

[HIA REF – BR 26]

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

SUPPLEMENTARY WITNESS STATEMENT OF [REDACTED] - BR 26

1. I previously made a statement which is dated 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2015 which dealt with the allegations made against me. I have now been asked to make a further statement concerning allegations made by SPT114 [REDACTED]
2. I am aware SPT114 [REDACTED] has issued civil proceedings against the De La Salle Order and I am one of a number of named Defendants in these proceedings. I do not believe SPT114 [REDACTED] has gone to the police about his allegations since I have not been interviewed about them. He has not been in contact with the HIA Inquiry. The only information I have is contained in the statement of Claim served by the Solicitors representing SPT114 [REDACTED]. In that document it is alleged I caused or permitted SPT114 [REDACTED] to be physically and sexually assaulted at various locations at St. Patrick's Training School. My Solicitor has informed me that he has requested further details of these allegations but to date this has not been forthcoming.
3. I do not recall SPT114 [REDACTED]. However I am quite clear I did not physically or sexually assault him as alleged. Without any additional information I cannot be more specific in my denials. I have also set out details of the years I worked in St. Patrick's and my role at the school in my first statement. I cannot say whether I would have had any contact with SPT114 [REDACTED] or if I ever supervised him during the time he was in the school.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed;..

**BR26**

Dated:..... 3 - 11 - 15 .....

## Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry 1922 – 1995

Statement 1: **BR 26**Date: 16<sup>th</sup> August 2015I, **BR 26**, will say as follows;

1. I am now 85 years old. I was born on [REDACTED] in a rural community in [REDACTED]. On the 9<sup>th</sup> September 1943 I entered the Junior Novitiate of the De La Salle Order.
2. On the [REDACTED] I was sent to St Patrick's Industrial School, in Milltown, Belfast. I spent [REDACTED] working with the children of St Patrick's School until [REDACTED] on the closure of the School in 1995. I remained in Belfast until 2000 when I was appointed [REDACTED] and I am now [REDACTED].
3. I make this statement with the intention that it will be useful to the Inquiry in gaining an insight into, not only into my background, but the issues which affected the School during the years. I had a rather unique role in St Patrick's, commencing my job there as a Housemaster and [REDACTED]. In the early days I had daily interaction with the boys both within the home and during their court experiences. I advanced into [REDACTED] and as a result was involved in many of the discussions with [REDACTED] about the provision of care within the Training School sector [REDACTED].
4. I have been the subject of a number of allegations and was first interviewed by the RUC in [REDACTED]. I have been consistent in both my denial of any wrongdoing and in my co-operation with the police and have, even in recent years, [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] Only during this Inquiry has it become known to me that there were other allegations which the RUC decided not to interview me about. I will be examining all the relevant material and addressing the allegations in a separate statement. The purpose of this statement is to give a generic overview with some recollections on my time at St Patrick's.
5. In [REDACTED] I was assigned to work in what was then called 'Milltown Reformatory and Industrial School', which, at that time, was being directed by [REDACTED] **BR 39** **BR 39**. The school – an old ramshackle building – was located adjacent to Milltown Cemetery on the Falls Road, in West Belfast. At that time there were over 100 boys in residence, the majority of whom hailed from Belfast with a small number from throughout Northern Ireland. Supervision was a 24/7 operation and the staff to student ratio was very low, with only ten staff members. For me it was what we would call today 'a huge culture shock'. At the time, I didn't dwell too much on that aspect.

6. A number of the younger boys were in residence for non-attendance at school. Often this had led to other offences like pilfering, being out of control or missing from home. The majority of the older boys had come into conflict with the legal authorities for stealing or housebreaking. In retrospect, I will always retain, as an abiding memory, the friendliness, respect and general level of happiness and contentment of the boys at that time. Television had not, as yet, arrived on the scene but there was a very high level of interest and involvement in a wide variety of sports. In summary, we had nothing and we wanted for nothing.
7. At that time the, the school was jointly funded by what was then called the Belfast Corporation and the Ministry of Home Affairs. In the ensuing years and in the new evolving order, the Northern Ireland Office took responsibility for the total funding arrangements.
8. In the mid-nineteen fifties, a new school on a green field site about a mile away on the Glen Road began to grace the horizon. In the summer of 1957 both boys and staff members 'shook the dust from their feet and moved into the new, state of the art building, situated at the top of a stately driveway with the formidable Divis mountain forming a majestic backdrop. The location afforded panoramic views of a wide spread of Belfast city and beyond, even to the hills of North Down. The school had two sections – junior and senior – with a shared gymnasium and chapel. School leaving age was generally the determining factor in the placement process. At this time, it became officially known as St. Patrick's Junior and Senior Training School and the terms 'Reformatory' and 'Industrial' were assigned to the archives. Many of the boys were simply spellbound by the size and newness of their new home. Almost overnight it was christened 'Butlins' and pals of the students were told it was 'the place to be'.
9. After the usual psychological and practical teething problems associated with such a major upheaval and adjustment, things finally settled down and fell into place. A gradual increase in staffing was approved and funded and a furnishing programme proceeded apace. Meanwhile, all the responsibilities associated with the running of a Training School were undergoing reassessment. Many of the basics from the old school in Milltown, especially in relation to extra curricular activities, were in place. The Silver Band went from strength to strength with over forty playing members and the number of engagements in both North and South increased considerably. The handball alleys and the swimming pool were major enhancements and exceptional outlets for growing, developing adolescents with boundless energy. So too, was the annual holiday in Glenariff, Co. Antrim which both senior and junior students looked forward to with great relish. It was nicknamed 'CAMP' and included river and sea fishing, hill walking, mountaineering, swimming, boating, canoeing, fishing and, on wet days, the long walk. Competitions with outside schools and clubs of similar age range were ongoing in season and the Training School team, in whatever sport, had the reputation of being the team to beat. The mantra from Milltown days of 'we can't get the money' seemed to have disappeared and nothing seemed to be beyond acquirement. In-house, the Secondary schooling with an emphasis on the practical and

technical, was well accepted by the students and the results in terms of woodwork, metalwork, art and craft, painting and decorating and horticulture, gained much acclaim from the visiting Inspectorate.

