

HIA REF:
Witness Name:

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 – 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF **SR 52**

SR 52 will say as follows -

1. I have previously spoken to this Inquiry concerning my time in our house in Derry.
2. I spent twenty four years in Nazareth Lodge, Belfast between 3 September 1975 and 28 October 1999. When I arrived the impact of the troubles was being felt by everyone, Sisters, staff and children. Most of our domestic staff came from Short Strand and the lower Ormeau Road. Some had painful experiences of having their houses searched, floor boards ripped up etc. before coming to work in Nazareth Lodge and Nazareth House.
3. My memory of the children generally is that they came from broken homes, where for many reasons parents could not cope, care for them or were in prison. Some children were very disturbed with many and varied behavioural problems and difficulties coming, as they did, from the troubled areas of Belfast or unstable backgrounds, thus needing a lot of attention and understanding. The Sisters and staff tried to provide a warm and loving environment for them, endeavouring to heal the wounds inflicted on them during this stressful time. They seemed to respond well to the peace and care provided. We tried to protect them from the worst of the troubles as best we could. I do not recall any incidents of a child being abused or unduly punished. Neither did I witness anyone ever being punished for bed wetting.
4. From memory, much work had been done in Nazareth Lodge to upgrade the accommodation of the children in the 60's and early 70's so that it was less institutionalised and better suited to meet the needs of families. Dormitories had been divided into bedrooms with capacity for three and four beds. On the third floor, where there were older children, some single rooms had been provided. This was to give them privacy, personal space, independence and enable them to study and do homework in peace. All rooms were carpeted and suitably furnished with dressing tables and wardrobes. The corridors were covered with carpet tiles. Each group could accommodate about sixteen children but due to the unsettled conditions in the city, there were few long-term children.

5. I was given responsibility for Bethlehem Nursery School and a group of sixteen children. At that time there were five family groups comprising altogether 69 children, 41 boys and 28 girls, with a Sister in charge of each group, assisted by two members of staff. Three of the groups were in the main building on the ground, second and third floors and the other two groups were in Bethlehem wing, a two storey building. Each unit was completely self-contained.
6. In 1975 there were four bedrooms in my unit, a large sitting room, study room, a dining room, kitchen, bathrooms, toilets and a store room. These were later divided into single and double bed-rooms. The older children would help with the washing up and tidying their rooms. We had a cleaner in each group who also did the laundry when the children were at school. Until 1977 boys over eleven went to the De La Salle Brothers in Kircubbin. After that families were kept together until they had completed their education.
7. My normal duties were those of a parent, getting the children up at 7.30 a.m., ensuring they washed, dressed and made their beds if they were old enough, serving breakfast before seeing them out to their various schools. A number attended Immaculata and St. Aloysius special schools. All the children had school dinners during term time.
8. Three of the Sisters in charge of the groups were also teaching. The Primary School was in the grounds and ages ranged from five to eleven plus. I worked in the two unit nursery school which catered for 58 under-fives who were resident in Nazareth Lodge, Nazareth House, St. Joseph's Babies' Home as well as from the parish. I had an assistant teacher and three nursery assistants on the staff.
9. I do not recall all of the staff I worked with in Nazareth Lodge but I have tried to provide a list of those I can remember to the Inquiry. I am aware of the name **NL 4** **NL 4** but I did not know her. She had left Nazareth Lodge before I arrived in 1975. I do not believe I ever met her and I do not know her personally. I believe **NL 5** worked with **SR 34**. I think she took care of a small group of younger children in the late 1970s. I also know she looked after **NL 5**. He was a boy who was found in a hen house and needed a lot of special personal care. I believe **NL 5** is still in contact with **NL 5**. When I was first in Bethlehem Nursery School in 1975 **NL 5** was one of the nursery assistants and was a gentle efficient lady who was generous with her time. She was very good at settling the new children, especially those who were coming into the care of the Sisters.
10. In addition to my teaching duties I would assist the staff with supervising the homework every evening before the children went outdoors to play. We were fortunate that we had two large playing fields, a smaller field with play equipment as well as a hall for recreational purposes. The boys spent considerable time playing football. All of the children went swimming at week-ends. There was

