

HIA REF: [            ]

NAME: [        HH 22        ]

DATE: [ 5<sup>th</sup> June 2015 ]**THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995****Witness Statement of        HH 22**

I        HH 22        , will say as follows: -

Career Positions and Qualifications

1. I am        years old. I retired 4 years ago, after 40 years working in Residential Child Care. From 1971 – 1975, I worked as a nursery nurse/house parent in Brefne, a children's home for babies 0-7 years old in Belfast. I completed the Certificate in Residential Care of Children and Young People (Child Care qualification 1972-1973). I moved to Fort James in 1975, first as a Senior House Parent and then as Deputy Officer in Charge. I stayed to 1978, then I went to Nottingham to do the C.Q.S.W; a 2 year social work course. I did not qualify but returned to Derry where I was appointed as Deputy Officer in Charge at Harberton House, where        HH 5        was the Officer in Charge. I completed the post qualifying course in Social Work at Queens in 1987, specialising in Child Care (PQ.S.W). In 1985 Harberton House established 2 separate staff teams. I was the team leader of the Medium Stay Unit, with total responsibility for the direct care of 13 children, also I was in charge of a small work team of 10. I remained at Harberton House in the same position until the Medium Stay Unit transferred in 2003 to 5 Upper Galliagh Road, Derry, a newly build children's home for 8 children. I took an early retirement package in March 2011.

### Overview Fort James

2. Fort James was an old house set in its own grounds. It had large rooms set over 3 floors; some had been divided up to allow 2 to share. Staff accommodation was at the top of the house (I lived there for 3 years) and the Officer in Charge had a bungalow in the grounds.
3. In 1975 there was a nursery on the ground floor (cots for 3 babies) and the oldest resident was 17 years old. Very little information was known about the children coming to live in the home, almost no paperwork was available on admission and there was a feeling of being “one big happy family”. All the practical needs of the residents were met but little in the way of “therapy”, care planning or understanding their wider needs. It was also very difficult to observe/monitor the children’s whereabouts both in the badly laid out house and the large grounds. It was all about group living, with little opportunity for individual time because of the small staff team and wide age range.
4. By 1978 both HH 5 and I knew that new systems, policies and procedures needed to be put in place. There had been a decision made to build an assessment unit, with a second unit to allow for short/medium term intervention and Fort James would be its long term house for older children 13-17 years. Much time had been taken to develop new policies and procedures i.e. for admissions to the Assessment Unit. It was very forward thinking for the time. There was great interest from outside (Peter Newman). I knew I wanted to be part of the purpose built Harberton House by the time it opened in 1980.

### Overview of Harberton House

5. Harberton House was shaped as an H, the assessment unit to the left and the medium stay unit to the right. The central ‘bar’ was the communal areas, the kitchen and playroom. It was on one level, with open plan living/dining areas. The offices were central and there was single, double and family bedrooms. There was also a Conference Room. The assessment unit would

accommodate 12 children and the medium stay unit would take 13 children. 25 children in all. The staffing allowed for limited cover of the whole building. One waking night duty and one sleeping person each night. The outside grounds were communal and land in grass at the back.

6. There were very clear time limits put in place, i.e. 6-8 week assessments and one year limited stay in the medium stay unit. A weekly meeting reviewed all the children's care planning.
7. Very quickly through put had slowed and there was no control over admissions. We were expected to care for very young children, a baby in one case and a young man of 17 who was on probation. Children were admitted from Enniskillen. Children were staying longer in the assessment unit and there was nowhere appropriate for the young people to exit out of the medium stay unit. By 1985 Harberton House felt over crowded. It was decided to separate the units.
8. Creating two distinct staff teams allowed an increased staffing level, with specialised training and a more manageable work load. It also allowed for better care planning, more focused reviews which included the families and young people. The staff were able to build strong relationships with the young people. Numbers remained high on site. Fort James closed and the cottage was used by Learning Disability for a time. I believe there was 28 young people on the site at one point in the late 80s/early 90s. By 1992 there were 20 residents.

#### Peer Abuse 1990

9. I would like to comment on the peer abuse incident report of 1<sup>st</sup> March 1990 written by Pat Norris. It involved 7 residents. It led to a review by Bob Bunting and a subsequent report with a number of recommendations. The incident report included a history of each resident involved, there was clear evidence of serious abuse before coming into care. I consider that previous sexual abuse has an influence on a young person's abusive behaviours

towards others. I believe FJ 37 was showing her understanding of this connection when writing the incident report.

10. I believe staff understood through observation, listening, asking the right questions, and was therefore able to name what was happening. This took time but was immediately acted on.
11. This was a devastating period for the staff of Harberton House. The Bunting Report was seen as helpful and fully accepted by the staff, management and the Board. Understanding peer abuse was in its infancy. Training was very clearly needed for all social work staff. With this in mind a “symposium of peer abuse” was held in 1992. Led by Dominic Burke, it involved speakers from England and allowed social workers from all over Northern Ireland to come together.

#### Letter of Concern written to Gabriel Carey – November 1990

12. I sent a letter of concern, written and signed by the staff team and myself, sent to Gabriel Carey in November 1990. See Exhibit 1.
13. This letter was triggered by a request to open the bungalow on the Harberton House site. This would put Harberton House well over its numbers and create an overcrowded site. This was so concerning considering what we had been through during the months before. It felt as if residential staff did not have a voice. The letter allowed them ‘a voice’ and was a way to share what their increased concerns were at ‘ground level’ - those of safeguarding the residents of Harberton House. Mr Carey’s early response was helpful as a reassurance to staff. It covered what had already been accomplished and what was ahead. I used it as a tool, clearly written down, to inform the staff and confirm his commitment to best practice.