10. The summer months of 1969 saw some of the worst rioting in Northern Ireland's history, mainly in response to the heavy crackdown on the Civil Rights movement in the province. In August 1969, after the marching season, a large number of Catholics began a huge riot in Derry and the RUC fought with them for three days. It became known as the 'Battle of the Bogside'. In Belfast, entire streets of houses were burned down by rioters and over 3500 families, mainly Catholics, were driven from their homes. It was from these two areas that large contingents of the students in St. Patrick's came and this led to a mood of anger, tension and unrest among all the students but, in particular, the older group. Rumours of deaths and injuries exacerbated the situation, especially when news of deaths of brothers or cousins or school mates of the students leaked out. It was 'agreed' that a group of the Derry boys could go home on condition that they would assemble at the Guildhall five days later at 5.00pm. The agreement was honoured to perfection.
11. In 'normal times', the Police would escort the boys to and from the Courts but, at this time, West Belfast became what was termed 'a no go area' so that the practice came to an abrupt end. At the request of the authorities, a new modus operandi came in play whereby the staff in the Training School took on the escort duties, often at considerable risk. Boys for the Belfast courts would normally be taken to Townhall Street and those for courts elsewhere were escorted to Lisburn Road which was the designated station. This arrangement continued until hostilities ceased and some semblance of normality returned to the streets.
12. During those sad years, the scourge of car stealing 'hit the streets' – all too often with horrific consequences. Inevitably, a number of our students got caught up in that criminal activity – often at considerable cost to themselves, their families or others. Sadly, the media portrayed it as 'joyriding', a term I have never accepted.
13. An army camp, just outside our boundary, presented very acute problems at that extremely sensitive time. The timing of their patrols was the problem. Almost invariably, as the boys were coming out for their mid-morning break, there were skirmishes – and that is putting it mildly. We asked for a meeting with the local army commander to point out our genuine concerns about the timing of the patrols and our efforts to diffuse a sensitive situation. We were received with great graciousness and courtesy and even complimented on our handling of a very tense situation. We were assured that our concerns would be speedily addressed. They were, in the sense that the patrol was doubled in size the following day and thereafter.
14. On at least three occasions, the entire buildings and workshops were meticulously searched. There was never a single item found. During one of those searches, a soldier left his rifle in the greenhouse complex and returned to base without it. When the dust

had settled, a youth who was working in that area, marched in with the weapon over his shoulder, to be loudly acclaimed by his companions. While another search was in progress, a member of the patrol required medical attention and had to be taken to hospital. He, too, left his rifle behind him. It too was handed in by the boys.

15. The emergence of the Diplock Courts presented almost an insurmountable challenge to the authorities in St. Patrick's in maintaining discipline and in the day to day running of the school, especially when large numbers of students were caught up in riot situations, arrested or were charged and remanded in custody. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] an appointment with the Director of Public Prosecutions - I think he was the first holder of that office in Northern Ireland - and he could not have been more welcoming or sympathetic. After outlining to him some of our major concerns, he said his hands were tied with the legislation 'as it was' and, consequently, there was little he could do 'just then'. He was very well informed in terms of the prevailing situation, especially as they affected young people, and he urged me to use my own judgment in dealing with a very difficult situation [REDACTED] staff members and with the Board of Governors. [REDACTED] very encouraged by the interview and it helped us through a very difficult period.

16. Over the years, a very wide variety of boys were admitted to the Training School and, conscious of the old adage 'boys will be boys', I have to admit that our boys were the same as any group. The vast majority responded exceptionally well to then necessary rules and regulations and benefited from the experience. A relatively small number provided us with major headaches, challenges and heartaches. Some were troubled and troublesome, some were hell-bent on a life of self-destruction and crime and, occasionally, so determined that we had to return to the courts with a 'cry for help' and admit we simply couldn't control or help them. We availed of all the psychological and psychiatric assistance that the medical world offered us, but often these proved inadequate. Looking back, with the benefit of hindsight, I recognise today that some of these boys had really acute psychiatric issues for which we simply didn't have the resources or training.

17. I regularly represented the boys and the School at the Juvenile Court to the Recorders and, all the other levels in between, I have some very vivid, if even hilarious moments, of my time at Court. I was however always conscious that the evidence and reports had to have a three-fold dimension;- to be fair to the defendant, to be fair to the Court (evidence and report), and to be fair to the school.

18. A few never-to-be forgotten incidents stand out: An extremely, hyper-active youth had no interest whatsoever in proceedings against him in the Juvenile Court. The resident magistrate asked him, in a very firm voice; What is your name? The youth replied in equally firm tones: 'Murphy, what is yours?

On another occasion, one of the boys who was out on week-end leave, wandered into a large disused property in the city. It was a listed building, with a significant

historical association, and its continued existence provided a major headache for the Government and Corporation. On his way out, in his own words, he 'set it up' and quickly departed from the scene. The building was totally gutted. Some months later the culprit pleaded guilty at the Juvenile Court and, after he was dealt with and had left the Court, the Magistrate remarked: 'This young man achieved what neither the Government nor the Corporation could'.