always someone supervising these activities. A number won trophies for dancing and certificates for swimming. While the children were justifiably proud of these successes we were also very proud, as a normal parent would be. In the winter months the children played indoor games, watched children's programmes on television and went to the cinema. Many of the children joined Guides, Brownies, Cubs and Scouts in St. Bernadette's parish. Older children attended youth clubs and discos weekly.

11. The younger children went to bed at 8.00 p.m. after having a snack. The older children stayed up until 9.00 p.m. In the late 80's some of the older children were trained in independent living. They did their own budgeting, cooking etc. in a separate section of the house set up for this purpose.
12. On Saturdays the Sisters took it in turn to go collecting. I accompanied Sister **SR 102** to Ardoyne in North Belfast where we went from house to house collecting in order to subsidise the £15.00 weekly received from the Health Boards for the upkeep of each child. The per capita rate was comparably low in voluntary homes which resulted in a significant funding gap. We could not have managed without the voluntary donations received each week.
13. In 1977 two non-teaching Sisters were appointed to take charge of two of the groups to relieve those responsible for the children's education. Both had NNEB qualifications in child care. Three other Sisters were undergoing training to obtain social work qualifications before coming to Nazareth Lodge in the early 1980's.
14. My memories of birthdays and holidays were that they were fun filled occasions. From 1972 at the beginning of the summer holidays the children were taken in three groups to Ballyhornan, Co. Down for three weeks holidays. There they had the freedom of the beach, fishing, rock climbing and swimming. A lady was employed to do the cooking. This was the holiday venue for the children until 1977. After that summer the children were taken for two weeks to either Portrush, Portstewart, Moville, Greencastle, Portsalon in Donegal and Mosney Holiday Camp in Co. Meath.
15. At Christmas the people of Belfast donated toys, selection boxes, books and money for the children. They were invited every year to the pantomime and several Christmas parties, at which they received lovely gifts. The rest of the Christmas holidays were spent playing with these presents. Black taxis were sent to take them to and from the parties.
16. From the 1970's onwards children coming into care were placed by the welfare authority. The majority of the children had Social Workers who would have visited on a monthly basis. There were very good working relationships between Nazareth and the professionals in the Health Boards. Case Conferences were held usually twice a

year. When **SR 202** who was qualified came to my group in May 1977 she had a manual typewriter which she used to document the minutes of these meetings. The only downside was that many of the junior field social workers were changed frequently and there was not the desired continuity of care and supervision.

17. In 1980 the appointment of **SR 148** who was a qualified Social Worker was a progressive and positive step. She took on a monitoring and mentoring role and was a great support to staff in each of the groups. There were serious efforts to improve practice and planning for the children. Documentation and communication was greatly improved and a greater effort to release Sisters and staff for professional qualifications in social work became the norm. The issue of staff ratios and qualification was inextricably linked to the question of finance. Each child was assigned a keyworker. Sister had a lot of contacts with social services and with **██████████** from the Down and Connor office. The latter received half her salary from Nazareth Lodge.
18. A committee of volunteers which included a QC, a doctor, a social worker and a teacher carried out regular inspections and monitored the operation of the home from 1980 until its closure. They would spend time talking to the children, sharing a meal with them and observing interaction between the children and staff. A written report of these visits was submitted to the Sister in charge.
19. A number of families received monthly visits from their relatives. Some were allowed home occasionally at week-ends or during part of the school holidays with the approval and under supervision of social workers. If the family home was not deemed suitable for visits, children were placed with families recommended by social services. Even when children in care were invited by school friends to their birthday parties, permission to attend was asked of the relevant social workers.
20. Up until the mid-seventies when the boys left care they would attend St. Augustine's club where a chaplain and **██████████** a senior social worker were responsible for their after-care.
21. After 1976 the children would have been found placements by Social Services who would have continued supervising and monitoring their residential needs. Some of the children would have returned to visit the Sisters and their former friends. An annual reunion of past residents was organised by the Sisters during the Christmas period and up to a hundred would have enjoyed a meal together along with entertainment.
22. In 1979 the Breda Football Club made a request to hire the pavilion erected by the Rosario Club and our tennis courts. They also got the use of one of our fields for Gaelic football on condition they would maintain it.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **SR 52**

