

**STATEMENT OF LINDSAY CONWAY TO THE HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL
ABUSE INQUIRY**

NOVEMBER 2015

Introduction

1. My name is Lindsay Conway. I joined Rathgael Training School in 1972 as an Assistant House Master. My career there spanned 40 years as set out below:

1972 - 1973 Assistant House Master
 1973 - 1974 Housemaster
 1974 - 1978 Assistant Welfare Officer / Social Worker
 1978 - 1984 Senior Social Worker

- Team Leader of the After Care Team.
- Secretary of the Review Committee.
- Co-ordinate reports for both care and Juvenile Justice Courts.
- Attendance at Juvenile Courts.
- Attendance at Case Conferences.
- Negotiate placements in children's homes, schools and hostels.
- Agree supports and resources for return home.

1984 - 1996 Principal Social Worker

- All of above, with a few additions.
- Strategic Planning of after-care services and the development of a Community Care approach.
- The development of the East Side Project.
- The Introduction of an Intake Social Worker.
- Development of the Porgammon Project at Runkerry

1996 - 2000 Director of Juvenile Justice Services – this included responsibility for Rathgael and Eastside Project

- Oversight and Management of the Juvenile Justice Centre.
- The ongoing management of the separation of care and justice on the Rathgael site.
- The overall management of Education for the Care and Justice Provision.
- Ongoing development of good practice.

2000 - 2002 Director of Custodial Development (Juvenile Justice Board) – led the team responsible for¹:

- Drafting a statement of purpose, aims and objectives for the transitional phase for the Juvenile Justice Centre (JJC) for NI to reflect modern

¹ Exhibit 1 - Juvenile Justice Board Custodial Development Services – Aims & Principles – Team Brief

- practice and thinking in terms of managing and delivering effective and accountable custodial services for children; and
- developing a child centred ethos Juvenile Justice Centre
2. Since 2002 I have been Secretary and Director to the Council for Social Witness. My key responsibilities are to deliver an effective Social Witness service on behalf of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland and to the wider community in partnership with appropriate organisations. I have oversight of:
- i. Residential Care, Nursing Care, Day Care, Respite Care, Supported Housing and the implementation of the Care in the Community initiative offered under the umbrellas of Older People Services and Disability Services.
 - ii. Management and professional oversight of Thompson House, a Probation Board NI approved accommodation on Belfast's Antrim Road, falls under this Councils' responsibility.
 - iii. Carlisle House, a residential substance misuse treatment centre near the centre of Belfast and Gray's Court, a supported living project consisting of seven one bedroom flats are managed and overseen by the Council.
 - iv. All public policy issues dealt with by the Council for Church in Society and all direct support of congregations, through the provision of resources and training.
 - v. Policy development and administration of Taking Care the Churches Child and Adult Safeguarding programme.
 - vi. Support to the ministry of the Kinghan Church, a congregation based in South Belfast that caters for the deaf and hearing impaired persons.
3. I have read the statement of Mr. Campbell Whyte to the Inquiry dated 28 September 2015². I agree with the content of the statement but wish to add some additional information that assist the Inquiry and bring further clarification to the issues under consideration.

² RGL-1714 - 1776

4. I worked closely with Mr. Whyte throughout our years at Rathgael. We started our careers there at about the same time, Mr. Whyte as a Teacher and myself as an Assistant House Master. We considered ourselves to be very much part of a new generation of staff being recruited into Rathgael aimed at developing new approaches and creating a different culture within the Training School sector. I reported directly to Mr. Whyte when he was Director of Rathgael before taking over that role on his retirement.
5. I have also read the statements submitted by the Applicants to the Inquiry in relation to Rathgael and I attended the Inquiry when HIA172 gave oral evidence on 5 November 2015.

Rathgael Training School

6. Mr Whyte has provided background information in relation to Rathgael in paragraphs 4 – 17 of his statement. I wish to add the following.
7. I believe that the public perception was that Training Schools were just one step removed from Borstal. Locally, Rathgael was referred to as the 'bad boy's home'. That perception is not actually what Rathgael was about in practice.
8. The history of these institutions was reformatory in nature. The move from Malone in 1968 to a unit based regime in a rural setting was a signal that major change was imminent. Rathgael in those early days could have been viewed as a school with accommodation although every attempt had been made to design a purpose built residential centre with small self-contained residential units, education and vocational training blocks that were well appointed and equipped compared to the former training schools. This move represented a change in approach from a reformatory style to a more progressive approach with new systems, processes and staff.
9. A summary³ of the changes and challenges experienced by Rathgael over the years illustrates the transition from Training School to a Centre for children and

³ Exhibit 2 - Rathgael Centre for Children and Young People: Absconding Behaviours – D Curran, APRU – 1991, paras 4.2 – 4.5.

young people that was adopted by the Management Board and endorsed by the Secretary of State.