One Sunday afternoon, a young man from the school decided that he would enjoy himself on horseback for a while. The animal he selected was the magnificent steed on the Orange Hall in Clifton Street at Carlile Circus. He soon had a captive audience, from his home locality. At the subsequent court appearance, the Registrar jokingly asked him whether he was placed in the race, to which he replied: 'Yes Sir, first into the Police Station'.

While on home leave, another wayward youth broke into the shed of a pigeon fancier in Dunmurry and decided to take some of the birds home with him. It was shortly after the commencement of the racing season and the owner seemingly had high expectations of a very successful season in the sport. In due course, the case against the youth was down for hearing at the juvenile sitting in Lurgan. After the prosecution had outlined the case, the defending solicitor asked me to 'take the stand'. I had just begun to outline to the Court what I considered to be helpful information when I was suddenly and abruptly interrupted by the Magistrate who literally 'tore me to shreds'. Later that day, as I went to pay for my lunch in the White Horse Restaurant the cashier informed me that it was already paid for by the gentleman near the East window. At a glance I recognised that it was the Magistrate who had berated me earlier that morning. I went to thank him and we shook hands.

19. Over a period of nineteen years, [REDACTED] four or five of the boys from the school to [REDACTED] every Sunday morning and on Church holidays to assist the wheelchair patients to get to Church. In practice, it meant that the boys had to be up at 7.00am when their mates were enjoying the week-end 'sleep-in' until 8.30. Over all those years there was never a complaint either from the patients or the [REDACTED] Management about the behaviour of the boys or about their honesty and I know what it is like to live with 'light-fingered' youths. In conclusion, I would like to say that I have met hundreds of former students of the school, in a wide variety of places and situations – in their homes, in hospitals, in Police Stations, in Prisons, even on Jury Service. The vast majority are friendly and chatty. I would also like to pay tribute to the many Brothers and lay staff I worked with during my time there. Many of them worked well beyond the call of duty on numerous occasions.
20. Despite having had to answer allegations of horrendous abuse that I reputedly perpetrated at St Patrick's I look back on my time at the School with fondness. I enjoyed my role and the work. I genuinely believe that I helped many of the children attain a stability and direction in their lives. There were many sad, tragic and difficult times but overall it was a vocation worth living. I'm comforted today by the

friendships I made at St Patrick's and the support that former residents continue to give me.

21. Finally, I would like to emphasise that, in the preparation of this statement, I have had no access to any files or diaries relating to the years I worked in St. Patrick's Training School. All of the above is purely from memory. I remain of course in a position to assist the Inquiry with specific questions on the provision of care or on the management, structure and administration of the School.

Signed:

**BR 26**

Date:

16<sup>th</sup> August 2015

- (c) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be physically assaulted by the Second Named Defendant.
- (d) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be physically assaulted by the Third Named Defendant with sticks and canes.
- (e) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be sexually assaulted by the Third Named Defendant who fondled the Plaintiff' private parts when he was getting changed.
- (f) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be physically assaulted by the Fourth Named Defendant using a strap and a cane to smack him on his backside after removing the Plaintiff's trousers.
- (g) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be sexually assaulted by the Fourth Named Defendant who fondled the Plaintiff's private parts.
- (h) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be physically assaulted by the Fifth Named Defendant who regularly beat the Plaintiff.
- (i) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be sexually assaulted by the Fifth Named Defendant who fondled the Plaintiff' private parts whilst he was in bed and in other rooms.
- (j) Falsely imprisoning the Plaintiff at various locations at the home so as to commit acts of physical and/or sexual assault upon the Plaintiff.
- (k) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to sustain severe personal injuries loss and damage.

**PARTICULARS OF NEGLIGENCE OF THE SIXTH AND SEVENTH  
NAMED DEFENDANTS**

- (a) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be subjected to regular physical and sexual assaults and abuse at St. Patrick's training school.
- (b) Causing or permitting the Plaintiff to be falsely imprisoned and subjected to regular physical and sexual assaults and abuse at St. Patrick's training school.
- (c) If the Plaintiff had to be placed at St. Patrick's training school, which is denied, failing and omitting to ensure that the Plaintiff would be properly cared for.



- 2 -

RESIGNATIONS AND APPOINTMENTS:

A letter from [REDACTED] tendering her resignation as Matron from June 30th, was read.

A discussion on the needs of the school in this area resulted in the decision to seek approval from the N.I.O. for the appointment of a Domestic Manager, preferably with a Medical background/qualification, to replace the Matron. A sub-committee comprised of Fr. McCann, Sr. Carina, the Director and Secretary was asked to deal with the matter.

The Chairman then referred to negotiations he had with BR2 [REDACTED] regarding the appointment of a successor to the Director who would be retiring on August 31st. He expressed his deep satisfaction and delight at the nomination of BR26 [REDACTED] for this post. He referred to BR26 [REDACTED] sterling work in St. Patrick's over the past [REDACTED] and felt that such an appointment would be totally appropriate. He further expressed his gratitude to BR2 [REDACTED] for proposing BR90 [REDACTED] immediate [REDACTED] and a man of vast experience and ability, as BR26 [REDACTED] s Deputy. It was, he said, an indication of the importance which the Order attached to the work of St. Patrick's in caring for disadvantaged youth and augured well for the future of the school.

