

HIA REF: [ ]

NAME: [ NHB136 ]

DATE: [ 9 February 2015. ]

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

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**Witness Statement of [ NHB136 ]**

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I, [ NHB136 ], will say as follows: -

1. In respect of my qualifications and experience, as a mature student I graduated with an MSW from QUB in 1983 having specialised in child protection. I commenced working in [ ] Social Services in the Child Protection team in October 1983. As a mother of two young boys I was committed to the care of young children. I continued to work in this programme and in the same highly intimidating area for 9 years before transferring into management of a team of social workers in a programme specialising in Physical Health and Disability covering [ ] Belfast.

In a voluntary capacity I was on the Board of Governors of Harberton Special School, when [ HIA 5 ] was a pupil and later his brother [ HIA458 ] before becoming chair of the Board.

I established a hostel for women experiencing domestic violence, with support for children as well as their mothers and chaired same for 18years.

2. I can confirm that I have been shown a copy of [ HIA 5 ] statement for whom I was social worker from 19<sup>th</sup> December 1983, when the case was transferred to me from [ NL 184 ] who had been involved

with the family from April 1982. I continued to work with the family until May 1986 when responsibility for care was transferred to Lisburn Social Services as the family had been re housed in [REDACTED] on 11<sup>th</sup> February 1985 and by which time **HIA 5** was no longer in Nazareth Lodge Children's Home having been returned home, to his family in [REDACTED] on June 25<sup>th</sup> 1985.

3. I also confirm that I was social worker to **NL145** when she was placed in foster care after placement in Nazareth Lodge. I understand that she is not an applicant but I believe that there is relevant information in her file. I attach a relevant report at Exhibit 1.
4. I wish to respond to issues in **HIA 5** statement by addressing the relevant numbered sections.
5. Re Para.2 **HIA458**, **HIA 5** and **NL 101** were taken into Care on 23<sup>th</sup> April 1982 (this did not include **NL 102**). They were returned home on 11<sup>th</sup> June 1982. However **HIA458** and **HIA 5** were placed again in Nazareth Lodge at their father's request due to his mental health state on 30<sup>th</sup> June 1982. **NL 101** did not return to care and **NL 102** had not been in Care and neither had she been fostered.
6. Re Para.10 While Sisters may state that 'all is well', I had already expressed my views on previous standards of Care (see **NL145** report at Exhibit 1) and as a result I ensured that I had a high level of contact with **HIA 5** both within the Home and outside. ( See List of contact with **HIA458** and **HIA 5** during 1984 at Exhibit 2.) I extracted this sample of my contacts during 1984 by going manually through an old work diary which enabled me to indicate the level of visiting I did to this applicant during that year.
7. Re Para 12 See more details set out in Transfer Report at Exhibit 3.
8. Re Para15, **HIA 5** did not attend the school to which he refers but both **HIA458** and **HIA 5** did attend school regularly. **HIA458** attended [REDACTED] School

but with the co-operation of the Educational Psychologist transferred to join **HIA 5** at [REDACTED] School. As a member of the Board of Governors in [REDACTED] I had easy access to **HIA 5** and saw him regularly. He was a lovely young boy who was frequently praised by the Headmaster. Considering his background and some form of learning difficulty, he had settled well. See Exhibit 2.

9. Re paras 19 and 20. **HIA 5** account may be verified by a comment made to me by **SR2** about **HIA458** behaviour. (See Exhibit 2 at 16<sup>th</sup> July 84) **SR 2** expressed concern about **HIA458** reaction when asked to go for a bath. He started screaming 'bitch' and became upset. **SR2** considered that he was very disturbed. I now wonder whether this was this the memory of previous treatment.

10. Re para. 21. **HIA 5** states that no one visited the Home. He may have taken social work visits as normal. I visited regularly to see **HIA458** and **HIA 5** (See Exhibit 2.)

