

**HIA** Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry

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This is the report of the Acknowledgement Forum. The content is agreed by the four members of the Forum, Beverley Clarke, Norah Gibbons, Dave Marshall, and Tom Shaw.



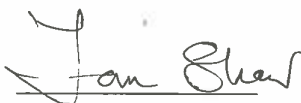
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## **Chapter 1: The Acknowledgement Forum**

### **Introduction**

- 1 The appointment of the Chairman of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (hereafter the Inquiry) and the four members of the Acknowledgement Forum (hereafter the Forum) was announced by the First Minister and deputy First Minister on 31 May 2012.

### **The Purpose of the Forum**

- 2 The principal purpose of the Forum was to allow applicants to talk informally and in whatever detail they chose about their experiences when placed in designated residential childcare establishments in Northern Ireland and, in doing so, to feel confident that what they experienced was being acknowledged and listened to in good faith. The process did not involve investigative questioning but the Forum offered to assist applicants in describing their experiences by putting some questions to them. The Forum meeting provided applicants with the time and the opportunity to be heard without challenge or disbelief – an element of their experience as children in designated establishments that may have been denied to them.

### **Arrangements for Applicants Meeting with the Forum**

- 3 To ensure everyone had an appropriate context in which to recount their personal experiences in what, for many, could be a difficult and painful process, a number of carefully considered steps and arrangements were put in place.
  - Following receipt of the applications by the Inquiry, each person was contacted by one of the Inquiry's Witness Support Officers (WSOs) who arranged an appointment in a way that was suitable for that person. The WSOs ensured that practical arrangements regarding travel to the Inquiry's premises – and overnight accommodation where required – were in place prior to the meeting with the Forum. The WSOs were also able to answer any queries an applicant may have had about the Inquiry, including the Forum process.
  - A letter was sent to each applicant setting out clearly the exact arrangements for the meeting with the Forum. The applicants were told that they could bring with them any papers, correspondence or

photographs relating to their placement(s) in designated establishments in Northern Ireland and all such documents, if they agreed, would be scanned into the Inquiry's records.

- Each applicant who wished to do so could bring a companion with him or her. The companion could be present for the meeting with the Forum or could stay in an adjacent waiting room. Some of those who accompanied applicants chose to leave the premises and come back when contacted by the WSOs or the applicant when the meeting with the Forum had concluded. The choice was in the hands of the applicant. The role of the companion was intended to be a supportive one. By the end of the Forum's work, 86 of the 261 male applicants and 58 of the 166 female applicants had chosen to have a companion present but many attended for their meeting alone. In the event that the companion was also an applicant to the Forum or to the Statutory Inquiry, that person was not allowed to accompany the applicant during the meeting.

**The table that follows contains a summary of this information**

	Male	Female
Accompanied but not during the meeting	38	42
Accompanied during the meeting	86	58
Unaccompanied	137*	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>261</b>	<b>166</b>

\*One applicant's account of his experiences was presented in written form. He is not included in this total.

- 4 Applicants' companions consisted of partners, family members, friends, people giving them specialist support and solicitors.

**Accompanied but not during the meeting with the Forum**

Accompanied but not during the meeting	Male	Female
Partners	10	9
Family members	16	15
Friends	11	17
Support personnel	-	1
Solicitors	1	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>42</b>

**Accompanied during the meeting with the Forum**

<b>Accompanied during the meeting</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
Partners	36	16
Family members	13	19
Friends	8	11
Support personnel	22	10
Solicitors	3	2
Interpreters only	4	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>58</b>

**Reception of Applicants for Meetings with the Forum**

5 The WSOs met the applicants – and any companions – when they arrived for their appointment. They were offered a quiet room to relax in and a welcoming cup of tea or coffee. They were told the names of the Forum members who would meet them. The WSOs made every effort to assist the applicants in settling themselves for the meeting with the Forum members.

**The Arrangements for Forum Meetings**

6 When ready, the applicant was shown into the room where he or she would meet the panel members who would listen to the account of his or her experiences. Generally panel members worked in pairs – a male and a female. In a small number of cases, applicants requested a meeting with one Forum member or with two female or two male panel members; those requests were agreed.