No. 20

CORONERS ACT (Northern Ireland), 1959

Deposition of Witness taken at an inquest, touching the death of

Bernard Brendan Taggart, [redacted]

held at Belfast County Courthouse, Crumlin Road, in the County of

[redacted] Belfast on [redacted] day, the [redacted] day of [redacted]

19 74, before me, [redacted] J.H.S. ELLIOTT ESQ.,

[redacted] Coroner for the District of Belfast

as follows to wit:—

The Deposition of SPT151 (continued)

who being duly sworn upon h [redacted] oath, saith

alternatives but they said the boy must go with them for an hour. Eventually Br. BR52 gave his permission and I was told to get the boy. I said he was at lunch and to let him finish and they agreed. Then as we opened the door to go out another man was standing there and I got the impression he was impatient. I told him I was going to get Barney and he said that it was [redacted] he wanted. I asked BR52 was that alright and he nodded. I went to the diningroom and [redacted] was having dinner. When he had more or less finished I brought him to the front of the school and he went off in a taxi with the men. By this time it was 1.20 p.m. and I should have been gone to lunch. I waited a few minutes and then headed home. When I returned after lunch at about 2.05 p.m. there was an empty taxi at the school and I thought to myself 'they haven't kept [redacted] long! I went in and was told the housemasters were looking for [redacted] and that they had gone to the cell (he was just back after absconding and had been confined to make sure he stayed). I was asked could he go out for an hour and I answered 'See BR52. I was told BR52 had gone out so I said 'Since he gave permission to [redacted] to go I suppose it was OK for Barney to go'. I went up to my office and resumed. When 3.0'clock came I rang the housemasters' office to see were the Taggart [redacted] back. I was told they were not. I left word that they were to ring when the boys returned. When school ended at 3.30 p.m. and the classes came out I made further enquiries and got the same answer. At this stage I was worried. I began to think of tarring and feathering and such like. I decided I must do something and I tried to find out where BR52 was. The first brother I asked didn't know so I went to the main offices and discussed the situation with the brothers there. I suggested ringing BR52 but was not told where he was. I suggested that the Police should be informed because 2 hours had now elapsed. I was told neither Br. BR52 nor the Police should be told at that time so I went back up to my own room to wait. At about 5.0 p.m. BR52 arrived up with me. Like myself he was now very worried. I told him I thought we must now do something. Police were mentioned and some

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12. As seen from documents<sup>34567</sup> (Exhibits 3 - 7) at the time, this matter was immediately brought to the attention of the most senior members of staff within the department – Sir John Chilcot, (Permanent Under Secretary), John Ledlie, (Deputy Under Secretary) and John Lyon all were made aware, as were Ministers. The urgency of the issue was immediately recognised at all levels and meetings to discuss these matters and the implications were held as early as possible internally; with the SSI (for expert advice)<sup>8</sup> (Exhibit 8); and the police to determine the best way forward. The police raised concerns in two respects: the impact on the individual, their reputation and that of the school should those allegations prove false; however should the allegations prove to be true, alerting the school authorities at such an early stage of their investigation could not only hamper it but could stop it altogether. Their fear was that the De la Salle Order could move **BR26** out of the jurisdiction and beyond their reach. From the start, the SSI took the view that the safety of children at the school was the priority and **BR26** should be removed from his position pending the outcome of the police investigation as is the recommended and adopted practice under such circumstances. We fully accepted the SSI's recommendation while acknowledging the police concerns. Ministers were formally advised and their approval sought to allow officials to inform the Chair of the Training Schools, Bishop Farquhar and ask that **BR26** be removed as **BR26** pending the outcome of the police investigation.
13. Having secured Ministerial approval, John Lyon considered it appropriate to invite the police to join the meeting with the Bishop but after internal consideration the police declined<sup>9</sup> (Exhibit 9). John Lyon and I arranged and met Bishop Anthony Farquhar and Canon Peter McCann. That meeting took place in Canon McCann's parochial house at St Malachy's Church. John

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<sup>3</sup> Note of a meeting at CJSJ between NIO and the RUC to discuss alleged sexual misconduct at St Patrick's Training School – 18 November 1993 SPT-12926

<sup>4</sup> St Partick's: Allegation of sexual abuse – memo from M Madden to J Lyons dated 23 November 1993 SPT-12927 – SPT-12933

<sup>5</sup> St Partick's: Allegation of sexual abuse – memo from J Lyons to M Madden dated 23 November 1993 SPT-12934 – SPT-12935

<sup>6</sup> St Partick's: Allegations of abuse. Note from PS/PUS to M Madden 25 November 1993 SPT-12936

<sup>7</sup> St Patrick's: Allegations of Abuse – Note from J Lyon to M Madden 25 November 1993 SPT-12937 – SPT-12938

<sup>8</sup> St Patrick's: Allegations of abuse – note from K McCoy to M Madden 25 November 1993 SPT-12939 - 12940

<sup>9</sup> Note for Record regarding police attendance at the meeting with the Bishop and Conor McCann SPT-12941

Lyon, who took the lead at that meeting, appraised them of the serious allegations made against BR26 by ex-pupils of the school and the advice of SSI that BR26 should be suspended during the police investigation, advice which the department fully supported. They were also advised that the police would at an appropriate stage of their investigation want to interview BR26 under caution, and we shared with them the police concerns that BR26 might leave the jurisdiction and that De la Salle Order and school might frustrate the investigation. We suggested that this would not be in anyone's interest and hoped that would be a view shared, which it was.

14. Both men understood the gravity of the allegations but emphasised that knowing the individual as they did, could not believe nor did they believe the allegations made against him. They undertook to consider the matter urgently and come back to us with their decision, which they subsequently did. We were advised that the allegations were put to BR26 who had denied them vehemently. BR26 had confirmed he would submit to a police interview under caution at any time and he would not leave the jurisdiction pending the outcome of investigation as he was determined to clear his name. The Management Board had discussed the matter and decided, as these were unproven allegations and given BR26 strong denial of wrong doing, they would not remove him from his position at this point. However, we were advised that should more information come to light, the Board would review their decision. We registered our surprise and disappointment with the decision. This outcome was relayed back to Ministers and senior officials.
15. Although BR26 remained of the School until he retired, his retirement occurred before I left the Division and probably not long after the outcome of the police investigation was known.
16. I have no recollection of having any further dealings with this matter.