11. Re paras. 25 and 26. I find it difficult to accept that having spent so much time with **HIA 5** and his brother, in the Home, in their own home and travelling in my car, that I did not create an atmosphere that allowed the boys to tell me of their treatment. I did not see any signs of injury and having attended a medical with **HIA 5** in [REDACTED] School (24<sup>th</sup> May 1984) and having taken **HIA458** from [REDACTED] School for a Medical at 31, Malone Place, that no doctor commented on having observed any evidence of physical abuse or injury.

Also **HIA 5** and his brother were home for increasing periods during 1984 and 1985, until spending full weekends, with parents laundering school uniform. On changing clothes, if abuse was evident I have no doubt their parents would have informed me as I visited regularly.

On that basis, I question the timing of abuse. Could it have taken place before my involvement which was from 19<sup>th</sup> December 1983?

12. Re para. 27 I do not know any **NL 185** S.W. I would have presumed that I would have returned **HIA 5** and his brother home as we had worked for this end for some time. However, this is not relevant. The important issue is that

**HIA 5** was returned into his new home with the sincere hope that all would be peaceful and happy. Obviously the situation must have broken down some time later. I transferred responsibility to [REDACTED] Social Services in May 1986.

Re; the birth of further children, **HIA 5** should have been aware of the forthcoming birth as he was home regularly at this stage. **NL 211** was born on [REDACTED] and the boys came home for Christmas on 18<sup>th</sup>. I cannot remember but considering their young age they may not have been prepared. I have no knowledge of a child called **NL214**

13. Re para.30, See Exhibit 2 in relation to commentary about his schooling.

14. In conclusion I would wish to say that in no sense do I aim, in my attention to detail of some of the issues in **HIA 5** statement, to negate or detract from the pain that **HIA 5** states he endured as a young boy of 7 years. It concerns me to think that I may have missed the evidence of such inhumane treatment. I am disappointed that the efforts made to provide a suitable home in a non-threatening area did not improve family relationships and prevent risk to **HIA 5** and his brother.

It is unacceptable if a lovely young boy who was subjected to such physical and emotional pain at home with his parents, was then further abused in Institutional Care that was designed to protect him. I had no knowledge that his parents abused alcohol during my involvement. However, his father did receive psychiatric treatment and was aware of his 'short fuse'. His Mum was a quiet gentle woman who loved her children but did suffer post natal depression after **NL 211** birth.

I wish we could undo the past. **HIA 5** deserved better.

#### Statement of Truth

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

Signed

**NHB136**

Dated

9 February 2015

HIA REF: [ ]

NAME: [ **NHB136** ]

DATE: [ 18 March 2015 ]

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

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**Witness Statement of **NHB136****

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I, **NHB136** will say as follows:-

1. In respect of my qualifications and experience, as a mature student, I graduated with a MSW degree from QUB in 1983 having specialised in child protection. I commenced working in [ ] Belfast Social Services based in the [ ] in the child protection team covering the [ ] in October 1983. As a mother of two young boys I was very committed to the care of young children. I continued to work in this programme and in this highly intimidating area for 9 years before transferring into management of a team of social workers in a programme specialising in Physical Health and Disability covering [ ]. During this time, in 2002, I qualified with an MBA in Health & Social Care, from the University of Ulster.

In a voluntary capacity I was on the Board of Governors of [ ] School, when **HIA 5** was a pupil and later his brother **HIA458** before becoming Chair of the Board for 8 years.

Also in a voluntary capacity I established and chaired a hostel, in [ ] Belfast, for women experiencing domestic violence, with special support for children as well as their mothers.

2. In my statement in relation to **HIA 5** I made reference to my involvement with **NL145** due to information which may have been relevant to the case under review.

3. Currently I intend to focus on my involvement with **NL145** as her social worker from October 1983 to April 1987. My role was to support her in Foster Care when, aged 16 years, she lived with **NL217** and **NL217**

after a childhood spent mostly in Institutional Care – the latter being Nazareth Lodge.