Dated 12 November 2014

CONFIDENTIAL

A2272/92 HIA1(39)C

NAZARETH LODGE CHILDREN'S HOME

The Home was inspected by Mr Chambers and Mr McElpatrick on 10-12 October 1983. All Child Care staff who were available were interviewed. A sample of case files was examined and all statutory records were examined. Those parts of the building used by the children were inspected. Mother Paul (Mother Superior) has responsibility for all aspects of the home and for the Sisters of Nazareth who live there. In addition to the sisters who work in Nazareth Lodge there are some others who work in the local schools and a few retired nuns. Mother Paul is accountable to Mother Regional who is based in Dublin. The latter visits the home approximately 3 times a year. The Headquarters of the Order of Nazareth is in Hammersmith and Mother General visits the Home every 3 years. There is no committee of management and full responsibility for the staff and children is vested in Mother Paul. Mother Regional appoints 2 "councillors" who meet with her monthly to discuss the affairs of the home. These are 2 sisters one employed in the Home SR 46 and another who works in the nursery school SR 29. Their meeting is referred to as the Council for the Community but its function appears to be more advisory and consultative than executive.

The Home is divided into 3 functionally autonomous living units with approximately 12-14 children in each. Responsibility for day to day affairs is delegated by Mother Paul to the 3 Sisters who run the groups. It is possible for the Sisters to be self determining in a wide range of issues and we found that the regime in the 3 groups differed markedly. Only one of the Sisters is social work trained and this was evident in her approach to the residential task. It is fair to say that SR 2 had only recently been appointed to the home and, while she is not social work trained she has considerable experience in working with adolescents in Birmingham and she may in time contribute to raising professional standards.

The management style in the home is rigidly hierarchical. The Sisters do not consult the staff on matters of policy and practice and an atmosphere of authoritarianism prevails. In only one of the groups has staff had access to children's records though in another the Sister has recently told the staff that they may have access to the children's files. In only one group do staff attend case reviews; they have all limited, if any, contact with social workers. Just as the Sisters do not consult with the staff nor involve them in decision-making, so the lay staff do not acknowledge the Sisters as being members of the caring staff. They perceive them as authoritarian background figures who absent themselves from the group, particularly during periods when their help is needed. The

2.4 The report of the inspection portrays the home in very institutional terms.

- Staffing arrangements were very hierarchical in character, with minimal communication/consultation between Religious and lay staff.
- Staff had little time to spend with the children and were required to do routine cleaning in the home.
- There was no policy in place to promote the professional development of staff.
- Staff worked long hours even by the standards of the 1980s, and they were required to work split shifts, which meant they had a break of a few hours before going back on duty in any 24 hour period.
- Religious staff had responsibilities to the Order, which appeared to take precedence over their child care duties in the home.
- Staffing levels were unacceptably low.
- Staff complained about the standard of food served in the home.
- The number of children accommodated was high relative to numbers accommodated in most other homes.
- The physical condition of the premises required investment, but the Order was not in a position to carry out any upgrading without assistance by the DHSS or the EHSSB
- The level of maintenance payment by the EHSSB, the main user, was low relative to some other voluntary children's home, and substantially lower than comparable costs in statutory homes at that time.
- While the EHSSB offered staff training opportunities to the staff of voluntary children's homes, Nazareth Lodge did not appear to avail of these facilities.

2.5 The report of the 1983 inspection, paragraph 8.9 noted that, while care staff were present at meal times, they preferred not to eat with the children as they did not find the food appetising. The report also stated that the Sisters did not eat with the children. The draft report of the inspection (SNB 14316) had stated that the children who were spoken to were content with the food provided by the home. *"Nevertheless, it was observed that some of them did not eat it and we were told by the staff that they had very limited scope to provide the children with anything different"*.

2.6 Paragraph 8.9 continues, *"Although the menus record indicates that a balanced diet is provided, the way in which food is prepared and presented may need to be reviewed. It would be preferable if Sisters and staff on duty were to dine along with the children in order to create a more family like environment. This would enable staff to be more aware of the quality of the meals. It is recommended that management take steps to satisfy itself that the meals provided for the children are appetising"* ■

- the report provided by the assessor from the Management Executive Estate Services Directorate;

1.7 The Inspection was undertaken by Miss Judith Chaddock, Social Services Inspector, with Mr Norman Chambers, Assistant Chief Inspector, as Inspection Manager. The Inspection team wishes to record their thanks to the professional manager, her staff and the children of Nazareth Lodge for their help and hospitality during the course of the inspection. ■

Name: SR 52

Date: 28 November 2014

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

Witness Statement of SR 52

I, SR 52 will say as follows: -

1. I have checked the records of SR 145. Sister was born on and she died on in . Sister entered the Congregation of the Sisters of Nazareth on and made her First Profession on .
2. Sister was in Nazareth House between – and her ministry was in the laundry. Sister was transferred to the Lodge in only for a few months until and her ministry was in the laundry and cared for the children. Sister was transferred again back to Nazareth House where her ministry was the workroom and supervision of the senior girls. Sister was transferred to Derry but returned to Belfast House and her ministry was in the where she took charge of the .
3. Allegations have been made against Sister that she slapped the children for no reason, or hit a child with a big stick saying she was a child of the devil. It is possible that Sister may have hit the children but it is refuted that it would have been excessive.
4. SR 145 was a Sister of Nazareth for seventy years. Sister was an excellent cook and was famous for her apple pies and she always had sweets in her pocket in case she met one of the children. Sister had a kind heart and a ready smile and she loved children. When Sister was in she completed a Child Care Course and a Catering Course and she was awarded two certificates of Achievement. As Sister died years ago we cannot seek her own recollection of the children involved nor ask her to respond to the allegations that have been made against her.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed **SR 52**

Dated 28/11/2014

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF: MARGARET ROBERTA MARTIN

AGE OF WITNESS [If over 21 enter 'over 21'] : OVER 21

OCCUPATION OF WITNESS: DETECTIVE CONSTABLE

ADDRESS:

I declare that this statement consisting of pages, each signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence at a preliminary enquiry or at the trial of any person, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated this 19 day of August 1996

SIGNATURE OF MEMBER
by whom statement was recorded or received

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

I am a Detective Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary presently attached to the CID Belfast Region. At 10.16am on 23rd July 1996 I commenced to interview [REDACTED] SR 25 DOB [REDACTED] of [REDACTED]. I was accompanied by D/Constable Marks. The interview went as follows:- Saw [REDACTED] SR 25 at above address. We introduced ourselves to her and D/Constable Marks fully cautioned her. She was told that we were making enquiries into allegations of abuse against her by [REDACTED] NL 1. I showed Sister [REDACTED] SR 25 a photograph supplied by [REDACTED] NL 1 marked MRM1 and asked her if the sister in the photograph was her. She agreed that it was. I then outlined the allegation of assault made against her of Sister [REDACTED] SR 25 having punched her. She denied this and stated that the children would not have had rooms but would have been in dormitorys. She was asked about corporal punishment. She said that the children would have been deprived of their TV programmes but that she would not have struck any child.

Q What group were you in charge of.