- ix. I recall being told by **BR95** that he had dismissed a chef for misappropriating catering material during a routine visit to the school. Having been shown documentation in relation to **DL137** for the purposes of making this statement it is possible that he was referring to **DL137**. I can confirm I was not aware at the relevant time that **DL137** had resigned, other than my recollection above of the conversation with **BR95** and was not in fact aware of the existence of **DL137** or his convictions until I came to make this statement.
- x. Absconding was an issue within the training schools. There are numerous reasons why children might abscond. It must be remembered that apart from Lisnevin and the small secure units at St. Patrick's and Rathgael, training schools were not secure apart from normal procedures of night time closures. Having regard to the location of St Patricks it is not surprising that absconding levels were quite high given the proximity of many children to their families. The matter of absconding was always taken seriously by staff.
27. In conclusion it is important to remember the role played by the training schools in the Juvenile Justice System, which operated in very difficult and trying conditions during the many years of civil unrest in the Province. On 24<sup>th</sup> July 1990, Sister Catherine Dunne of the Order of St Louis, who was a staff member in St Joseph's Training school in Middletown, whilst on duty was killed when she was caught up in an ambush on a police vehicle just outside Armagh. Three RUC officers also died. Sister Catherine was a young dedicated woman who died needlessly whilst following her chosen vocation.

Signed: 

Dated: 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2015.

- 5.24 Some of the records in Aisling House examined by the Inspectors suggest that absconding from the school is not always treated as seriously as it might be. For example a number of the reports on case files do not suggest that the dangers of an eleven or twelve year old boy being missing for several days are fully recognised. Some of them are written in style which suggests that they may not be treated with the seriousness they deserve. Furthermore there is little indication that the reasons for the absconding are followed up or discussed with the boy following his return. Staff appear to take the view that, since it is an open unit, there is little that they can do to stop absconding if the boys are determined to go whereas experience elsewhere shows that a considerable amount can be done to reduce the risks by identifying them systematically and providing additional direct supervision when necessary.
- 5.25 Absconding is a serious issue and steps need to be taken to address the problem as a matter of urgency if the current levels are to be reduced. There are obvious dangers when children as young as eleven remain out of adult supervision and care overnight or for even longer periods, particularly during a period of civil unrest as is amply demonstrated by William's tragic death. However, there are also risks that the young people can become involved in delinquent activities. It can instil a sense of failure among staff and seriously damage the reputation of the school.
- 5.26 A review of the literature on absconding suggests that there is likely to be more absconding by young people in short term care units, particularly when they are uncertain about their futures. It is also more likely to occur when there are high occupancy levels. All these factors apply in Aisling House which would suggest that the risk of absconding may be higher there than in other units on the St.Patrick's campus.
- 5.27 The incidence of absconding from the other large training school in Northern Ireland has also been high. As a result of public concern about it a special study was undertaken by APRU in 1991. This study helped the school's management to identify a pattern of absconding in terms of the type of young people most likely to abscond, the times of the day and even the season of the year at which they were most likely to leave, the house units with the highest levels of absconding and the types of supervision which gave the highest and lowest levels of risk. Having identified the risk factors management were able to develop a fifteen point strategy to tackle the problem. It is significant that when the situation was reviewed a year later the levels of absconding in the school had been significantly reduced. The Inspectors were concerned to be told that the lessons learnt in the exercise were not shared with the staff of St.Patrick's. **It is recommended that at least the conclusions and recommendations should be made available and that a similar exercise should be conducted in St.Patrick's.**

**RATHGAEL CENTRE FOR CHILDREN  
AND YOUNG PEOPLE:  
ABSCONDING BEHAVIOURS**

**DAMIAN CURRAN**

**APRU  
WHITEFIELD HOUSE  
BELFAST**

**NOVEMBER 1991**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- a. \* 1.0 This study was commissioned by Mr A Shannon, Assistant Secretary, Northern Ireland Office with the agreement of Mrs M Quigley, Chair of the Board of Management and Mr C Whyte, Director, Rathgael Centre for Children and Young People, Bangor. The brief is to evaluate and report upon the incidence of absconding behaviours during the period 1 January - 31 August, 1991 through the existing information and data available in the Rathgael Centre.
- b. \* 1.1 I should acknowledge the assistance, given to me in preparing this report, provided by the Director and Senior Managers in the Rathgael Centre who allowed full access to available information and gave considerable practical help in ensuring rapid collection of information; to Mr D Wilson, temporary research assistant, APRU who collected and coded raw data; to Senior Residential Social workers in Rathgael who cooperated in returning questionnaires in relation to absconders who offend. I should also acknowledge the assistance of Dr M Hoghugh, Director, Aycliffe Centre, Durham who provided an advance copy of a section concerning children who run away which is to appear in a forthcoming book on disordered children; of Mr J A Zadeh, Deputy Principal, Redbank School, Merseyside who provided some comparative information; Mr C W Donnell, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSS., who also provided comparative information; Mr E F Jardine and Mr C J Morris, Policy Planning and Research Unit, Stormont who helped in some of the statistical analysis; Mr S Smith, Information Systems Unit, NIO who assisted in producing the graphics of results. Finally, I should like to thank the Information Unit, Home Office Research Unit, London who provided a literature search and copies of various Home Office Research Unit studies. While I acknowledge this assistance, responsibility for the contents and views expressed is entirely mine and should not be attributed to any other person or agency.