Placement of Young People in Training Schools

- 10.** The majority of young people were admitted to Rathgael as a result of difficulties experienced in the Care and Education systems. Generally, they were admitted on a short-term, interim basis to the Training School as a result of a crisis in their personal or family life, or committed by the Juvenile Court because no alternative placement was available. Some were admitted by reason of their offending behaviour. The Children and Young Person's Act (NI) 1968 made it difficult to be flexible and innovative, in relation to length of placement and a planned return to their community. An indeterminate order was issued that resulted in uncertainty and was often added to by subsequent Training School Orders as a result of further offences effectively extending their period of detention and delaying their release on license to the community. I recollect many young people reaching their peak within the first year of their detention and thereafter regressing as a result of the uncertainty of future placements.
- 11.** Rathgael was a regional resource and as such often dislocated young people from their community and family. Being admitted from the four health and Social Services Boards and five Education and Library Board areas, although there was financial assistance available it was difficult for families outside the greater Belfast area to visit Rathgael on a regular basis. This also meant that young people going on home leave had to travel long distances on their own. At no time in the Centre's history was there a direct bus service to the Rathgael Road.
- 12.** My impression was that there was often reluctance on behalf of the Magistrate to commit young people to Training Schools but they were afforded no other option. In real terms, the Training School was the only option. Few specialized units were being developed in Northern Ireland and child and adolescent psychiatry was totally inadequate. The substantive response to this was the

separation of care and justice children as recommended in the Black Report in 1979⁴ and fully implemented through the Children's Order (NI) 1995⁵.

- 13.** On reflection, a large proportion of young people should never have been sent to a Training School. To create a regime to adequately manage care, school refusers and juvenile offenders was unrealistic. Each group demanded a unique set of skills and approaches. Other jurisdictions within the UK had recognised this issue some years previously⁶ and had provided alternative care arrangements for young people depending on their needs. As a result of the relatively smaller number of complex cases in Northern Ireland, it was difficult and expensive to create a series of specialised and specific units of the type that were available in the other jurisdictions. I believe the Training Schools were the perceived solution, although the specialised units in England were available young people in Northern Ireland as discussed in paragraph 15 below.
- 14.** The 1969 legislation, although it didn't tamper with the criminal age of responsibility, did ensure that all children aged 14 years and under, would be dealt with in a Care Court. Additionally, Scotland brought all children to the Children's Panel, a non-court environment of professionals and significant people in the young person's life. I am of the opinion that Rathgael in particular endeavoured to learn from the developments within Community Homes. For example, I recall that staff were encouraged to go to them on placement during their training. Following the Children and Young Persons Act 1969, Approved Schools in England and Wales were replaced by Community Homes, with responsibility devolved to local councils.
- 15.** These alternative care arrangements in England, such as David Lewis Centre (a centre for those with epilepsy), Cotswold, Pepper Harrow and the Ayeclyff Centre in Darlington were available to those young people in Northern Ireland who had been assessed as requiring specialist treatment. These placements

⁴ SPT-14942 - 15088

⁵ Exhibit 3 - The Children (Northern Ireland) Order 1995
(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisi/1995/755/contents/made>)

⁶ Exhibit 4 - Children and Young Persons Act (England and Wales) 1969
(<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1969/54>)

were fully funded by the NIO. For example, HIA 172 was one of the few young people who benefitted from being sent to specialist units in England. We recognised that this was an extreme measure and the decision to move children from Northern Ireland was not taken lightly.

The Ethos and Culture of the School

16. My experience of Rathgael was a child-centred establishment long before “Child Centred Practice” was recognized as a desirable approach in working with children and young people. Staff were generally very conscious of the background and history of the individual young person and how vulnerable they were. Many young people had multiple placements prior to their admission to Rathgael having been admitted following a further breakdown in their personal life. It would be true to say that no child would have willingly chosen to come to Rathgael although many knew that there was no other option. It wasn't until the 1980s that specific social work practice with children and young people was recognized as a specialism. The system finally recognised that children and young people were not ‘problem children but children with problems’. The separation of care and justice and a child-centred approach we had been canvassing for over a number of years came only became a reality in 2000 with the establishment of the Juvenile Justice Board Custodial Development Services.

Services provided at Rathgael

17. I also note the description of the services provided at Rathgael to young people as set out in paragraphs 18 – 39 of Mr. Campbell's statement. I wish to add the following. A small percentage of staff felt that their only approach, especially with the senior boys, was to be “macho”; this resulted in a more regimented approach, with an emphasis on physical activity and a highly competitive regime. Over time this was replaced by a more relational approach to working with the young people, and the introduction of marks and the setting of short term goals.
18. Paragraphs 27 - 31 of Mr Whyte's statement covers the support structure available to the young people at Rathgael. Further to this, Chaplains were very

much members of the Rathgael Community and developed greatly over the years. As well as conducting regular Assemblies, they provided Pastoral Care to both young people and staff alike. This met the statutory requirement set out in section 31 of the Training School Rules.⁷