4. I confirm that I have read all the information on **NL145** file.

5. I wish to expand on the background of my Report of 19.11.1985 regarding **NL145** account of abuse while in Nazareth Lodge, see exhibit 1 containing the report As I stated a young girl, who had been in Nazareth Lodge, was invited to QUB to speak of her experience in Care. As I listened to accounts of physical and emotional abuse and as a mother of young sons I decided that once qualified, as a social worker in child protection, I would not place a child in Care in Nazareth Lodge or any other Institution without assessing the quality of Care provided.

6. I had to face this decision shortly after being employed as a Social Worker when I was asked to return another Social Worker's young clients to Nazareth Lodge. I refused and was advised that the best way to address this was to visit Nazareth Lodge and confront the issue which I did. I met with **SR 2** and expressed my views. While I cannot remember exact detail, I left there relatively satisfied that the problem had been addressed. I learned that **SR62** who had been responsible for the Unit and about whom the allegations had been made, had been transferred to a Convent **SR 2** I was informed that Care was different then and as far as I was aware, during my involvement there was improvement.

7. I refer to information, provided by **NL145** and contained in both Dr Mangan's (at SNB 71687) and Professor Fahy's (at SNB 71839), detailed medical assessments.

8. I have also referred to notes I had written in work diaries during the period of my involvement. I agree with the excellent sensitive assessments of these reports but query some aspects of **NL145** statements.

9. I can confirm that I was concerned about **NL145** initial lack of response to me. It lacked warmth and indicated a reluctance to express emotion or to become involved with me, after all I was an authority figure. During my visits I focused on developing a warm trusting relationship with this young girl who had suffered so much due to her mother's ill health and her loving father's inability to care for her at home due to his age and lack of experience, followed by the loss of both parents.

10. Our relationship helped **NL145** disclose her experience of inappropriate physical punishments and emotional abuse while in Care under

the direction of [REDACTED] The details concur with that contained in both medical reports.

11. If one can measure authenticity by the degree of distress caused by the reliving of the events I have no difficulty in believing **NL145**. Each time we focused on her experience in Care she became very distressed and this was from a young girl who tried to contain her emotions.

12. I have no difficulty accepting the existence of a regime of strict discipline resulting in physical and emotional abuse of very vulnerable young children. I also accept the truth of the scenes in relation to refusal to eat. From personal experience as a boarder in a Convent school for 2 terms when I was 11 years I soon learned that no one left the table until everyone ate the food on her plate. There are 2 items of food I have not eaten since. This happened in an environment of organised controlled routines where physical or emotional punishment was not the norm.

13. I have no knowledge of **NL145** experience of bulimia nor is there any evidence in the Case Conference or Review Reports by the Social Workers involved at the time of having verified **NL145** statement that she 'ran away from care'. Normal reaction would be to notify the SW immediately. This would need to be verified by the SWs who were involved or at least from their records if available.

14. I agree that most Care reports are very positive and are not indicative of the emotional or physical pain endured by **NL145** and the other children. Yet when examined closely we read statements such as 'temperamental – cursory remarks – reticent', see SNB 71820. 'lack of emotion and inability to demonstrate affection', see SNB 71825 and other such references alongside all the positive comments especially the Internal Case Review reports written by **SR62** who was allegedly responsible for the physical punishments and punitive discipline.

15. I have no knowledge of inappropriate sexual behaviour. **NL145** did not disclose this to me. It is difficult to internalise the reality of opportunity unless the rules eased to the point of neglect with change of management. Allowing for **NL145** innocence I cannot understand why she did not report the initial incident and why she appears to have continued with this behaviour if she was distressed by same. She does name the older boy and possibly now with maturity regrets her involvement, no matter how innocent, as she would have had to participate during the absence of staff.