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## 2. A COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE

2.0 There is a dearth of recent published research on absconding behaviours. A comprehensive literature search conducted for me by the Information Unit of the Home Office unearthed a 1971 study by Clarke and Martin titled "Absconding from Approved Schools", a 1974 study by Dunlop titled "The Approved School Experience" a 1977 study by Laycock titled "Absconding from Borstals" a 1975 study by Banks et al titled "Absconding from Open Prisons" and a further study by Dunlop in 1980 which examines absenteeism in "Junior Attendance Centres". In other words, the limited research done is dated.

The absence of more recent research and information nationally is puzzling, indeed remarkable, when one considers the following information which gives some indication of the scale of the problem in England and Wales. Hansard (16th October, 1991) records Mr M Shersby (Member of Parliament for Uxbridge), "As the House knows I am parliamentary adviser to the Police Federation of England and Wales and I want to declare that interest ... A recent survey conducted by the Police Federation on the best available evidence reveals ... figures (which) relate to the year ending 31 July 1990. West Yorkshire, which has numerous community homes, had 4,426 absconders. The total number relates to 1,500 individuals, and 781 youngsters absconded more than three times. Of the persistent absconders, 274 committed offences while on the run ... In the home counties, Hertfordshire has nine such establishments. There were 833 absconders; only two secure places exist in Hertfordshire, and 63 youngsters absconded more than three times. Lancashire has 39 community homes and there were at least 965 absconders, 89 of whom absconded more than three times. Leicestershire has 10 community homes and 640 youngsters absconded during that 12-month period. Norfolk has 16 homes and 621 youngsters absconded. Cumbria

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has seven homes and 786 youngsters absconded, while Durham has a terrible record, with 16 establishments and 2,296 absconders. There is only one secure location, with 46 beds and 122 youngsters absconded more than three times. So the list goes on. Unfortunately, I have no figures for the metropolitan police area. They are difficult to obtain because of the number of local authorities involved.

"The figures that I have quoted show clearly that there is a huge problem of which the House is not aware but which needs to be tackled urgently. That problem will become worse next year, when the Criminal Justice Act 1991 comes fully into force and abolishes remands to prison for juveniles. At present young people can be remanded to prison where a certificate of unruliness is provided, but all that is to stop under the Criminal Justice Act which the House has recently passed" (my emphasis).

These contemporary figures concerning absconding from a variety of settings provide a useful comparative perspective. Unfortunately, for present purposes, most of the Shersby figures are insufficiently precise in terms of institutional features such as population size, capacity and turnover or, most importantly, the offence and behavioural characteristics of the children and young people. It is clear that England and Wales figures exclude deep-end juvenile offenders who are currently held in adult prisons; it should be noted by contrast that in Northern Ireland, following a policy decision by NIO in 1984, that this population of deep-end juvenile offenders are already very largely contained in the Training Schools system.

2.1 Some further evidence of the national incidence of runaway children is about to be published by the National Children's Home (Abrahams, 1991). A consortium of agencies (the NCH, the Police Foundation and the Metropolitan Police) was established in 1989 to investigate juvenile runaways in

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#### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

3.0 In Training Schools in this country intervention with children and young people takes place in conditions of relative freedom. One price paid for this freedom is absconding.

#### 3.1 Personality and Motivation of Absconders

While I have acknowledged that much of the absconding literature is dated, nevertheless some important, relevant perspectives may be derived from this literature.

The research on individual differences and background factors has not been very successful in explaining the aetiology of absconding. In three studies, Clarke and Martin (1971) studied absconding in approved schools. They describe (p.4) the function of an approved school in this way: "An approved school order is the main custodial disposal open to the courts for offenders aged between ten and seventeen (and for some children who are the subject of civil proceedings) who it is judged need removal from home and fairly long-term residential training. For those over fourteen who require a shorter period of training, detention centres are available. Further, approved schools are not intended for offenders over fifteen who are 'so criminally sophisticated as to require training in a borstal situation' (Home Office, 1969)". Clarke and Martin followed up samples of boys and girls in approved schools to estimate the incidence of absconding and found that 39% (318 out of 822) of a boys' sample admitted to approved schools in 1963 and 57% (371 out of 657) of a girls' sample admitted to approved schools had absconded at least once. The authors

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. It is recommended that the Western Board should commission a review of its fostering services with a view to achieving an improved level of availability. (Paragraph 3.2)
2. It is recommended that St.Patrick's Training School should prepare an information leaflet for referring agencies outlining the services that they can offer. (Paragraph 3.4)
3. It is recommended that the Western Board should prepare guidance for its staff on the admission of young children to training schools. (Paragraph 3.7)
4. It is recommended that Place of Safety Orders should not be used to transfer children to training schools other than in emergencies when the school is in a position and willing to admit them immediately. (Paragraph 3.9)
5. It is recommended that when children are transferred from Board accommodation to training schools the time prior to admission should be used to provide the school with information about the child's history and behaviour and to make firm plans about how the placement will be used to achieve identified objectives. (Paragraph 4.5)
6. If it is found that boys are absconding from Aisling House through doors that are difficult for staff to supervise consideration should be given to fitting them with alarms. (Paragraph 5.2)
7. It is recommended that consideration should be given to providing a more structured approach to the assessment process. (Paragraph 5.12)
8. The use of secure accommodation as a response to misbehaviour should be reviewed. (Paragraph 5.16)
9. It is recommended that the Northern Ireland Office should issue guidance to the training schools on the use of secure accommodation and the schools' management boards should incorporate it into revised procedures for their staff. (Paragraph 5.19)
10. It is recommended that care should be taken to consider the dangers of children being drawn into absconding behaviour by their placement in group containing persistent absconders. (Paragraph 5.23)
11. It is recommended that the conclusions and recommendations made in the study of absconding in another training school should be made available to St.Patrick's and that a similar exercise should be conducted there. Paragraph 5.27)