Education

- 19.** I note from their statements that some Applicants (for example, HIA172 and HIA198) are critical of the standard of education provided at Rathgael. HIA 172 was admitted at the age of [REDACTED], which would assume that he had basic English and Math's on admission. His comments would also infer that he returned from [REDACTED] unable to read and write, which in my opinion is difficult to comprehend. HIA198's recollection of Shamrock does not align with my experience – staff to pupil ratios were low and individual teaching plans were developed and followed. Additional activities such as colouring in, crosswords and television would have also been part of the normal routine. . Mr Whyte's statement at paragraphs 19 - 26 also discusses provision of education at Rathgael.
- 20.** Further to that, high ability young people, mostly Care residents, attended local schools in the Bangor area, e.g. Gransha High and Bangor Girls High School, to allow them to continue mainstream education and obtain qualifications. The individual's parent school would have linked with the donor school to ensure continuity of education.
- 21.** With regards to school refusers, I am of the opinion that Rathgael introduced many to a positive education experience for the first time, introducing them to a school routine and afforded them an opportunity to progress with their own personal development. It must be stated that many of the young people had been admitted having been excluded from school or having a negative experience of education, some of whom were unable to read or write. Assessments will show that many were admitted with low attainments, many of which were related to absenteeism as opposed to intelligence levels. The older

⁷ SPT-80001 - 80062

young people were able to follow vocational training courses and many achieved City and Guilds qualifications in a range of subjects, painting and decorating, motor engineering, horticulture, catering and metal work: for example HIA 400. This greatly improved their employability on discharge from Rathgael and ready access to work experience placements enabled staff to refer young people to local employment schemes such as Youth Training Programmes and Youth Community Programmes. Many young people were not accepted by their home school with some choosing to return to Rathgael as day-pupils.

Medical and Dental Services

- 22.** From reading the statements of the Applicants, I note that there are criticisms in relation to the medical and dental care provided at Rathgael: for example HIA436 and HIA503. This was not my experience of how these services worked. In terms of medical services provided in Rathgael and further to the information provided at paragraphs 32 of Mr. Whyte's statement, we provided comprehensive medical and dental services to all young people in Rathgael.
- 23.** There was a fully qualified medical department consisting of visiting Medical Officers and a Dentist, a Matron and a number of nurses. When the girls transferred from Whiteabbey to Rathgael in 1985, a female doctor was also appointed.
- 24.** Daily visits to sick bay were organised and treatment given. There was an inpatient facility until the late 1980s when it was replaced with care being providing in the residential units by visiting nursing staff. In my opinion the medical services provided in Rathgael were outstanding and the staff were professional and caring and dealt with a high level of remedial medical care as a result of medical issues having been neglected prior to admission.
- 25.** The medical centre / sick bay consisted of:
 - i. A dedicated medical room with an examination couch, equipped medical cabinets and desk;

- ii. A dental suite;
- iii. Two small inpatient wards;
- iv. Sleep-in facility for medical staff.

26. The daily routine would be:

- i. Young people request a visit to sick bay at breakfast time;
- ii. Permitted to go to sick accompanied or on their own depending on the circumstances;
- iii. Times for attendance were allocated to units / sections of the centre;
- iv. Nursing staff would visit the Fox Lodge and Shamrock Units daily;
- v. Doctors would visit the centre on Tuesday and Thursday mornings;
- vi. Routine chest x-rays were carried out at Bangor Hospital;
- vii. Referrals were made to hospital in the normal way and young people were accompanied to outpatient appointments;
- viii. The visiting dentist came two mornings a week;
- ix. Visiting psychiatrist came weekly and APRU had a constant presence on site;
- x. All of these arrangements were subject to regular inspections⁸ by SSI and the Department of Health.

27. In relation to the provision of dental services at Rathgael, I recall there being discussion of removing in-house dental care but contrary to Mr. Campbell's recollection at paragraph 32, I do not recall this happening and am of the view that the services continued in-house until the school's closure in 2002.

⁸ RGL-23716 - 23719

Staffing and personnel aspects

- 28.** I have read and noted the comments at paragraphs 35 - 38 in Mr. Whyte's statement. Many staff would have transferred from Malone to Rathgael, many of whom had been appointed in preparation for the move. All senior staff in the school in those early days came from a teaching background, and the house staff from children's homes and positions in the youth work sector, with some former RUC officers, army, navy and prison officers.
- 29.** Working with some of the most disturbed and troubled individuals in Northern Ireland was demanding in so many ways with both verbal and physical assaults on staff not uncommon. Some staff dealt with this better than others but professionally their task was to deal with such behaviours and explore ways to modify and prevent the behaviour being repeated. An indicator of staff stress was the high level of staff sickness at particular times in the life of the Centre. To further monitor staff sickness and to explore ways of reducing stress, particularly in relation to the integration of Whiteabbey and Rathgael, a group was established by the Management Board on 3 January 1984⁹. This provides an insight to the levels of staff stress at the time.
- 30.** Extracts from Board minutes over the years¹⁰ clearly demonstrate that staff were regularly subject to assault by young people. Few reported these assaults to police and chose to deal with it as an internal matter in line with the internal disciplinary policy.