16. In no sense do I accept that staff, whether religious or lay, would have ignored or tolerated this behaviour. However it is not unrealistic to presume that young people could find a way of avoiding staff.

17. I note that in relation to Fostering Assessment there is reference to 'male identification problems', see SNB 71828 and 'She is beginning to show an interest in boys' etc. and 'that she felt uneasy with younger boys seems to have resolved itself', see SNB 71827.

18. I did not know that **NL145** was pregnant or attempted an overdose at 19 years. However on checking a 1986 Diary, I learn that during a lengthy home visit we had an intensive discussion on the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on intercourse and contraception. In the interest of confidentiality I may not have noted all detail. Also during this visit she was upset that **NL145** future husband, was going to England as his family had to move due to serious threats from a militant group. She said she would go on holiday when **NL145** had settled and then make her mind up about her future.

19. Also if file notes record all contact, despite frequent phone calls and a home visit when no one was at home I did not see **NL145** in November and December. I had a phone call from Anna Liddy who was distressed as **NL145** had moved out. Later **NL145** phoned me to say she was going to London on 23<sup>rd</sup> December to visit **NL145** and stay with his family. She gave me all contact details.

**NL145** and she returned to Belfast from 17<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> February when she phoned me from the airport in a very distressed state, see my report of 26<sup>th</sup> May 1987 contained at exhibit 2.

20. This urgent action by her future father-in-law was taken due to concern about **NL145** safety. This was Belfast 1987. **NL145** was not prepared for this but wanted to be with **NL145**. After frequent phone calls in March I lost contact in April as her new phone number was not recorded correctly. I became concerned about her vulnerability when I lost contact.

21. Regarding the possibility of a pregnancy, I realise despite frequent phone contact I had not seen **NL145** from October 28<sup>th</sup> 1986.

22. I cannot make any comment on **NL145** use of alcohol or smoking or attempts at overdosing. This could have happened when she was older.

23. In relation to my final Contact with **NL145**, I did not hear from her from March 1987 until May 1989 when she phoned to say that she had married **NL145** was living in London and had a six month old baby. She



sounded positive and stated that she wished to pursue claims against Nazareth Lodge due to the physical and emotional abuse she had experienced while in care. I passed the information on to my line management, see exhibit 2 above, and have had no further contact. I note that there was no mention of sexual abuse at any time

24. In relation to the allegations of physical and emotional abuse, I realise that this is a difficult issue especially as physical punishment was prevalent in schools at that time. I had professional experience of having to address, with a Headmaster, the issue of serious injury to a young boy inflicted by a teacher around this time. However, I do not accept that such behaviour was justifiable.

25. I have great respect for carers and understanding of the stress endured while caring for young vulnerable children who may have been placed in care due to excessive physical and/or emotional abuse inflicted in their homes who arrive distressed, confused and feeling unloved. Others may be grieving the loss of a parent or like **NL145** whose mother was too ill to care and her father, who loved his daughter and did try but could not cope, through lack of experience, with child care.

26. These children need individual loving care but I know numbers make this difficult. As many children may have had no experience of appropriate behaviour and to protect the most vulnerable there has to be discipline – a set of rules. The balance is difficult and stressful but essential.

27. While sympathetic to the stress placed on caring staff we cannot tolerate anything other than gentle care for the vulnerable little children who have endured such unacceptable behaviour at home combined with the distress of separation and placement in the unknown.

28. It pains me that **NL145** whom I last saw aged 19 years, having experienced such childhood loss, has suffered so much including domestic violence. I am concerned about her health and care of her children and hope she is offered and accepts appropriate help.