M E M O

TO: ALL TEAM LEADERS

FROM: BR90

DATE: [REDACTED]

=====

RE: INCIDENTS OF ABSCONDING FROM ST PATRICK'S

*As you are aware a new recording system has been introduced to facilitate an examination of the nature and extent of absconding from all units in St Patrick's.*

*May I ask you to advise all Care staff that a child or young person who has left the grounds of St Patrick's without permission, should be reported immediately to the R.U.C. at Andersonstown who will in turn notify the child/young person's local R.U.C. station.*

*Parents or guardians should also be notified as soon as it is positively established that the child/young person has left the grounds without permission.*

*Should the young person be subject to a P.O.S.O. or Interim Order, Social Services should be informed at the earliest opportunity via the referring Social Worker or the Co-ordinator of the out-of-hours service.*

*Yours sincerely,*

**BR90**

*P.S. Weekly return forms should be forwarded to Fred McKeating, even in the event of a nil return.*

FB/AK

MR McELPATRICK. - JSF  
22/8/95

C16718



St. Patrick's Training School

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Fax. No:  
(01232) 626879

GLEN ROAD,  
BELFAST  
BT11 8BX.

16th August, 1995.

FB/MK

Dr. K. McCoy,  
Chief Inspector,  
Social Services Inspectorate,  
Dept. of Health & Soc. Servs.,  
Dundonald House,  
Upper Newtownards Road,  
BELFAST BT4 3SS.

Dear Dr. McCoy,

I write to you in response to your letter to **BR26** [redacted]  
regarding the circumstances surrounding the death of [redacted]

As requested the Board of Management and Senior Management of St. Patrick's  
have considered the report and I enclose our proposals in respect of the  
recommendations.

I would welcome the opportunity to discuss these in greater detail and other  
matters of concern pertaining to this Inquiry.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

**BR90**

Mr Walker,

Please consider the responses from  
St. Patrick's. You will need to establish  
in more detail the adequacy of some of  
the measures proposed or actioned. Please  
let me have your comments on each of  
the responses and your views on whether  
any further action is needed. We can  
then discuss. I think it would be helpful  
if Mr McCarty were sent a copy of the  
responses. Can you arrange please.

H. V. McEgan  
23/8/95

/ENC



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### RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

- to see
2. We have prepared and circulated an information leaflet for referring agencies. This leaflet should complement existing leaflets which were prepared in respect of Aisling and Slemish Houses for parents and guardians.
  
  4. It continues to be the policy of St. Patrick's to monitor applications for places in Aisling House and to ensure the appropriateness of each placement. As has always been the case this has been done in the context of the Children & Young Persons Act (1968). In the vast majority of cases an admission is reviewed by a Juvenile Court within a period of five (5) weeks.
  
  5. We welcome this in principle but would welcome a meeting to discuss logistics of this recommendation.
  
  - ✓ 6. There is no evidence, to date, that these doors are being used for absconding. However, if it does become apparent that these doors are being used for abscondings, alarms will be fitted - subject to finance being available.
  
  7. At present we are carrying out a review of the assessment process and consideration shall be given to a number of assessment processes. (planned for September/October). The review group plan to report to the Director by October 1995, at which stage a plan of action shall be drawn up.
  
  8. St. Patrick's cannot accept that [REDACTED] was moved to Slemish House for the reasons outlined in 5.16. Obviously those alone would not be adequate justification for his removal.
- b see
- However, a memo has been circulated to all Care Staff re-enforcing the criteria for admission to Slemish and the need for detailed recording of factors which necessitated admission.
- 10-13 Staff are very much aware of the dangers of absconding behaviour and there is a very strong emphasis on dealing with this problem. At present St. Patrick's is collecting detailed information as to the nature and extent of absconding throughout the School.

Mr. D. Curran (Head of A.P.R.U.) has been invited to carry out some detailed research into the problem of absconding and hopefully help in the implementation of strategies designed to minimize this problem.

We have received copies of the document covering research on absconding in another Training School and these strategies shall be utilised in the overall review of the absconding problem.



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14. A memo has been circulated giving instruction on procedures to be followed in the case of absconders. These will be incorporated in the guidance manual presently being redrafted.
15. As and from June 26th 1995 Aisling House has been staffed in accordance with funding providing by N.I.O.
16. To date we have not had an opportunity to discuss this with the N.I.O. but would welcome a meeting to do so.
- 17-22 Since these recommendations have implications for financing and changes in the present rota in the School and require negotiations with the N.I.O and with Trade Unions, Management have these matters under review at present. It is planned to address them more fully in early September when staff return from holidays.  
  
Management will be urging a speedy response to these issues.
23. This recommendation has serious financial and logistical implications and is not in accordance with directives given by N.I.O. Hence St. Patrick's welcomes a meeting with S.S.I. and N.I.O. to discuss this issue.

## SENIOR STAFF MEETING - [REDACTED]

PRESENT:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr. R. Kilpatrick

APOLOGIES:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**BR26** opened the meeting and invited Dr. Kilpatrick to address the group.

Dr. Kilpatrick said it was probably an appropriate time to meet with the Senior Staff as Michael Barbour had recently been appointed as a new member of the A.P.R.U. staff. Damian Curran was no longer on the A.P.R.U. rota and an allocation of 4% days to St. Patrick's by the A.P.R.U. was in operation.

While Assessment continued to be the main role of the psychologist, their responsibilities also included other areas of the Training Schools i.e. Staff development, Research and Evaluation and support for C.S.S. Students. Derek Wilson had recently been appointed as research officer for the A.P.R.U. with responsibility for monitoring Training School Records, and had visited St. Patrick's.