Transfer of Girls from Whiteabbey¹¹

- 31.** The Board agreed that the amalgamation of Rathgael and Whiteabbey would take effect by 3 June 1985. Personally I recall working from Whiteabbey School on a weekly basis to negotiate the placement of as many girls as possible before the planned transfer. The objective of this was to minimize the number of girls having to be resettled in the new environment of the Rathgael site. Ideally the courts would have had the opportunity to refer girls directly to

⁹ 1984 Management board minutes

¹⁰ RGL-22790 – 22797

¹¹ Exhibit 5 - Rathgael and Whiteabbey Schools Management Board – Amalgamation of Rathgael and Whiteabbey Schools – May 1985

Rathgael during the transition period. Unfortunately, a fire in March 1985 accelerated this process thus preventing us following our agreed transition strategy. As a result girls and staff were moved on mass from Whiteabbey to Rathgael shortly after. This resulted in a nervousness that translated into resentment amongst some Rathgael and Whiteabbey staff. It also meant that we were not as well prepared for taking in girls as we had hoped to be. However, Whiteabbey staff transferred to Rathgael at the same time as the girls so there was no deficit of knowledge, skills or experience. Over time, however, any issues that did exist were resolved as staff and girls settled and the male young people adjusted to the changes the girls brought with them.

- 32.** Facilities specific to the requirements of girls, such as mother and baby support, were transferred from Whiteabbey and subsequently developed by the Eastside Project. Existing initiatives, such as the Community Services Programme, were extended to include the girls.
- 33.** Although the system had to respond to a premature decamping from Whiteabbey because of the fire, I am of the opinion that the girls were well taken care of.

Absconding

- 34.** This is discussed in paragraphs 52 – 55 of Mr. Whyte's statement. This was and continues to be a complex issue. Often absconding was related to a child's response to routine and mundane matters, some of which may have been external to Rathgael, e.g. a demand to see a family member in hospital not being immediately met, withdrawal of weekend home leave as a result of bad behaviour, or exclusion from a particular event. At the same time I acknowledge that some residents were running away because of personally significant events that took place outside or inside the Training School environment, e.g. being bullied by other residents and perceived mistreatment.
- 35.** The issue of absconding from Rathgael was taken seriously. APRU was commissioned to carry out a review in 1991¹². The resulting report was critical

¹² Exhibit 6 - 1991 APRU report on absconding at Rathgael

of the fact that there were no robust arrangements in place for monitoring absconding. A Monitoring Group was established, the terms of reference for which was to monitor, understand and reduce absconding behaviour¹³. There were also follow-up reports produced by APRU in 1992¹⁴ and 1993¹⁵. The conclusions in the 1992 follow-up evaluation report state at page 26 that, *“The number of absconders and number of absconding’s in the Rathgael Centre has declined significantly in both absolute and proportionate terms. The number of absconders is reduced by 37%; the number of abscondings is reduced by 60%. This is attributable to the strategic management approach implemented by Senior Management. Given the inherent unpredictability and fluctuating nature of absconding the difficulty in sustaining this reduction should not be underestimated.”* The follow-up APRU report¹⁶ in November 1992, from page 9 summarises the Strategies which had been active since March / April 1992.

- 36.** Unfortunately, the first six months of 1993 saw an increase in the number of absconders to those levels seen in 1991. Some of this increase may have been due to the fact that admissions during that period in 1993 were more than 25% higher than in 1991 and 1992. APRU concluded that *“an increase in absconding’s would have been expected in 1993”*.

Secure Accommodation

- 37.** I note from some of the Applicants’ statements that they are critical of the facilities provided in the secure accommodation at Rathgael. Shamrock House and Fox Lodge were designed for the care of the most disturbed individuals in Rathgael with the aim of integrating the young people back into the parent children’s home or mainstream school. Key to attaining this objective was the ability to work innovatively as possible within the existing legislation.

¹³ Exhibit 7 - Appendix 2, Absconding behaviours in the Rathgael centre – a follow up evaluation – 5 February 1993

¹⁴ Exhibit 8 - 1992 APRU follow up evaluation report on absconding at Rathgael

¹⁵ Exhibit 9 - 1993 APRU follow up evaluation report on absconding at Rathgael

¹⁶ Exhibit 8 - 1992 APRU follow up evaluation report on absconding at Rathgael

- 38.** Shamrock House was a converted staff maisonette and a unit. It and Fox Lodge were self-contained with its own classroom, kitchen, bedrooms and recreation room. For the first time, specific colours were used to decorate the accommodation to help create a calm environment for the young people. There was also a strict anti-ligature policy operated within the secure accommodation, which meant that certain equipment had to be used, the bedrooms in particular had to be kitted out in a certain way and items such as sheets were not permitted.
- 39.** Information in relation to Shamrock House is provided at RGL-102743 – RGL-102748 and the SSI carried out an inspection of Shamrock House specifically in 1992¹⁷. The main recommendations were in relation to record keeping, the lack of a complaints procedure and the poor state of some of the bedroom equipment. There was no criticism of the level of care afforded to the young people, nor of the use of the time-out room. Management at that time indicated that they were committed to introducing an Independent Representative Scheme and early discussions with NIACRO had already taken place in relation to this. The IR Scheme was implemented shortly after and provided a further opportunity for young people and parents to have access to an external scrutiny body. This also provided a further assurance mechanism to senior management and the Board as any issues raised through the IR scheme would have been highlighted.
- 40.** Fox Lodge had a secure play area at the rear of the unit. This area had basketball nets fixed to the wall and the area marked out for padder tennis. There was also an attempt to grow flowers and vegetables. Young people were encouraged to use this area and in good weather it would have been used for visits. A pool table was provided in most of the units and was well used and a good activity for young people and staff to interact. Board games were popular and well used as was the early computer games. (see RGL-31991 Use of Time Out).