7 Meetings with the Forum did not follow a strict format. As already explained, each meeting was designed to allow the participants to describe their experiences in the way that they chose. At the beginning of each meeting, Forum members welcomed the applicant, outlined the purpose of the meeting, and asked permission to take notes and make a recording of the meeting. Each applicant was assured that he or she could take a break at any time, and was given the opportunity to ask questions of the Forum members. Each participant was also informed of the legal requirement on all citizens in Northern Ireland to report a crime of which they become aware to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). All applicants accepted this and some welcomed the information as reassuring.

## Recording Forum Meetings

- 8 In accordance with the Inquiry's Terms of Reference and the assurance given to applicants at the beginning of their meetings with the Forum, all notes taken during the meetings were destroyed once the details were recorded in the Forum's secure database. It was explained to applicants that the information recorded by the Forum members in its database would be used solely for the purpose of informing the report that the Forum would be required to prepare when the meetings with applicants had concluded. They were also told that the information in the database would be deleted once the Forum's work was complete.
- 9 The design of the database was informed by the model developed by the Ryan Commission for its Confidential Committee. The Forum acknowledges with gratitude the benefits of having access to the expertise and experience of the Confidential Committee.
- 10 Some applicants brought personal papers, files and photographs to support them in their accounts and provide an assurance of the veracity of what they intended to tell the Forum. The originals of those papers and photographs were returned to the applicants either at the end of the meeting or were posted to them afterwards. For those intending to proceed to the Statutory Inquiry the papers and photographs were scanned into a secure database before being returned to applicants.
- 11 Following this, and when the applicants felt ready to proceed, they were invited to talk about their own experiences. In some instances it proved necessary for one of the Forum members to leave the meeting for a time at the applicant's request, for example when the applicant wanted to recount events that caused deep embarrassment or difficulty in the presence of, in some cases, a female and, in others, a male.

## The Duration of Forum Meetings

- 12 All applicants were free to decide how they would proceed with recounting their experiences. Some preferred to answer questions to help them get started while others had prepared exactly what they wished to say and were content to start themselves. People often wanted to know how long their meeting would last. The answer always given was that the meeting would last as long as they needed it to last. The time allocated to them was for them to use as they wished. A review of all the meetings reveals that an hour and a half was the average time taken for a meeting with the

Forum. Some meetings lasted for a shorter period and some for much longer. All meetings proceeded constructively and according to the wishes of the applicant. Occasionally panel members suggested to an applicant that he or she should take a break, for example when he or she became distressed in recounting experiences or was becoming tired. Some availed of that opportunity, others declined saying that they wanted to recount their information as quickly as possible; “to get it over as soon as I can” was the comment of one applicant. Others asked for a break to have a cigarette or requested a comfort break.

- 13 The Forum meetings were focused on the individual and his or her experiences and on no-one else. This required the Forum members to be understanding and acknowledge any distress or upset that arose on the day as painful life experiences were recounted. Forum members reassured applicants that any distress was respected and not unexpected. The Forum members’ concern for the well-being of the applicant was at the heart of the process.

## **The Conclusion of Forum Meetings**

- 14 When the applicants were satisfied they had recounted their experiences as fully as they would like, the meeting ended. In some cases the applicant indicated at that point that he or she still had other experiences in care to recount; when that occurred, an offer was made of a further meeting with the Forum members. Applicants were also told that, as an alternative, they could send additional recollections in writing, in confidence, to the Forum members with whom they had met. When a meeting was clearly at an end, the Forum members thanked the applicant and the applicant’s WSO would come to the room and sit with them and ensure that they had time to relax before leaving to go home. The WSOs ensured that the applicants were aware of the support services that could be accessed – in addition to any they had availed of already. Any questions relating to travel or other expenses incurred in attending the meetings were answered at that time.
- 15 In the week following the applicant’s meetings with the Forum, their WSO, with their prior permission, phoned to ask how they were and to follow up on any queries they may have had or that had arisen since their meetings with the Forum.