#### Statement of Truth

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

Signed **NHB136**

Dated 18<sup>th</sup> March 2015

REPORT

Re: **NL 145** D.O.B. **[REDACTED]**

I have been visiting **NL 145**, at least, monthly since 4th October 1983 and during this time I've discussed her years in Nazareth Lodge on several occasions and for 2 main reasons:-

- (a) On my initial visit I was concerned about **NL 145**'s unresponsive, negative attitude. In an effort to establish/<sup>a</sup>more positive response I spoke to her of an eighteen year old whom I had met while I was a student at Queens. When I tentatively said that this girl had indicated that discipline had been strict **NL 145** became animated named the girl (I've forgotten the name) and said they both had been in Sr Anthony's unit and that she too had experienced similar forms of discipline as did some boys she named. In no sense was **NL 145** distressed, rather she seemed to be happy to be able to communicate about something.
- (b) However, I noted her comments and decided to return to the subject when I had developed a better relationship. On doing this and having made contact with **NL 145**'s feelings she became very distressed and cried uncontrollably. This scene is repeated every time I focus on this area of concern. On two occasions I have discussed the topic with **NL 145** while alone with either **NL 217** or **NL 217**. Both have become concerned and surprised as they knew **NL 145** during the relevant years and were not aware of anything. **NL 145** insists she did try to tell them and her Social Worker but no one seemed to take her seriously. She believed no one would listen to her as **SR 116** appeared so pleasant and interested in **NL 145**'s welfare when Social Worker and **NL 217** visited. There was a sense too that this punishment was acceptable to all adults concerned.

As **NL 145** is now 18 years old, will not return to Nazareth Lodge and **\*Sr SR 116** is elderly and no longer working with children. I focused on the essence rather than detail of the events **NL 145** relayed **\*Apparently she resides in the main convent sometimes opening the main door.**

**NL 145** was happy in St Joseph's till she moved to Nazareth Lodge when she was 7 years old. She went to live with foster parents when she was 14 years (see C11's for details). Her father died in 1979 when she was nearly 12 years and it would appear that life in Nazareth Lodge was unpleasant from this time. She has spoken of being made to

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lie on a bed while she was beaten with part of 'a shower unit' by **SR 116**. Another girl received similar punishment. She has also spoken of a member of staff in the same unit who made the young people, boys and girls, roll up their trouser legs while she beat them with a stick across their legs.

She considers the physical punishment she received was minor compared with that experienced by two brothers and a 'black boy'.

I am concerned that this young girl should have had such an adverse experience and that she has been deprived of the excellent standard of care currently practised in Sr Teresa's unit.

**NHB 136**

Social Worker

CF/OE

19.11.85

NL 145

NL 223 - P.S.W.

Mr R Bunting - A.D.S.S. EN-SSB

HC/mg

26 November 1985

Please find enclosed copy of a report forwarded to me on behalf of a girl who was a resident in Nazareth Lodge several years ago. As you will see, NL 145 is making a complaint about the harshness of the regime which prevailed at that time. She too is talking in terms of the physical punishment that she received but notes that for the boys, life could be much harsher.

You will remember that I carried out a limited investigation at the Department's request, the results of which I forwarded to yourself. At the time I remained unconvinced about the denials that I was receiving from 'ex staff in Nazareth. This complaint only heightens that lack of confidence.

NL 223

Principal Social Worker

Shs report re  
allegations

for limited investigation  
referred to file by H&C  
See files of

(1) NL 204

(2) NL 97



cye 1. NL 145

2. Complaints - Nazareth Lodge

EASTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD  
NORTH AND WEST BELFAST DISTRICT

26 MAY 1987

MEMORANDUMFrom NHB 136 S.W.  
Antrim Road  
Ref. CF/RLTo Mr NL 219 P.S.W.  
Ref.