¹⁷ RGL-23798 – RGL-23833

41. Shamrock House also had a play area that was a fenced area at the side of the Unit. It offered similar activities to those which were available in Fox Lodge (see RGL-31993).
42. In his oral evidence HIA 172 suggested that a lack of structured activities in the secure accommodation, in particular, resulted in friction developing between young people. The very design of Rathgael illustrates that it had an emphasis on sport and physical activity through the provision of a gym, swimming pool, playing fields and the later addition of a sports hall. Stimulation and keeping the young people busy was built into the ethos of a school. This ethos was very much in practice in the secure accommodation. Like the other units facilities such as table tennis, pool tables, television and reading materials were available to the young people as well as use of the gym, swimming pool and playing fields.
43. I recall many examples of young people talking to their House Staff / Key Workers, and of situations when staff were skilfully able to de-escalate situations. Young people were very aware that they, by their behaviour dictated the length of their stay in Rathgael, with the majority taking advantage of their stay, being released and not returning.

Specification of Time-out Rooms

44. Time-out rooms were not used to punish young people. Much of the best practice in relation to providing secure accommodation was being developed within psychiatric care and the prison service. Policies, procedures and the room had to be designed to reduce the risk of the young people harming themselves or others:
 - Beds were constructed in stainless steel and aluminium and fixed to the floor, to prevent the bed from being used as a weapon or barricade.
 - A heavy duty, flame retardant mattress with concealed stitching and constructed from washable material, was provided. I can understand why

the young people refer to it as a gym mat¹⁸ but in reality these were safety mattresses designed to ensure the young people could not use them to self-harm and the materials used reduced the risk of cross infection as they could be easily cleaned.

- Bed sheets were dangerous, depending on the presenting problems, so blankets were used as there was less chance of them being used as a ligature.
- The room would sometimes have equipment, and books, comics and magazines were permitted.
- Some toiletries were safer than others and were therefore permitted but no glass was permitted.
- Cassette tapes were safer than CDs and these were therefore permitted.
- Clothing would be checked and those items regarded as high risk were prohibited.

A typical day in the life of a young person at Rathgael

45. This is mentioned at paragraphs 23 – 26 in Mr. Whyte's statement. The day would consist of the following:

Monday to Friday (School Year)

7.30 Young people awakened / washed and showered / dressed
 8.00 Breakfast
 8.30 Morning jobs and free-time before school
 9.00 Assembly
 9.15 School / workshops
 10.45 Break time – young people returned to units (Stand Easy)
 11.15 School / workshops
 12.30 Lunch (main meal of the day)
 2.00 School / workshops
 4.00 Return to units – free time – games and hobbies
 5.00 Tea
 6.30 House cleaning and evening programme (Evening groups, TV, pool, general recreation)
 9.00 Bed time

¹⁸ Exhibit 10 - Specification of the Safety Mattress (internet search)

46. Mentions Meeting were held on Friday afternoons during which marks were allocated to individual young people and House Points awarded for good behaviour or taken away for inappropriate behaviour (cross reference with paragraphs 48 – 49 of Mr. Whyte’s statement). Individual marks were allocated to young people for good behaviour in class and unit, performance in school and workshop, house cleaning and tidiness of rooms. House points would have been awarded for sporting activities such as five-a-side football, snooker and table tennis.
47. The Mentions meetings were attended by all young people and staff on duty held in the Common Rooms of each Unit. This is what the disciplinary system was based on and it was very much part of the culture - all young people were made aware of this as part of their introduction to Rathgael. This system developed over the years resulting in a more assessment profiling approach and ultimately became the bronze, silver and gold awards scheme.
48. The award of points allowed a young person full pocket money, full home leave and full participation in sporting and weekend activities. There was also the recognition of their good behaviour that was afforded by being awarded individual and house points in the first place.
49. If a young person ended up in a negative points situation this could have resulted in sanctions such as reduction of pocket money, withdrawal of home leave, withdrawal of sporting activity and early beds.
50. The Mentions meetings were also used to discuss home leave and activities for the forthcoming weekend. They generally afforded an opportunity for young people and staff to discuss routine matters within the Unit.
51. There was a less formal time-table during holiday times. Lengthy leave periods for young people would have been negotiated. I recall that leave would have been granted to those assessed as being eligible and with a suitable home base. These would have been in two-week blocks thus reducing the risk of returning to inappropriate behaviour. This leave would have been supervised and monitored by house staff using home visits and was part of the overall assessment of a young person’s progress. For those periods outside term time

but spent in Rathgael a full programme would have been organised including 5-aside football, swimming pool and outings. The Runkerry Centre¹⁹ would have been used extensively, particularly over the summer period by the young people. Minibuses were available to all units, booked in advance.