Both [REDACTED] were working across the Care and Justice sections of St. Patrick's. The time which has been allocated to us, 4% days, was divided as follows:

- One day to Reception/Care/Saul
- One day to Justice
- One half day each to Slane/Donard
- One half day to Staff development/research
- One half day to Slemish (Roger Bailey).
- One half day for administration.

**BR26** stated that other demands were made of the A.P.R.U. The Circus 1 to 3 and evaluation of the Westside Project to name a few. Dr. Kilpatrick asked for feedback from staff for monitoring purposes and also requested that case reviews be organised if possible on days when the A.P.R.U. member was present in St. Patrick's. She further requested, and it was agreed to, that all referrals should be made on the referral form, stating the reason for the referral. This would ensure a record of the referral and assist in balancing the case load of the psychologists

Dr. Kilpatrick also requested that the A.P.R.U. be notified if any referral to the Admissions Panel for Slemish House was being made regarding boys who were currently involved with any of the A.P.R.U. team. This was in order that the psychologist concerned could attend or at least provide a report. Mr. Crummey agreed with this suggestion and would comply.

- 2 -

**BR90**

said solvent abuse was a serious problem and quite difficult and frustrating for staff to deal with. Was there any guidance the A.P.R.U. could provide with this problem? Dr. Kilpatrick suggested that group work involving the A.P.R.U. and other agencies might be the answer.

After some discussion on boys in Justice it was agreed to provide as much information regarding the boy as possible. With this in mind it was agreed to have the Probation Officer's report for the initial case review.

Mr. G. Kerr asked about written feedback on boys for the purposes of case reviews. Dr. Kilpatrick responded by saying that a verbal feedback was appropriate in some cases but if it was felt necessary a written report could be provided although they were finding that the volume of written work was increasing. Space in the Licensing Review Report would also be made available for A.P.R.U. information on the boy.

Dr. Kilpatrick agreed to report back to the senior Meeting in one months time. She then retired from the meeting.

*March*



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MEETING OF BOARD MEMBERS

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

PRESENT:

[REDACTED]

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mr McKeating outlined a proposal from Child Psychiatry, Foster Green, that a child - [REDACTED] a Catholic boy, should be committed to Rathgael Training School, Shamrock House Unit.

Medical opinion clearly indicated that this boy needed specialized intensive treatment and supervision which could only be provided in a close observation unit within the training school system. It was further felt that given the boy's specific problems, that such a placement should be in a unit which did not cater for males exclusively.

As St Patrick's Slemish House catered exclusively for males, Dr McAuley, Consultant Psychiatrist and Dr Mestel, Senior Registrar, were of the opinion that the boy would have a higher chance of successful intervention in the mixed gender unit of Shamrock House in Rathgael.

After detailed analysis of the case presented to Board members, and with some hesitation, the members deemed it advisable to accede to medical opinion and to agree to the request before them. There was a proviso, however, that following the expiry of the T.S.O. in two years, that St Patrick's be consulted, should there be a need for further placement in the training school system.



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Mr Allan Johnston,  
Principal Officer,  
Criminal Justice Services Division,  
Northern Ireland Office,  
Royston House,  
34, Upper Queen Street,  
BELFAST. BT1 6FD

29th September 1993

Dear Allan,

**Re: Consultation on Social Services Inspection.**

Your letter of 25th August 1993 refers.

I am aware that current arrangements for the inspection of residential Care facilities for children are inconsistent in many ways and that major changes in inspection arrangements are being considered in line with the new Children's Order, Citizens Charter etc. While I confess to being somewhat unsure about the full details of these new arrangements I have considered the documentation you forwarded and can make a number of general comments.

I would welcome the involvement of trained lay members in all inspections as a very positive step, particularly if they have had direct experience of residential child care, either as a provider or a user. The involvement of lay people in this way can only enhance public and user confidence in the objectivity and independence of the report and thereby give the report greater weight and credibility.

I would also welcome the introduction of national standards and procedures for Inspectors which would help ensure fairness and objectivity across the spectrum of care. This would entail detailed standards and indicators being available to Inspectors not just of building design, record-keeping and staff quality, but of the quality of life for children and young people, implementation of basic rights, and protection. There is, of course, a considerable amount of evidence from previous enquiries into abuse of children in residential care which could be used as reference for drawing up a list of indicators of the type of regimes that are likely to lead to abuse, e.g. isolation from the community, high turnover of staff, high incidence of absconding, frequent outbursts of violence, high rate of self-injury and involvement of the Police and the like. These, at least, should be included in any list of indicators. I believe that this list could also be helpful to Managers of residential child care facilities for monitoring purposes.

On the issue of Inspection Reports on residential homes for children being made public, I would have some reservations. At present there is no legislative requirement for such reports to be made public. However, as in education there is a general move towards publication and one would have to accept that these reports rightly belong in some way to the public domain.

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There is a difference though between education reports and child care reports, particularly in the nature of the client group. Reports on child care facilities for example would very likely refer to the reasons why the children were admitted to Care. This would often highlight incidence of incest, sexual and physical abuse etc where the young person was either victim or perpetrator. This I feel could lead to the further stigmatisation of children in Care and as a consequence disadvantage them in relation to job prospects etc. In this respect Inspectors would need to be very circumspect in ensuring not only the individual's rights to privacy and confidentiality but also that the client group as a whole were not stigmatised and isolated any further. If this can be achieved then I think that it is certainly right that at least the children themselves, relevant authorities and in most case parents should see the Report. I would also add that the important rights to privacy and

confidentiality of individuals and client group should never be used as an excuse for preventing publication of non identifying material which rightly should be public.

I hope you will find the above comments helpful.

Yours sincerely,

**BR26**