## **Acknowledgement of the Age and Health of Applicants**

- 16 The Inquiry related to designated establishments that functioned at some stage during the period from 1922 to 1995. Given that time span, Forum members were alert to both age and health issues that might arise for some applicants. Consequently, priority was given to those whose needs required an early appointment. Inevitably this meant, in practice, that it was not possible to say exactly how long an applicant would have to wait for an appointment. However, Forum members were very conscious of the commitment applicants made when they completed application forms and they worked to see each person as soon as possible. Applicants, for the most part, understood and accepted this.



## **Chapter 2: The People Who Applied**

### **Informing Former Residents about the Inquiry**

- 1 Information about the Inquiry was available from a number of sources including the NI Assembly, the Inquiry itself – through its strategy to ensure that as many former residents as possible were made aware of its work and the ways in which individuals should apply to participate – and widespread coverage in news media, both locally and further afield.

### **The Applicants' Eligibility to Participate in the Inquiry**

- 2 Applications to be included in the Inquiry were received from 533 people. When the applications were reviewed against the Inquiry's Terms of Reference it was found that 32 had been placed in or had attended establishments that were outside the Terms of Reference and so were ineligible for participation. Another seven applications were duplicates of applications already received and 37 applicants later withdrew their applications or their applications were designated as withdrawn by the Inquiry. In the latter case those applicants had:
  - failed to attend on at least three occasions for meetings with the Forum; or
  - failed to respond to numerous attempts by the WSOs to contact them to arrange a meeting with the Forum or Statutory Inquiry or provide requested information.
- 3 The Forum began to meet applicants in October 2012. By November 2014, the Forum members had listened to the experiences of 427 people who had been cared for in designated establishments in Northern Ireland between 1922 and 1995. One applicant's written account was also accepted, bringing the total number to engage with the Forum to 428.

### **The Applicants Who Attended the Forum**

- 4 The great majority of applicants who met the Forum were born in Northern Ireland. Others were born in the Republic of Ireland, England, Scotland, South Africa and the USA. The figures for each country are given in the following table.

Country of birth	Male	Female
Northern Ireland	224	134
Republic of Ireland	15	17
England and Wales	11	10
Scotland	2	2
South Africa	2	-
USA	1	-
Undisclosed	7	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>166</b>

There was a wide age range amongst applicants. The numbers born in each decade varied with the largest numbers coming forward from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. This information is set out in the table below.

Decade of birth	Male	Female	Age in 2012
1920 - 1929	3	1	83+
1930 - 1939	20	13	73+
1940 - 1949	51	37	63+
1950 - 1959	79	56	53+
1960 - 1969	78	39	43+
1970 - 1979	27	17	33+
1980 onwards	4	3	32 or under
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>166</b>	

## Reasons for Coming Forward

- 5 The 427 applicants who engaged directly with the Forum gave one or more reasons for doing so. Two reasons were mentioned more than any others: “to tell my story” and “to record abuse.” Those who said they wanted to tell their story indicated that they wanted to be listened to, to be heard without interruption, challenge or disbelief. “Please listen to all I have to say”, “I’ve waited so long to do this”, “I thought the day would never come” and “I’m so grateful for the opportunity to be heard” were typical of the comments made by applicants. Others said that they wanted to have it on the record that they had been abused, even where they did not want to take the matter any further.

- 6 Other reasons given by both men and women included the wish to help others and help to prevent abuse. Some said they hoped that by coming forward they would both encourage others who had had similar experiences to do so and, where those others were still not able to report their abuse, to give them a sense that what they had experienced was being represented to authority. Almost a fifth of the applicants regarded participation in the Forum as a therapeutic experience and part of the healing process they were engaged in as they strove to deal with their past abusive experiences in residential childcare.
- 7 A small number, around 7%, said that they had been persuaded by others to come forward. Their reluctance to do so of their own volition, they said, reflected a number of factors including their lack of self-confidence, their sense of awkwardness and mistrust in dealing with authority, and their perception that they would not be believed.
- 8 The selection of quotations that follows exemplifies these concerns and other feelings that applicants expressed in coming to the Forum.