F.S HIA 233

14. HIA 233 has provided a statement to the Inquiry. In paragraph 22 of her statement she says that I said to her .... "Are we back to these lies again" They will take you back to training school".
  
15. I wish to respond as follows. As the manager of the Home, I would not speak directly with the young person after they make a statement of complaint to another person. My role is to support the staff member to guide and direct that the correct procedures are followed and the appropriate persons informed. The support for the young person comes from her key worker. I have also been informed that there is no record of this conversation anywhere.

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

Signed\_ HH 22

Dated 5.6.15.

Witness name: Health and Social Care Board

Date: 5 June 2015

The Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse 1922 to 1995

HH 22

Exhibit 1

**WESTERN HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD**  
 Londonderry Lincavady & Strabane Unit of Management

Form 17  
 Our Ref: SH/A/100  
 Your Ref:  
 Date: 14th November 1990  
 - 2 NOV 1990  
 REGISTERED LETTER

FOR THE ATTENTION OF MR. GABRIEL CAREY, P.S.O.

Following recent team meetings, concerns are again being expressed over the continued lack of change in the situation at Harberton House.

Excessive admissions continue, as high as six on occasions over our occupancy. This in turn has led to an increase in temporary staffing levels and often those employed are inexperienced and unqualified. We find ourselves in a similar situation with the same concerns as outlined in our letter to you dated 14th February 1990.

Obviously our concerns have been heightened by the current review of incidents occurring within Harberton House approximately eleven months ago. The comparison in our present situation and the one mentioned are frighteningly similar.

It is the feeling of the staff group that this present situation mitigates against fulfilling the Board's statutory responsibility to provide care, protection and control for children who require it.

Also we feel that despite voicing ongoing concerns about the situation, due to the obvious lack of change, we cannot help feeling that our concerns are not being recognised.

We would appreciate a written response to this letter with particular reference to paragraph 4.

**G. V. C. AND ALL STAFF**  
**HARBERTON HOUSE ASSESSMENT UNIT**

c.c. Mr. John Curry, M.I.P.S.A., Harbin House,  
 54 Wellington Park, Belfast BT9 6BZ

c.c. Mr. Bob Bunting, Chairman, Review Team,  
 M.D.E.C., Altnagelvin Hospital, Londonderry

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mother's face when she found out one of the families was Protestant. My mother was a devout republican and I was the only child staying with two families. He was using that to get at my mother because she was well known to the welfare authorities. The first family I stayed with in America were lovely but when I arrived at the house of the second family, they said 'are you the little fenian coming to our door'. I said 'no, I'm the little fenian leaving your door'. I went back to the first family and stayed with them for the rest of the trip.

20. I left Nazareth House on 25<sup>th</sup> January 1991 when I was twelve years old. I was fostered out to [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. I stayed there for about a year and I watched my foster family's marriage break down. My foster father was having an affair. I knew what was going on because he used to take me out to play squash when in fact he was meeting the woman he was having an affair with. I told [REDACTED] I didn't want to stay there any longer. When she asked why I said it was because my foster mother pulled my hair but really I didn't want to stay and watch their marriage fall apart. I loved her more than I loved him. The [REDACTED] are now separated and I still speak to

**Harberton House, Derry (1991-1992 approximately)**

21. After the foster placement with the [REDACTED] broke down, I was placed in Harberton House. I would have been twelve at the time. Harberton House was run by a man named [REDACTED] HH 5 – [REDACTED] we used to call him. I don't have a bad word to say about that man. He cared for us all but things happened on his grounds that shouldn't have happened. There were about ten or twelve in each unit in Harberton House and there were two units [REDACTED] HIA and [REDACTED] SND 283 were already there and we were all placed in the one room together. I said to a staff member called [REDACTED] HH 15 that I wasn't staying in a room with [REDACTED] SND 283. He just said I had to because I was there on an emergency placement. I slept in the bathroom, I put my duvet in the bath and lay there all night with the door locked. I was moved to the other end the next morning for a long term stay. [REDACTED] HH 15 was a big brute of a man and he



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would grab me by the neck and batter me. HH 5 knew HH beat me but he didn't do anything about it. My first memory of being in there was seeing him trail a young boy named HH 16 down the corridor. HH 15 lives in the Waterside. He was an ex rugby player. He also slapped and beat my younger sister HH 17. My mother and father came to the home to report it and I think HH 15 ended up taking early retirement because there were so many complaints about him.

22. I was raped by a boy in Harberton House called HH 18 when I was about thirteen years old. He was about two years older than me. One night I was going to bed in my single room when I heard music blasting from another room. HH 18 and another resident HH 19 were carrying on. I complained to HH 20 who was the social worker in charge that night about the noise. She told them to turn it off. Around 1 or 2am when I was sleeping HH 18 came in to my room and HH 19 held the door from the outside. I could hear HH 19 giggling. HH 18 raped me and held his hand over my mouth. It lasted for about ten minutes. When he left I put my bedside locker up against the door. I was distraught. His mother was a prostitute who had been murdered in the town so he had been in Harberton for a long time. I told a young girl called HH 21 HH 21 about it and she told HH 20 HH 20 then told HH 22 who was the head of the long stay unit in Harberton. She lives in Derry. HH 22 said 'are we back with these lies again HIA'. She said I was going to end up in the training school. She asked why I hadn't told her and I said I learned years ago not to tell staff, to which she replied 'are you implying we wouldn't believe you?' Two days after I was raped I telephoned my mother and told her. She sent my sister HIA 126 down to see me. I told her to tell my mother I was being sent to the training school the next day. My mother told the Derry Journal and it was the front page story two weeks later that I was moved to the training school. The headline read 'child raped in children's home and moved to training school'. Harberton wanted me to report it to the police and I wanted to but nothing happened and I was never interviewed. HH 18 still lives in Derry and I think he is a drug addict.