- 52.** My recollection is that Rathgael was well run and that discipline was not a major problem on a daily basis. The key to this was keeping residents busy and stimulated, especially outside school hours, for example sport was an important part of daily routine with football, swimming and sports hall activities being used as well as inter-house challenges, sports days, raft races, padder tennis, etc.

Saturday

8.30	Young people awakened / washed and showered / dressed
9.00	Breakfast
10.00	House and Dorm cleaning
11.00	Free time
1.00	Lunch (main meal of the day)
Afternoon	Sports or outings
5.00	Tea
Evenings	Usually free for television and hobbies
9.00-10.00	Bed time

Sundays

- 53.** As above plus:

10.30	Church parade – walked to Bangor Abbey / St Andrews Presbyterian / Queen's Parade Methodist
2.00	Family visits / in House Units
4.00	Sunday Service / Sunday School / Conducted by Chaplains

- 54.** In terms of staffing, the following arrangements were in place:

Residential staff (qualified)

Early shift	7.00/7.30 – 2.00
Late shift	2.00 – 10.30 / 11.00

The arrangements always allowed for a handover period between early and late shift residential staff.

¹⁹ Exhibit 11 - Runkerry Centre - brochure

Occasionally, Residential staff would have also slept in the 'link rooms' when required, for example when a child needed additional supervision during the night, perhaps because they were upset, or possibly at risk of self-harming.

Night supervisors

Awake all night 10.30 – 7.00/7.30

Night supervisors were not qualified but they were trained to supervise the young people at night to ensure their safety. Regular checks were carried out on each dorm, with particular attention given to those requiring special attention. Additional sleep-in staff were available in the event of an emergency and senior staff were on call.

- 55.** Teaching and ancillary staff also worked in the residential Units in the evenings, weekends and holiday periods.
- 56.** In addition to the routine daily life at Rathgael, special occasions such as birthdays were celebrated as well as Christmas, Easter, Halloween and school concerts.
- 57.** Day to day life was recorded and administered through the maintenance of daily and night sheets for each unit. These were filled out by unit staff and covered all aspects of life such as numbers in Unit, names of absconders, court appearances, medical appointments, visits, work placements, etc. The Friday daily sheets would also have covered weekend home leave arrangements.
- 58.** Night sheets detailed who was on duty, what young person was in each room, issues that required observation during the night, for example those who had been ill during the day or fretful. These would have been filled in at different times during the night and then the relevant issues discussed with day staff when they came on duty.
- 59.** Incidents sheets were filled in separately by residential or teaching staff detailing the incident, those involved and the action to be taken (e.g. removal of marks or a period of time-out in their bedrooms or to go for a walk with a member of staff). Depending on the seriousness of the issue, an incident could be brought to the attention of the relevant senior staff. Other documents

personal to the individual young person were kept on file – these would have detailed issues such as educational attainment, medical records, home visits and visits by family, excursions and review reports.

Rathgael Management Board

- 60.** Mr. Whyte's statement describes the relationship between Rathgael and the NIO at paragraph 40. Further to this I wish to add that the relationship between the Management Board and the NIO and with other training Schools was good – it had a familiarity and openness that enabled positive working whilst allowing challenges to be made when appropriate. It is my opinion that the Training Schools and NIO had ready access to advice from SWAG, and then SSI when required and that contact was frequent. The progress and innovative practice that we embarked on after the Black Report was published in 1979 was encouraged and supported by the NIO. The Eastside Project with its supported housing scheme was an example of this innovative approach to exploring alternatives to custody.
- 61.** A further example of providing an alternative to custody to the Courts is the Portcamman Project²⁰ - this was available to young probationers and afforded them with opportunities to address their offending behaviour outside the custody environment by increasing self-confidence and self-esteem, improving social and life skills, providing exciting and satisfying physical challenges, individual and group counselling, and introducing new vocational and educational skills.
- 62.** Further to paragraphs 43 – 46 of Mr. Whyte's statement, the Management Board was appointed by the Secretary of State for a three year term, with a maximum of two terms allowed. From recollection, the board consisted of representatives from a cross section of the community, including clergymen, councillors, trade union representatives and independent individuals with an interest in youth care.

²⁰ Exhibit 11 - Runkerry Centre brochure

- 63.** The Board met monthly with the exception of July and August and had three sub-committees – Finance, Staff and Review. Board members visited the school on a monthly basis, recording their visits, the departments visited and who they spoke to²¹. These were monitoring visits that allowed Board members the opportunity to observe first hand different aspects of life at Rathgael. They often visited the classrooms and interacted with both pupils and teachers; the residential units speaking to young people and staff; and ancillary areas such as the kitchen and sickbay to ensure conditions were fit for purpose. The visits would also have included a tour of the grounds and major facilities such as sports hall, swimming pool and playing fields. Some of these visits may have taken place in the evening to allow Board members time to interact with the young people and staff outside routine school hours. Many Board members would have attended special events, such as Sports Day, school concerts and Carol Service.
- 64.** The Board had oversight of the implementation of innovative thinking. Mr. Whyte's statement already discusses the Community Service Programme at paragraphs 32 - 35. Further examples include the participation by young people in the Duke of Edinburgh Awards scheme, Circus Skills, Mourne Ramble Scheme, organised by the Community Relations Branch of the RUC, Princes Trust (Employment Programme) and activities at the Runkerry Outdoor Pursuit Centre. These were available to all young people in Rathgael and other Training Schools and fully funded by the NIO.

Review Committee

- 65.** I was Secretary to the Review Committee from 1978 to 1995. The Review Committee met monthly and discussed all committals and complied with Rules 46 – 49 of the Training School Rules 1952²². All young people had to be reviewed after a year and then on a six-monthly basis thereafter. Detailed reports were submitted to Board Members in advance of the meeting from teachers, care staff, psychological staff and medical staff if required.

²¹ Exhibit 12 – Monthly visits by board members 1/3/1968 – 5/6/1989

²² SPT-80001 - 80062

Residential workers / key workers would present the report and take questions from Committee members. Young People were aware of the process and contributed to their reports; parents and carers would have been very much part of the process, especially if release was being recommended. This process developed over the years and would have mirrored the Looked After Children (LAC) Review Process. Recommendations were part of the report and my recollection is that these recommendations were generally accepted with few exceptions. The Committee would set a date for discharge on license which would result in the young person being referred to the aftercare / community care team, also based in Rathgael.

Bullying

- 66.** Bullying in various forms, including that of a sexual nature, was becoming a recognisable issue in Training Schools and Children's Homes from the early 1980s when staff increasingly started to question certain behaviours. There was growing recognition that bullying was not acceptable and could not be tolerated when detected. Staff were to be more observant and trained to detect such behaviours and to immediately challenge the individuals involved. When this behaviour was detected it was often dealt with by simply transferring one child to another unit and those responsible being immediately reprimanded and advised of the consequences of repeat behaviour, for example loss of points, exclusion from activities, reduction in pocket money. Name-calling was by far the most damaging aspect of bullying in the eyes of the young people but the most difficult to control and detect. It is interesting to note that the 1991 APRU report²³ on absconding makes no reference to bullying as a presenting problem. This may be taken to indicate that bullying was not seen to be a significant issue at the time.

Self-harming

- 67.** Self-harming was a behaviour that manifested itself initially with some girls in residential care, with some boys then mimicking some of these behaviours but

²³ Exhibit 6 - 1991 APRU report on absconding at Rathgael

never to the same extent. This demanded specialist training for teaching and residential staff. In the case of Training Schools this was provided by the APRU. The APRU also worked one-to-one with young people who were presenting with any form of self-harm behaviour. This would have manifested itself in numerous ways and Rathgael staff, including medical staff, were trained to detect and report them. Often, self-harming resulted in a transfer to one of the two specialist Units, Shamrock House or Fox Lodge, where such behaviour was more easily monitored and managed. APRU worked with individuals in these units on a daily basis and supported staff in respect of best practice in the treatment of these young people.

68. Given the profile of children being admitted to Training School, a high proportion had been abused prior to admission and their behaviour was often very much associated with that hurt and their sense of low self-worth and even lower self-esteem.
69. As the Key Worker model developed, there were regular opportunities to address the individual needs of young people. Also, it would not be unusual in the care environment for other young people to detect and report incidents of bullying and other behaviours.
70. VOYPIC, the Voice of Young People in Care²⁴ in Northern Ireland was established in July 1993 and other peer support groups would have been used to address this emerging issue and other issues relating to young people in care. These support mechanisms formed part of the wider after care structure available to the young people.

Aftercare

71. The 1952 Training School Rules²⁵ were innovative in that they gave priority to “*placing out and aftercare*” as integral to the care of young people (Rules 46 – 49). The Rules gave the Management Board the power to place out children on license to schools, suitable employment and to seek appropriate

²⁴ Exhibit 13 - <http://www.voypic.org/about-us>

²⁵ SPT-80001 - 80062

accommodation. It also ensured that adequate arrangements were made for the aftercare of every pupil until their license expired and to the appointment of a suitable person to carry his or her aftercare.

- 72.** The Rathgael Board interpreted this by establishing an Aftercare Team which in time evolved into a social work department with a Community Care Strategy with a Community Care Team. This eventually ensured that young people were supported from admission to discharge, for example the appointment of an Intake social worker as part of the Community Care Team. From recollection, the Community Care Team was responsible for the following:
- i. To provide the supervision and support for each young person being released from the Centre, having been introduced to them as early as possible within their stay at Rathgael. This was vital in the individual cases that required placements in residential care, foster care or supported living;
 - ii. To liaise with schools, and negotiate their return when appropriate and to provide support both to the young person and to the school for the duration of their supervision;
 - iii. To arrange employment, work schemes and placements to those beyond school leaving age;
 - iv. To liaise with Social Services and Probation Service in relation to any joint working and/or with the family;
 - v. To provide reports to other agencies in relation to progress whilst under supervision; and
 - vi. To provide court reports in the event of reoffending or other appearances before the juvenile bench.
- 73.** Young people were allocated to a member of the Community Care Team for the duration of their license and supervision on release. The purpose of this was to provide a stable transition from care to the community and fulfilled the statutory requirement to ensure the young person could see out the balance of their sentence under supervision in the community. This was often done on a

geographical basis given the regional nature of Rathgael. An important part of the social worker's role was to liaise with the appropriate agencies in the home area, for example Social Services, Probation, schools and employment schemes such as Youth Training Programmes and Youth Opportunity Programmes.