### **Males**

“I wanted to meet you and share the burden I’ve carried for so long.”

“This is a dark secret I kept hidden until three years ago. After I had a breakdown I started to talk about it...It’s important that I tell all of my story...I want to be believed.”

“I found it difficult to come to the Forum and made a number of dummy runs...I see the Forum as part of the healing process along with the counselling I’ve been having for four years.”

“I find it very difficult to talk about the sexual abuse I endured, but I need to be heard and believed after a life of denial and rejection.”

“I want to put this nightmare in its place. I just want to get this fucking anger out of me.”

“I feel my abusers have not been dealt with properly and have largely escaped any accountability.”

“I’m really grateful for this opportunity to unburden myself.”

“I believe I have to inform future generations of what happened to child migrants.”

“I want and need to be believed. I have not spoken about my abuse since I left Northern Ireland when I was fourteen.”

“I have waited for a long time for this opportunity to be heard and believed...I want my experiences on the record...I have had serious mental health problems over the years and I believe they’re the result of being abused when I was a child.”

“I saw the HIAI posters and felt I had a duty to back up the testimony of anyone else who’d come forward.”

“I’m not interested in compensation – my interest is to help the children in care today.”

### **Females**

“My prime concern is to ensure that what happened to me couldn’t happen to any other child.”

“I want my story to be told to help future generations.”

“It’s nice to get it off my chest; that’s the most I have ever said to anybody.”

“I want to tell my story but now I want to keep it dead, at the back of my mind, and just get on with my life.”

“At last I’ve got someone to listen to me.”

“I just want to be believed. In the past, people tried to tell but they weren’t listened to.”

“I reported my abuse on a number of occasions but my complaints were ignored.”

“I feel guilty that I did not come forward earlier with information which might have made a difference to someone else.”

“My doctor advised me to talk to the Inquiry as part of his way of getting me to confront the past and deal with it.”

“I was contacted initially some time ago by an ex-resident and I decided to join the action being taken by the group.”

“I’ve been struggling for a long time with whether or not to come to the Inquiry but I finally agreed...I want to speak on my behalf and on behalf of the others that I saw being abused...I want to tell all I can without being challenged.”

“I feel very wronged that my culture and heritage were stolen from me when I was sent to Australia.”

“I feel very strongly that the most disadvantaged children were not cared for appropriately.”

- 9 The reasons for coming forward are summarised in the table below.

Reasons	Male	Female	Total
To tell my story	150	104	254
To record abuse	146	83	229
To help others/prevent abuse	57	30	87
Therapy (part of the healing process)	56	27	83
Sense of obligation	33	12	45
Persuaded by others	20	11	31
Other reasons	27	13	40
<b>Total</b>			<b>769</b>

**Note:** Many applicants gave more than one reason for coming forward, hence the figures above when totalled exceed the number of applicants.

## Location of Meetings with Applicants

- 10 Applicants came from all over the United Kingdom and beyond to attend the Forum: 64 per cent from NI, 16 per cent from England and Wales, 1 per cent from Scotland, 5 per cent from the Republic of Ireland, 1 per cent from other parts of Europe, 12 per cent from Australia, and 1 per cent from the rest of the world. Some, for reasons of health or factors such as distance from the Inquiry's premises, were heard in or close to their home.

Location of Forum meetings	Applicants
<b>HIAI premises</b>	278
<b>Derry/Londonderry</b>	61
<b>Other places in NI</b> (1 care facility, 1 hospice and 1 health facility)	3
<b>Applicant's or relative's home</b> (including 8 in England and 1 in Wales)	14
<b>Perth, Australia</b>	29
<b>Melbourne, Australia</b>	4
<b>Brisbane, Australia</b>	2
<b>Republic of Ireland</b>	4
<b>England</b>	16
<b>Scotland</b>	1
<b>Prison, including 4 in England</b>	11
<b>Secure NHS hospital in England</b>	1

Location of Forum meetings	Applicants
Phone calls to Canada, USA and Australia	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>427*</b>

\* **Note:** As mentioned earlier, one applicant’s written account of his experiences in childcare in NI was also accepted by the Inquiry bringing the total number of applicants who met or had contact with the Forum to 428. That total is used throughout the remainder of this report.