18 May 1987

RE: NL 145

Since last correspondence little progress has been made. When last in contact NL 145 wanted to press charges. She did go to a local Police Station in [redacted] but had no satisfaction as they wanted some instruction from R.U.C. to take her statement. NL 145 came back to Belfast from 17th to 27th February. During this time she attempted to make a statement in Antrim Road Police Station. They asked her to call at Police Station covering Nazareth Lodge area. I enquired to learn this was Willowfield R.U.C. and was attempting to make a joint appointment. When NL 145 phoned in a very distressed state from the airport as she was returning to [redacted] under duress. Her boyfriend's father had come to collect his son [redacted] who refused to return to [redacted] without NL 145. (The family had been intimidated out of Belfast). She father made it very clear to me that once he had his son in [redacted] he would ask NL 145 to leave his home, find her a bed sit and "wipe her out of his son's life".

NL 145 phoned me almost daily at first. [redacted]'s parents were buying a new house, she was looking for a job and [redacted]'s father was looking for a bed sit for her. Contact was maintained throughout March; On 2nd April NL 145 phoned while I was at a case discussion. She attempted to give the name of a hotel and phone number, but the Social Worker could not make out the name of the hotel and phone number was incorrect, since then I have heard nothing. This concerns me as NL 145 is so vulnerable alone in [redacted]. I have made several attempts to make contact through [redacted]'s family, but they must have moved house.

In the meantime, after much discussion I have received the permission of Inspector Hamilton Willowfield R.U.C. to use his name if NL 145 should make contact with a Police Station in England.

Interestingly his main concern was that he or the Police were not seen to be bringing charges against Nazareth Lodge as he had great respect for Nuns and the work done there.

NHB 136

Social Worker

GA367/AP183

Telephoned [REDACTED] NHB 136 with reference  
to Mr Bunting's memo of 31/5/89.

NL 145's file was closed in Aug/Sept 1987  
with a view to opening if she contacted  
Social Services again.

NL 145 made contact with NHB 136  
around the middle of May 1989.  
She is now married, living in [REDACTED] and has  
a baby. Her name is now [REDACTED].  
She intends to press charges and has been  
in contact with a solicitor in [REDACTED] to  
assist her. NHB 136 thinks that  
NL 145 will go ahead and press charges  
and will be looking for compensation.  
The case has, however, been passed through  
[REDACTED] to [REDACTED] to  
put details to date in writing.

[REDACTED]  
7/6/89.



NL 145

FILE

has spoken to  
NHB 136 Re:  
Reference to claims in Solicitor's letter.

She was very evasive with regards to claims. No way gave them any grounds that a claim should or would be paid. NHB 136 discussed claim with NL 145 but not in a positive way.

R G Black, ADSS  
North and West Belfast  
RGE/DB

R J Bunting, ADSS  
EHSSB

23 June 1989

Re: Nazareth Lodge Children's Home  
Allegations of ill treatment by former residents

With reference to your memo dated 31 May 1989 and previous correspondence regarding the above matter, the up-to-date position is:

NL 97

NL 97 has not made an official complaint to the Police despite the fact that in 1987 NL 281, who was Social Worker at the time, discussed this matter with him. To the best of our knowledge at present, NL 97's decision remains the same as of that time.

NL 145

NL 145's file was closed in August/September 1987 with a view to re-opening if she contacted Social Services again.

NL 145 made telephone contact with NHB 136, Social Worker, in the middle of May 1989. She is now married, and living in [redacted] and has a six month old baby. (Her name is now Mrs [redacted]). NL 145 wanted to know if there were any further developments in her case. She informed NHB 136 that it was her intention to press charges and had been in contact with a Solicitor in [redacted]. Inspector Hamilton, Willowfield Royal Ulster Constabulary agreed some time ago that he would act as Liaison Officer if she wished to pursue the matter.

Subsequent to this telephone call, a letter arrived at [redacted] Social Services on 7 June 1989 from Solicitors in [redacted] and apparently they are advising NL 145 to report this matter to the Police. (See copy enclosed)

To date, Social Services are unsure as to whether NL 145 has made an official complaint to the Police. However, it is almost certain that she will proceed with charges and will be seeking compensation.

I hope this answers your queries.

OTHER YOUNG PEOPLE

NAMED !

R G Black  
ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES