

1971 "In February we had a visit from Miss Forrest, from the Ministry of Home Affairs. We received two instalments of our Grant from the Ministry. £5850.00 + £3425.00."

Also in February, "there was a meeting on the site. Everyone present agreed that a completion date in October is certainly possible."

In September, "we received a Grant of £1492.00 from the Ministry of Home Affairs."

In November, "we had a Grant from the Ministry of Home Affairs, £2497.00"  
Page 166-7

1972 In January, "we received a further Grant of £3586.00 for the Ministry of Home Affairs for the building fund."

In April, "we received a further instalment of Grant for the new wing from the Ministry of Home Affairs, £4113.00."

In May "we received a further instalment of Grant from the Ministry of Home Affairs £2065.00"

In September, "we got a further instalment of Grant from the Ministry of Home Affairs £3035.00 and we had a visit from Miss Forrest, Ministry of Home Affairs. She was very pleased with the renovations in the nursery and the new building."

In November, "Dr Simpson and Miss Hill came to visit us and stayed for lunch. They were both very pleased with the new building which was opened on 21<sup>st</sup> November. The Bishop came and said Mass and blessed our new wing."

In December, "we were happy to welcome Miss Forrest, Mr Poulter and Mr J Irvine, from the Ministry of Home Affairs. They were delighted with the new building – thought it was the best they had seen yet. Mr Irvine promised we would get a further Grant of £12,500.00 also to help with running costs, he promised to write to the local Authorities to ask them to pay £11.50p per child per week maintenance for children in their care who were admitted to St Joseph's. We trust this will get a successful hearing at all the meetings to be held to discuss it.

The Children's Officers from County Derry, Omagh and Fermanagh, visited also Mr White and members of the Derry Development Commission with the Chief Welfare Officer." Page 179 - 186

1973 "We are very pleased to receive our further Grant £12,500.00 from the Ministry of Home Affairs for the new building." Page 187

April, "We were pleased to receive a further instalment of Grant £4875.00 from the Ministry of Home Affairs." Page 191

December, "We had a visit from Miss Hill from the Ministry of Home Affairs, she was very pleased with all she saw and complimented the Sisters on how well kept everything was in the different Houses." Page 198

1974 "Miss Forrest and Mr Kirkpatrick from the Department of Social Services Belfast, they were very pleased with everything and congratulated the Sisters." Page 201

September, "Miss Gallagher and John Beattie from the Western Health Board visited to discuss course on Child Care etc." Page 206

December, "We had a visit from Miss Hill, Stormont. She is very pleased with all the work that is being done for the children." Page 208

1975 "Miss Hill from the Social Services Department visited and spent most of the afternoon and early evening with the children. She was very pleased with her visit and paid special tribute to the work being carried out by the Sisters." Page 210

1976 "Miss Hill visited and spent a very pleasant afternoon. She was delighted to meet the children and complimented the Sisters very highly for their care and work." Page 215

1978 "The newly appointed Director of Social Serviced of the Western Health and Social Services Board, Mr Carroll and his assistant Mr Newman paid us a visit before Christmas. Sisters and children were busy with decorations and the visitors commented on the happy, natural atmosphere which seemed to prevail in the groups." Page 238

#### Congregational Inspections

12. Inspections were also carried out by the Superior General or her Deputy who reside in Hammersmith, London. These inspections were provided to the Inquiry and included in the History of the Foundation Book as the following:

1928 – Page 13

1931 – Page 18

1933 – Page 28

1936 – Page 36

1943 – Page 55

1946 – Page 66

1948 – Page 74

1951 – Page 81

1955 – Page 101

1956 – Page 110

1959 – Page 123

1962 – Page 137

1966 – Page 146

1969 – Page 159

1971 – Page 169

1972 – Page 185

1973 – Page 189

1978 – Page 225

1979 – Page 241

1980 – Page 251

1981 – Page 257

#### Allegations

13. The Sisters do recall allegations being made against a former employee; **SND 38**. The Sisters, Sister **SR 142** and Sister **SR 2**, were very open in discussing with me the matters which arose surrounding Mr **SND 38** and condemned his actions rigorously.
14. Sister **SR 142** states that when on holiday in Portstewart with some of the children, one child called **HIA 127** said he felt unwell and so stayed behind when the children went out for a day trip. **HIA 127** reported to the police that Mr **SND 38** stayed behind to care for him and abused him at that time. Sister **SR 142** said that this was untrue because Mr **SND 38** was their minibus driver and was out with them on the trip. At no time was **SND 38** left with **HIA 127** or any other child.
15. Sister **SR 142** also recalls a second incident when **HIA 127** went for an overnight stay with Mr **SND 38** at his parents' house on Christmas Eve. **HIA 127** reported to the police that Mr **SND 38** came into the single bedroom and abused him. **HIA 127** was only 12 or 13 years old at the time of the incident.
16. **HIA 127** reported these incidents to the police when he was about 25 years of age and the alleged incidents were investigated by the police with the co-operation of the Sisters. A further allegation concerning a female resident, we believe, in Bishop Street led to Mr. **SND 38**'s dismissal from the Sister's employ.

#### Convictions

17. To discuss Father Brendan Smith, it is true to say that Sisters are appalled at the activities which are now known to have occurred at the hands of Father Brendan Smith. At no time were the Sisters ever aware of the manner in which Father Brendan Smith behaved when he was in any of our Houses. The Sisters condemn outright the activity of Father Smith and confirm they would not have allowed Father Smith into the House had they been aware of same.

#### Statement of Truth

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

Signed Sister Brenda McCall

Dated \_\_\_\_\_

HIA REF:

Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 – 1995

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WITNESS STATEMENT OF SISTER BRENDA MCCALL

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1. This statement is in regard to a request for information around Sister **SR 1**
2. **SR 1** was appointed to her role by the Superior General and her Council and she was ministering in Termonbacca in that role from 1961 – 1970.
3. **SR 1** went for training in the area of Childcare in 1958 when she received a formal qualification in child care.
4. **SR 1** was considered competent for her role in the field of childcare by the Superiors in the congregation.
5. **SR 1** did a residential childcare course in London between 1958-1959.
6. Sisters would have been encouraged to keep up with their qualifications by attending any courses, lectures or study days which were available to her in the locality in which she was working. We cannot provide any information as to what these courses were as none of that information is currently available to us. In the circumstances we cannot advise what, if any, course or training Sister would have attended during her period in Termonbacca.
7. The supervision over Sisters performance and how this would have been done would have been carried out by Senior Sisters, the Superior, the Regional Superior and the General Visitors during the period in which she was in her role. Her work would have been monitored and observed by the people within the order who were instructed to do so as suggested above.

8. **SR 1** would have been observed and evaluated during any visits by Superiors, Regionals or Super Generals or Regional Visitators who were coming over from the general house in London.
9. **SR 1** was appointed by the Superior General and her council as Superior in Northampton in 1970 and she remained there until 1976. She was the Superior in Bishop Street from 1982 – 1985 and then again from 1991 – 1997 when she appointed and selected by the Superior General and her Council.
10. Sister was selected for her role as Superior in any house when she was appointed because she was seen to have possessed the qualifications as required in the constitutions of the Sisters of Nazareth which are updated and currently state that a Sister would have to "...be eligible for Superiorship a Sister must possess the qualities required by Canon Law. She must be at least 40 years of age and ten years perpetually professed. She must be outstanding for her piety, religious observance, wisdom and loyalty to the congregation, its spirit and its apostolate. She must be skilled in the art of leadership and have had experience in the apostolate. She must be able to engender serenity and confidence and to instil resolution. She is to show kindness with firmness, understanding and a respect towards all. The Superior must show equal concern for every aspect for the apostolates carried on by the community, and the Sisters should welcome this solicitude and respond to it".
11. As Superior, **SR 1** would have had overall responsibility for the wellbeing of the whole house, the children, elderly residents and other Sisters and it would have been her duty to go on inspections daily around the house or even more regularly to ensure that all aspects of the house were running smoothly. She would also have to be available to anyone whether they be residents or Sisters to speak to.
12. In her role as Superior she would not have had any direct involvement in caring for the children but would have had overall responsibility for ensuring their wellbeing.

### **Statement of Truth**

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

Signed Sister Mary Brinda McBall

Dated 28/2/2014

WESTERN AREA HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD  
LONDONDERRY, LIMA VADY AND STRABANE DISTRICT

# GRANSHA HOSPITAL

CLOONEY ROAD, LONDONDERRY BT47 1TF

Telephone: CAMPSIE 860261

Mr Colm McCourt  
 Social Worker  
 Social Services  
 Meetinghouse Street  
 STRABANE  
 Co Tyrone

THIS REPORT IS STRICTLY  
 CONFIDENTIAL AND IS FOR THE  
 INFORMATION ONLY OF THE PERSON  
 TO WHOM IT IS ADDRESSED.

7 July 1986

Dear Mr McCourt

RE: **HIA 108** [redacted]

This 16 year-old girl was admitted to Altnagelvin Hospital on 4.3.86 following an overdose. She was transferred to Gransha Hospital the following day, 5.3.86. This was thought to be a cry for help but was probably precipitated by home circumstances and the fact that her parents disapproved of her boyfriend.

At the time of her overdose, **HIA 108** was staying with her uncle but her father had threatened to take her home. She told me that she found the home situation intolerable and that her parents were both heavy drinkers and, generally, behaved irresponsibly. She was forced to look after the younger children as well as maintaining the household. The area she lived in was very sectarian and the neighbourhood contained a large number of terrorists.

**HIA 108** appeared to be very keen on her boyfriend but she was aware that he had another girlfriend. Against this background, she grew up with a rebellious frame of mind. She had been in a children's home a few times - this had always been short term. Her education was poor and she had missed a lot of schooling for the previous 2 years due to truancy. She had been arrested for shop-lifting 2 months prior to admission, although she did it in such a way as to invite being caught. We found this girl to be a very independent individual with a very hostile attitude towards the staff. She told me that she was determined that she would never return home to live with her parents under the present conditions at home. An IQ test showed her to be of normal intelligence and was thought to be an underestimate of her true potential as her general information was very poor because of her deprived background.

We thought that returning this girl to her home background would have a detrimental effect on her and further stop her development towards a productive

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-2-

7 July 1986

Mr McCourt

member of society. We, therefore decided to transfer her to Harberston House until she is old enough to have her own independence.

Yours sincerely



H O'DONNELL  
S H O to Dr Nugent

ST. JOSEPH'S HOME, TERMONBAOGA,

Date 5th. Sept. - 11th. Sept.  
1962.

COUNCIL MEETING in connection with the Visitation held on 11/9/62.

Presided over by Reverend Mother General.

Members present SR 93 SR 136 The Bursar

was called in. SR 93 SR 86

SR 86 was also present.

Observance of Rule and Religious spirit:-

There are two helpless invalids in this Community of nine members; the

care and attention which the former receive is a striking proof that

a true spirit of charity exists. The Rule is kept; the Spiritual

Exercises are punctually attended; the Office is said with devotion.

Bursar's Remarks & Bursar's Store:-

The Bursar said she is quite satisfied, that she has no difficulty in  
obtaining all that is necessary. The food is excellent, plentiful and  
well-cooked; the menu is varied.

Sisters' Part:-

The rooms are clean and everything in keeping with the religious life.

Chapel:-

Sacred Vessels, Vestments and Altar Linen are carefully kept. One