74. Returning young people to the community was fraught with a multitude of problems. A return to a school in the local area was sometimes impossible because of resistance by the school or because appropriate accommodation at home or in board care was not an option.
75. By November 1990 the Board recognised that there were issues in relation to young people due for discharge from Rathgael having no home base resulting in them being retained beyond their discharge date. I carried out a detailed analysis and evaluation of the issue as detailed in a paper entitled 'Young people with no Home Base'²⁶. This was another indication that young people in Training Schools were not being afforded the same level of care that their age and circumstances demanded.
76. Rathgael, in partnership with Barnardo's, developed a Professional Fostering Scheme to enable us to place out young people who had no home base and required specialist placements. This was fully funded by the NIO.

Eastside Project²⁷

77. The Eastside Project was one of the few practical outworkings of the Black Report 1979. Chapter 2 of the Black report 1979 states "*there must be some formal framework through which the various agencies can come together to review and coordinate their activities*". I can recall a discussion with Mr. R Sterling (NIO), Mr. W Donnell (SSI) and Mr. W Pugh (NIO) with regards to the development of a community based alternative to training school. I was encouraged to develop this model and to seek a partner to take this initiative forward.

²⁶ Exhibit 14 - Young People With No Home Base – L Conway – November 1990

²⁷ Exhibit 15 - The Eastside Story

78. The former East Belfast Community Unit of Management (Social Services) had a sizeable number of young people in Rathgael in the early 1980s, thus making them a suitable partner. The project in its pilot form was opened in 1982 and continues to operate today as part of the adolescent work with the Belfast Trust. It provides the coordination function envisaged in the Black Report and places young people aged 14-17 from Training Schools back to their community with maximum individual and family support from the statutory and voluntary agencies. Specifically, the Eastside Project was developed to enable young people to function as a responsible person by:
- i. Increasing self-esteem and discovering personal strengths;
 - ii. Developing personal interests and acquiring practical skills to help the young person find a place in their community;
 - iii. Helping with job / work experience placements;
 - iv. Encouraging community participation and service;
 - v. And offering the necessary casework support to the family.

Allegations of Abuse

68. Paragraphs 72 – 75 in Mr. Whyte’s statement describe the policy in relation to how allegations of abuse were handled. I can confirm that the policy he has outlined was in place and implemented. All incidents were reported to the police, the NIO and the staff member was suspended pending investigation. Once the police and social services were formally involved, they would take the lead and advise Rathgael staff in relation to appropriate support. Much of this was implemented as lessons learned following the Hughes Inquiry into Kincora Children’s Home²⁸, and other significant child protection investigations such as Cleveland²⁹ and Orkney³⁰.

²⁸ Exhibit 16 – Hughes Report (<http://www.childrenwebmag.com/child-care-history-policy/the-hughes-report-chaired-by-judge-william-h-hughes>)

²⁹ Exhibit 17 – Cleveland investigation report

(<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1834212/pdf/bmj00295-0046.pdf>)

79. In more recent years, prospective staff would have been subject to pre-employment checks through PECS, POCVA or Access(NI) depending on when their employment started. Prior to that, and in line with good practice, references would have been demanded as part of the recruitment exercise and followed up to check the credentials and suitability of the individual applying for a post.
80. Once employed, staff were fully trained and made fully aware of their responsibilities and of what would constitute behaviour that would result in disciplinary procedure, police investigation and, potentially prosecution.
81. I personally did not witness any incident of physical, sexual or emotional abuse during the period of my extensive service at Rathgael, and nor did any young person or staff member report any allegation to me. Had I been aware of any abusive behaviour I have no doubt that I would have challenged the perpetrator and/or reported the matter to the appropriate authority. I would expect that the vast majority of my colleagues would have taken the same approach had the occasion arisen.
82. Subject only to what is stated below in the next paragraph, I was not aware of any alleged incidents of physical, sexual or emotional abuse at the time they are alleged to have taken place. If such abuse did occur, it was inconsistent with the clearly understood ethos and philosophy of the organisation, and it would have constituted a disciplinary and criminal offence and I believe it would not have been tolerated.
83. I became aware of some allegations of abuse in December 1998 through a police investigation that resulted from a letter from RG 128 , [REDACTED] [REDACTED], to Dr McCoy. Although I do not recall the detail, I imagine the issue was raised with me thorough the NIO. I recall the investigation resulted in a no prosecution decision by the PPS. There was, however, a multi-disciplinary Strategy Planning Group established, involving the Ulster Community Health Trust, Rathgael, NIO, SSI and the RUC. I played a key role

³⁰ Exhibit 18 – Orkney investigation report
(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/235702/0195.pdf)

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in this. This Group was established to respond to the issues raised and to make recommendations for the improvement of practice in relation to the care of young people. See also SPT-2796 – SPT-2797. It should also be stated that the Ulster Community Health and Community Trust, were by that time, our partners on the Rathgael site, and responsible for the Care Units on the campus.



23rd November 2015

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