

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 117

I, HIA 117 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born [REDACTED]
2. I am the second eldest in a family of six. My parents were both alcoholics and my father was away working in England. I was living in [REDACTED] with my mother and my five siblings – NHB 107 DL 64 DL 243 NHB 92 and NHB 113 I remember feeding the children, putting them to bed and going to the bed when my mother was drinking. My mother wasn't looking after us properly and one night when I was about six or seven I was out walking the streets in high heels when I was attacked by a neighbour. After this the Welfare became involved and the six of us were taken into care.
3. I remember a red van and a man and a woman coming and saying they were taking us to the park for the day. It was a scorcher of a day. I carried my brother NHB 113 out of the house; he was only eighteen days old. NHB 92 was only a toddler.
4. I was taken to Nazareth House on 3rd August 1965 with my older sister NHB 107 and my younger sister NHB 92 The boys were taken to Nazareth Lodge and I never saw them again. After we were taken into care, my mother went to join my father in England and they went on to have four more sons. My mother also had a daughter to a different man who was two years older

PRIVATE

than me. Growing up, I was led to believe she was my aunt. I have no contact with my older sister or my half brothers.

Nazareth House, Belfast (3rd August 1965 – 3rd July 1975)

5. I went into Nazareth House when I was seven years old and I stayed there for ten years. My first memory is of the nuns meeting us at the door. They were so nice when the man and woman dropped us off but as soon as they left they changed. It was a scary place. The nuns told us we would only be staying a little while and as the day went on I remember wanting to go home to see my mummy and daddy. We never saw them again. I recall going to court with the same man and woman who took us away and I think we were all made wards of court until we were 18.
6. NHB 107 and I were put in the girls' section of Nazareth House. NHB 92 and NHB 113 were placed in St. Joseph's Babies Home which was part of Nazareth Lodge. I never got to see NHB 113 again. NHB 107 has what would now be called special needs – she can't read or write and has learning difficulties.
7. The nuns I remember are SR 31, SR 134, SR 116 and [redacted]. I was in SR 31 group – we nicknamed her [redacted]. She was always knocking you on the head with her knuckles. SR 134 was called SR 134. I can't remember the Mother Superior's name. I had a doll when I went into the home and SR 31 took it off me. She said she would keep it safe but I never saw it again.
8. The daily routine in the home was you got up at about 5am and jumped straight to the side of your bed to say your prayers. I wet the bed so I got beaten regularly and SR 31 or SR 134 would push my face in to my wet sheets. They got alarms then for the 'wet the beds'. Mine always went off first and SR 31 would come out of her cell and give me a terrible hiding. By the time she was done with me she was too tired so the other girls could fall asleep and if they wet the bed all they would get is a smack the next morning. I used to have to wash my sheets in the middle of the night. I had to

bring them down to the bathroom and wash them even though they had a launderette. SR 31 would leave me down there on my own until they were washed and by the time I finished it was morning. My sleep was disturbed almost every single night; it was cruel.

9. After prayers we went down for breakfast. We used to get lumpy porridge and cornflakes on Sunday as a treat. We had no milk though – we had to eat the cornflakes with black tea because milk was too dear. We never got toast. For dinner we got sausages and potatoes with lumps. The food was rotten but you couldn't complain. You were that hungry you had to eat it or you'd starve.

10. After a few months I ran away from the home. It was just hell and I wanted my parents. I jumped on a bus and went to C & A. The police picked me up and brought me back to the home. The nuns were really nice in front of the police but then I was stripped and beaten by SR 31 in front of all the other children as punishment for running away. She was making an example of me. SR 31 put me on the stage and beat me with these black sticks they used to keep in a container. I got beaten with the belt that night as well; the nuns used to wear big black belts and I got hit with rosary beads too.

11. Every Saturday the tin baths were put out in the yard and we were dipped in them in Jeyes fluid. They washed our bodies and hair in Jeyes fluid. It burned the eyes out of your head and on occasions you couldn't avoid swallowing it. I can remember bathing, washing and feeding the wee ones in Nazareth House. We had to change our clothes every Saturday too. You went up with your pinafore and if there was a pluck in it you would get a beating or if there was a pluck in your tights you'd get beaten.

12. I went to school onsite in the convent. SR 134, SR 31 and SR 116 taught in the school. I never really had much contact with SR 116. SR 116 She taught P1 and P2, SR 134 taught P3 and P4 and SR 31 taught P5, P6 and P7. SR 31 would think nothing of coming into SR 134 class and giving me a whack. I've been a career minded woman all my life and I think education was beat into me. The day I was due

to sit the 11+ we were all queuing up and the nerves got the better of me. I began to laugh out of nerves and [SR 31] grabbed me, gave me a beating and said I wasn't doing the 11+. We all went to St. Monica's Secondary School – I don't remember anyone ever going to a different school.