## Social and Demographic Profile of the Applicants

- 11 This section of the report provides an overview of the personal details of 262 male and 166 female applicants who gave information to the Forum. The demographic information compiled in the following section was provided by the applicants in regard to their pre-admission social and familial circumstances. Some applicants had no knowledge of their parents or chose not to speak of them at their meeting with the Forum. Information on fathers was most likely to be missing.
- 12 The table that follows shows that the majority of applicants understood that their parents were married at the time of their birth. The next largest group were born to single mothers, who often were unable to rear their children alone, whether because of the stigma attached to single parents or because of a lack of resources.

A total of 65 applicants had no knowledge concerning their parent’s/parents’ marital status or chose not to speak about that.

Marital status of parents	Male	Female	Total
<b>Married</b>	137	79	216
<b>Divorced</b>	7	2	9
<b>Single</b>	52	37	89
<b>Separated</b>	8	3	11
<b>Extra-marital</b>	11	9	20
<b>Co-habiting</b>	6	10	16
<b>Widowed</b>	1	-	1
<b>Not known</b>	40	26	66
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>428</b>



## **Main Issues in Parental Relationships Affecting Applicants' Admission to Care**

- 13 Outlined below are the main issues that male and female applicants identified as occurring in their parents' relationship and which affected decisions about their upbringing. The issues include death of one or both parents, abandonment by one or both parents, domestic violence and emotional abuse in the family, imprisonment of one or both parents, mental health difficulties and substance misuse, including, alcohol abuse.

### **Death of Parents**

- 114 female applicants said their mother was deceased. Twelve of those deaths occurred when the applicant was very young.
- 87 females said their fathers were deceased. One of those deaths occurred when the applicant was very young.
- 158 male applicants said their mother was deceased.
- 28 of those deaths occurred when the applicant was very young.
- 115 males said their fathers were deceased. Four of those deaths occurred when the applicants were very young.

### **Abandoned by Parents**

- 74 female applicants said their mother abandoned them.
- 55 females said their father abandoned them.
- 84 male applicants said their mother abandoned them.
- 78 males said their father abandoned them.

### **Domestic Violence in the Family**

- 37 females said there was domestic violence in their family.
- 53 males said there was domestic violence in their family.

### **Emotional Abuse in the Family**

- 40 females said there was emotional abuse in their family.
- 59 males said there was emotional abuse in the family.

### **Imprisonment of One or Both Parents**

- Six females said their mother had been in prison on one occasion or more.
- Twelve females said their father had been in prison on one occasion or more.

- One male said his mother had been in prison on one occasion or more.
- Ten males said their father had been in prison on one occasion or more.

### **Mental Health Difficulties**

- 30 females said their mothers had experienced mental health difficulties.
- 35 females said their fathers had experienced mental health difficulties.
- 30 males said their mothers had experienced mental health difficulties.
- Ten males said their fathers had experienced mental health difficulties.

### **Substance Abuse including Alcohol Abuse**

- 49 females said their mothers had been involved in substance misuse and/or alcohol abuse over a number of years.
- 36 females said their fathers had been involved in substance misuse and/or alcohol abuse over a number of years.
- 42 males said their mothers had been involved in substance abuse and/or alcohol abuse over a number of years.
- 68 males said their fathers had been involved in substance misuse and/or alcohol abuse over a number of years.

- 14 The following selection of quotations and comments from applicants has been chosen to illustrate some of the issues commented on.

“My mother died of tuberculosis. There were six children all very young. My father left us alone to go to work, so we were put into care.”

“My parents were in a mixed marriage in which my father’s views prevailed. My mother had been married before and had two daughters from that marriage. Mother died, when I was two, from cancer. My mother’s sisters offered to bring us up but my father wanted us brought up in his religion so refused this offer. Father didn’t want us adopted so he paid for us to stay in an institution.”