13. My mother's family always came to take [NHB 107] out but not me. They'd take her out on a Sunday. The family blamed me for us being taken into care. They used to say if I hadn't gone out and got attacked we wouldn't have been taken but I was only six or seven. My mother should have been looking after me. I believe the man who attacked me was convicted and served time in prison.

14. When I was about nine they made me start looking after the old people in Nazareth House after school and at the weekends. I was the only one sent over to do this. I did it until I was fourteen or fifteen. [SR 31] said it was to get the devil out of me and to keep me away from the other children. I used to have to bathe the old ladies, change their nappies and if they were dying I had to sit up all night with them and then wash their dead bodies. A civilian woman I called 'Matron' and two Scottish girls worked there and they were good to me. They were in their early 20's and they used to buy me sweets with their wages.

15. I continued to wet the bed until I was about eleven. I remember coming home one day and telling [SR 134] I had cut myself because I didn't know I had gotten my period. I lay all night thinking I was dying. I was terrified of getting a hiding. I was put into a dark room and then I was brought out to the canteen and put in front of everyone to tell them I was a woman now. You had to go to [SR 134] to ask for a sanitary towel. They were old-fashioned ones with a belt and you only got one for the day and one for night time.

16. The older girls used to try to bully me but they picked the wrong girl. I got in trouble for standing up for myself. One time a woman who used to look after us when the nuns were away praying got into my bed and tried to touch me but I beat her out of my bed. I was about eight or nine at the time. She was an adult civilian worker the nuns brought in to keep an eye on us when they were at prayer. I don't remember her name – we just knew her as 'Miss'.

18.1 remember somebody from the Welfare visiting the home on one occasion but I couldn't say anything as SR 31 was sitting right there. I knew if I said anything I would get a hiding. I never had a social worker assigned to me or anything like that.

20. My sister NHB 107 left the home a few years before me. She had been living with my granny in [REDACTED] since she was 14. Then she went to [REDACTED] and met her husband [REDACTED]. She had two babies within nine months and moved to [REDACTED] where he was from. I used to go down to help her at weekends and that's where I met my husband [REDACTED] when I was 16. I soon got pregnant and when the nuns found out they wanted me to go to England but I refused so they threw me out. I left Nazareth House on 3rd July 1975 a few days before my seventeenth birthday.

Life after care

21.1 was sixteen and pregnant and living on the streets. I didn't tell [REDACTED] I was pregnant. The police picked me up and I told them the nuns had thrown me out. A social worker came to the police station and took me to the NSPCC and they got me a flat on the [REDACTED]. I had planned to have the baby and give it up for adoption but then [REDACTED] came looking for me saying he loved me so we got married. My sister NHB 107 had said to him "you've left my sister pregnant" but he had no idea.

22. When I was 17 I took NHB 92 out of the home to live with me – she was 12 at the time. She was under foster care and they gave us a lot of support. I went on to have another daughter and a son with my husband – [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. My husband was removed from the house by a court order when I was 24. He used to mentally torture me and he threw a poker at me. [REDACTED] was only six weeks old at the time. I raised the children on my own; he gave no financial support or anything. We didn't see him for 28 years.

23. My daughters resent me because I didn't show them love growing up and I am able to show love to my grandchildren now. I practically reared my granddaughter [REDACTED] who is 21 now. [REDACTED] got pregnant with her when she was 16 to hurt me. All I knew how to do was work hard and provide for my

children but I've since gone to counselling which has helped me open up emotionally. My daughter [REDACTED] doesn't speak to me nor does [REDACTED] [REDACTED] lives in Australia and [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] live a few miles down the road from me. [REDACTED] got married two years ago but I didn't go to the wedding. She said I could go as long as I wasn't in the photographs and as long as I didn't take a drink but I said I wouldn't go under those conditions. [REDACTED] has since had a baby called [REDACTED] but I'm not allowed to see her. All my children have done well academically and they are all in good jobs.

24.1 got married again when the children were all reared in 1994 but it only lasted twelve weeks. He went to beat me one night and I said "come on and do it but I'll be the last person you beat because I'll cut your throat". He let me go then and I have only seen him once since to get a divorce. I'm not capable of being in a relationship; I cope better on my own. Growing up in care has left me with scars. I don't trust people and I have suicidal tendencies. I am on a lot of medication – diazepam and antidepressants. I have attempted suicide a few times. I also suffer from rheumatoid arthritis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and I had my gall bladder removed two years ago.

25. When my son [REDACTED] was sixteen or seventeen I took an overdose and ended up in the high dependency unit. I was put under psychiatric care. My life was just falling apart. They wanted to institutionalise me but the doctor said "no, she's been institutionalised all her life". The mental health team came out to my home for two years to work with me and then I started attending the outpatients department in [REDACTED] I have a good supportive doctor. I now work four days a week as site manager for a cleaning company. I have to because I get too low if I just sit in the house and sleep.

26.1 have come to the Inquiry because I need closure. I need somebody to be held accountable for what happened to me and I want to make sure it never happens to another child. They haven't just ruined my life; they've ruined three generations. My two daughters don't speak to me because they say I gave them everything they needed in a material sense but I never showed them love. My sister [REDACTED] NHB 92 is the same as me – she was unable to show love to her children and my sister [REDACTED] NHB 107 lost six children through neglect. It was a case of history repeating itself. She's now on the streets of Manchester.

27. My brothers **DL 64** **DL 243** and **NHB 113** are all alcoholics. In or about 1984 I arranged for my brother **DL 243** who was 18 years old at the time, to come to live close to me. I wanted to look after him and give him a start in life. I organised a flat for him to live in, a job and a car to enable him to get to his new job. Unfortunately **DL 243** was unable to settle. He disappeared without any notice to me and left me with a debt of £3,000.00. This was a huge financial burden for me, as a single mother with three children and I found the whole experience emotionally hurtful and I was unable to trust my brothers again following this episode. I am not in touch with **NHB 92** at the present. She is a heavy drinker and is in denial and has never sought professional help for her problems. My brothers were sexually abused in Kircubbin and went to court about it. I got a phone call one night a few years ago from someone claiming to be my brother **NHB 113** but I didn't want to know. I never saw my Brother **NHB 113** from the day I was taken into Nazareth House. I have since learned from my son **[REDACTED]** who had a telephone call from **NHB 92** that **NHB 113** died suddenly in June 2014. I didn't go to the funeral. I have never met my four younger half brothers. My parents are both dead; I didn't go to their funerals.

28. I have never reported the abuse I suffered to the police. The police came to speak to me about Father Brendan Smyth sometime between 1994 and 2000. They asked me if I was ever sexually abused by him but I wasn't. I remember seeing Father Brendan Smyth and another priest called **NHB 108** in Nazareth House. They said Mass for the nuns. Both Father Smyth and **NHB 108** had their favourites but I wasn't one of them. I believe they were sexually abusing these children. **NHB 108** used to drive a **[REDACTED]** and he would take children out in it but I never got a spin in it.

Statement of Truth

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

HIA 117

Signed **[REDACTED]**

17/12/14

Age group coming into care

(42) Under 2.

(43) 2 - School Age.

(44) School Age.

(45) Over School Age.

ADMISSION TO CARE

NAME OF CHILD.....

DATE OF ADMISSION.....

DATE OF BIRTH (19)...

PLACE OF BIRTH.....

SEX (71),(72).....

RELIGIOUS DENOMINATION.....

LEGITIMATE/ILLEGITIMATE (69),(70).....

BIRTH CERT. READ.....

WHETHER BAPTISED.....

PLACE OF BAPTISM.....

HOME IN WHICH CHILD IS FIRST TO BE ACCOMMODATED (7),(8),(9),(10),(11),(12),(13),(14),(15).....

HOME ADDRESS OF CHILD.....

ADDRESSES BEFORE ADMISSION.....

NAME OF SCHOOL ATTENDED PRIOR TO ADMISSION.....

AUTH. FIN. RESP.....

BOARDED-OUT (1) (direct).....

IN BELFAST (2).....

OUTSIDE BELFAST (3).....

WITH RELATIVES (4),(5).....

PLACED IN LODGINGS (6).....

INFORMATION RE PARENTS OR OTHER RELATIVES

	Name	Address	Occupation	Age	Denom.
Father				35	R-C
Mother			HOUSEWIFE	30	R-C
Other Relatives			HOUSEWIFE	56	R-C

INFORMATION RE BROTHERS AND SISTERS (IF ANY)

Name	Date of Birth	Address	Whether in care
NB 107			
DL 64			
DL 243			
NHB 92			
NHB 113			

MEDICAL DETAILS

NAME AND ADDRESS OF FAMILY DOCTOR.....

HAS CHILD A MEDICAL CARD?.....

HAS THE CHILD RECEIVED (1) SMALLPOX VACCINATION?.....(date).....

(2) B.C.G. VACCINATION?.....(date).....

(3) POLIO VACCINATION?.....(date).....

HAS THE CHILD RECEIVED IMMUNISATION AGAINST (1) WHOOPING COUGH?.....

(2) DIPHTHERIA?.....

HISTORY OF PREVIOUS INFECTIOUS DISEASES (TICK WHERE APPROPRIATE).....

MEASLES.....CHICKEN POX.....WHOOPING COUGH.....

MEASLES - GERMAN.....SCARLET FEVER.....POLIOMYELITIS.....

MUMPS.....DIPHTHERIA.....OTHERS.....

BRIEF PARTICULARS OF OTHER PHYSICAL, MENTAL OR NERVOUS DISORDERS :-

OFFICIAL-SENSITIVE-PERSONAL

CHILDREN - IN RESIDENTIAL CARE

3 - MONTHLY REVIEW

Name of Child: HIA 117 Date of birth: [REDACTED]
Home Address: [REDACTED] Care Address: Nazareth House
Division: North School Attended/Employment * Rupert Stanley College
Date of Admission to Care 9. 8. 66 Section under which admitted 63
Reason for admission (be specific) Brought by N.S.P.C.C. to Court as "neglected in a manner likely to cause her unnecessary suffering".

How accommodated during period in Care

Place	Period
Nazareth House	9.8.66 - Present

Report

Date of visits to child: 22. 1. 74; 14. 3. 74

Date of Interviews with Parents: Not available

HIA 117 is still enjoying her Catering Course at Rupert Stanley College, although she is rather short of money on occasions. Because of this she likes to work in the holidays.

HIA 117 goes out quite a lot at nights with some of her other friends from Nazareth. She relates well to her peer group but on occasions resents authority.

Asst. Principal Social Worker: [REDACTED] Social Worker Officer: [REDACTED]

Principal Social Worker: [REDACTED] Date: 29. 3. 74

* Delete whichever is inapplicable

FOSTER PARENT(S) (relationship with child, his own family and Social Worker).

Relationship with Staff at Nazareth House has deteriorated since HIA 117 has told them of her pregnancy.

PHYSICAL CONDITIONS IN FOSTER HOME

Good.

CHILD'S OWN FAMILY (whereabouts, contact with the child, attitudes to the child and to the fostering arrangements etc.

Mother and Father in England. Mother visited once but HIA 117 does not wish to have any contact with her.

FUTURE PLANS (refer particularly to possible return to parents' care)

Marriage to her boyfriend [REDACTED] who lives in [REDACTED]

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS DURING LAST 6 MONTHS

Progress has been erratic and in the present situation after much discussion, HIA 117 sees her future as marriage to her boyfriend.

Date 30/6/76.

Signature [REDACTED]

REMARKS OF SENIOR STAFF:

[REDACTED]

N/192/1/SME

REQUEST FOR CONSENT TO MARRIAGE OF A MINOR

HIA 117

Father:

Mother:

NB 107

DL 64
DL 243

NHB 92

NHB 113

Married and living at

Boarded out with maternal grandmother.

Nazareth House.

Nazareth Lodge.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

_____ were married in 1956 and since then their life has been very unstable. _____ who has been diagnosed as "special care" and is also alcoholic has received treatment in numerous psychiatric hospitals at various periods during, and, indeed, before her marriage. _____ was prone to frequent outbursts of temper and on many of these occasions was physically abusive towards her husband and children.

As the marital situation deteriorated, _____ left and spent progressively longer periods in England. _____ (maternal grandmother) attempted to care for the children but, because of _____ attitude towards her mother and of the excessive demands of six young children, was unable to do so. Consequently, on 9th August, 1966, the children were brought before the Juvenile Court by N.S.P.C.C. under a Place of Safety Order as "neglected in a manner likely to cause them unnecessary suffering." A Fit Person Order was later made to Belfast Welfare Authority (North District) and the children were placed in Nazareth House, Nazareth Lodge and De La Salle, Kircubbin. Their parents then went to England permanently and have been living at _____ since then.

HIA 117 BEHAVIOUR SINCE ADMISSION TO CARE

Although all the children were initially quite disturbed on their admission to care, they settled down quickly and responded to the care and affection given to them. HIA 117 progressed well both academically and socially and there were no complaints from the staff about her behaviour.

She attended Nazareth Primary School at first and then at the age of eleven was transferred to St. Monica's Girls' Secondary School. On finishing her leaving examination there, she was admitted to Rupert Stanley College for a Catering Course. She is now in the

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process of finishing the second part of the Course at the College of Business Studies and does her final examinations this month.

She is an extraverted girl who enjoys good relationships with her peers. Recently, however, relationships with the nuns have deteriorated slightly as HIA 117 resented their authority and tried to exert her independence.

EVENTS LEADING TO PRESENT REQUEST

In January of this year HIA 117 eldest sister, NB 107 married a nineteen-year old boy, [REDACTED], from [REDACTED]. The couple had been engaged for over a year and in December 1974 NB 107 approached the Department to say that she was pregnant and wanted permission to marry. Permission was granted and the young pair have now settled down happily in [REDACTED] and their baby son was born a month ago.

Since NB 107 marriage, HIA 117 has spent each week-end at [REDACTED] and goes out to dances there with her sister and brother-in-law. It was at one of these local dances in February that she met her boyfriend, [REDACTED].

[REDACTED] and HIA 117 have been seeing one another regularly since then and on 30th May HIA 117 contacted me to say that she wanted to get married. When I visited her then she told me that she was pregnant (E.D.C. November 20th). In interview with her I pointed out the alternatives to marriage and discussed the matter with her in detail as I did not think it advisable for her to make any hasty decisions. However, it was obvious that HIA 117 and her boyfriend had talked the matter over seriously and that they both loved one another and were in agreement about the future.

[REDACTED] is nineteen years old and is the eldest of three children (having two younger sisters). His father died five years ago and since then he has of necessity taken an active part in running household affairs. His mother has apparently become more introverted since her husband's death and depends on her son greatly for emotional support. He is an apprentice engineer with a local firm and earns approximately £30 per week. When his apprenticeship finishes in September his earnings will become much higher.

The couple became engaged on 1st June and would like to marry in July. [REDACTED] Co. Down, has known [REDACTED] since birth and the couple feel that if he is approached he will perform the ceremony.

After their marriage (if consent is given) they intend to live

CHILD:

Emotional and Social Development: (include relationships with Residential staff, S.W., Foster Parents, any other significant adults & peers).

██████ is a friendly boy who relates easily to social workers, residential staff and peers. He has settled during the past few months and is not displaying his temper as frequently.

Physical development and health: (include any recent visits to family doctor).

██████ health is good

Progress at School/Work: (include vocational plans and any S.W. contact with School/Employer).

NHB 113 applies himself in school although his work is behind others of his age group.

Interests and Special events: (include any religious observance and recreational activities).

NHB 113 attends chapel regularly and enjoys going to discos in a nearby town. He is also a keen football player.

Evaluate the following:-

Family situation: (include frequency and quality of contact between the child and his parents).

NHB 113 has had no contact with his parents for sometime. He spends one week-end per month and holidays with his three sisters in ██████ and presents no problems during these visits. He has infrequent contact with two brothers in ██████

Current placement and plans for the child: (In the case of Foster Parents, include their relationship with the child, his family and social worker and physical conditions in the foster home).

NHB 113 will continue to reside in De La Salle where he is fond of the staff and they of him.

Social Work Input:

Regular visiting and encouragement of occasional visits to other family members.

CHILD:

Emotional and Social Development: (include relationships with Residential staff, S.W., Foster Parents, any other significant adults & peers).

NHB 113 is a friendly, talkative boy who relates well to social workers, residential staff and peers. He is maturing in the Home as evidenced by fewer tantrums and attention-seeking behaviour.

Physical development and health: (include any recent visits to family doctor).

NHB 113 general health is excellent although he recently sprained his wrist badly and is attending hospital for treatment.

Progress at School/Work: (include vocational plans and any S.W. contact with School/Employer).

NHB 113 applies himself to his school work and does well although he is behind most of his class. He is a good attender and timekeeper.

Interests and Special events: (include any religious observance and recreational activities).

NHB 113 attends chapel regularly and attends youth club activities. He is very athletic and is an active participant in most sports.

Evaluate the following:-

Family situation: (include frequency and quality of contact between the child and his parents).

NHB 113 has had no contact with his family for several years. He spends occasional weekends and holidays with two married sisters in [redacted] with whom he appears to be close. He has infrequent contact with a brother and grandmother in [redacted] and erratic contact with a sister in [redacted].

Current placement and plans for the child: (In the case of Foster Parents, include their relationship with the child, his family and social worker and physical conditions in the foster home).

NHB 113 will continue to reside in the Home until at least school leaving age.

Social Work Input:

Regular visiting and encouragement of visits to family members.