“My father was alcoholic and we were a big family. I loved my mother; I was the apple of her eye. I was chastised by my father for getting into trouble but at least he was beating me for doing something...they beat me for nothing.”

“I was born in hospital and when my mother returned with me, her mother refused to allow her into the family home. I was placed with my uncle...who cared for me until I was five months old and I was then placed in care.”

“Both my parents had chronic alcohol problems over many years. My father was very violent, and my mother was very frightened of him.”

“My father was just seventeen and my mother 23 when they married. They eloped to London, and later both developed alcohol problems.”

“My mother and father were prosecuted for neglect and served three-month sentences for this.”

“My mother suffered from chronic depression, and my father, who was violent, from poor health. We had a nomadic existence, and rented houses always of a very low standard.”

“My parents were in a mixed marriage and both families disapproved. They went to England where I was born. My parents moved back but my mother died of lung cancer. My father tried to cope but eventually couldn't cope.”

“My parents both drank a lot and there were a lot of alcohol-fuelled fights between them.”

“My parents were in a mixed marriage...The extended families on both sides, including grandparents, disowned me, my parents and my siblings so I had no contact with my extended family.”

“I came from a big family, thirteen in total; some of the children were born as a result of extramarital affairs. My father was a violent alcoholic.”

“I think my parents' marriage was strong and successful. I was the black sheep of the family.”

- An applicant described a home marked by domestic violence and the children in the family were sexually abused by the father.
- An applicant had virtually no information about his parents and said the staff in his establishment did not disclose any details of his background – even though he thinks they had information. He found out by chance that his mother had passed away.
- An applicant from the Travelling Community told the Forum that his parents were described as living in absolute poverty with no money to provide for their children.

## Parents of Applicants - Occupational Status

- 15 The table below shows the occupational status or job description of the applicants' parents at the time of their admission into the care system. In two-parent households, the father's occupation is recorded and in other circumstances the occupational status of the sole parent is included. More than 50 per cent of applicants did not know the skill level of their parents at the time of their birth and a further 22 per cent reported that their parents were unskilled.

Occupational status	Male	Female	Total
<b>Professional worker</b>	4	2	6
<b>Managerial and technical</b>	1	1	2
<b>Non-manual</b>	1	1	2
<b>Skilled manual</b>	30	15	45
<b>Semi-skilled</b>	10	6	16
<b>Unskilled</b>	62	33	95
<b>Unknown</b>	154	108	262
<b>Total</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>166</b>	<b>428</b>

## Siblings of Applicants

- 16 Of the 428 applicants, 336 reported that they had brothers and sisters, some or all of whom may also have been in the care system. The following table indicates approximate family size as reported by applicants.

Number of siblings	Number of Applicants
<b>0</b>	51
<b>1 – 4</b>	176
<b>5 – 9</b>	125
<b>10 or more</b>	35
<b>Unknown</b>	41
<b>Total</b>	<b>428</b>

- 17 One hundred and sixty applicants had five or more brothers and/or sisters. For the purpose of this report, half-brothers and sisters are included as siblings as they were described by applicants as family members. The average family size reported by the 336 applicants was five children.

Eighty-five applicants were deemed to be single children without siblings, having either stated that they knew they had no siblings or that they have never been able to establish the facts in relation to the details of their family of origin.

- 18 In allowing for families represented by more than one applicant to the Forum, the 428 applicants represent 306 families. Applicants who came to the Forum were mainly first-born children or the youngest member of the family.

### **Siblings of Applicants in the Care System**

- 19 A total of 253 applicants reported having siblings in the care system. It is of note that many applicants to the Forum reported that, when they were received into care, older brothers and younger family members were likely to have remained within the extended family. A small number of applicants noted that older siblings who had been placed in designated establishments in Northern Ireland had been sent to Australia under the child migrant scheme.

- 20 Some applicants were raised with their siblings prior to their placement in care, while others were one of the younger members of the family and did not know their older brothers and/or sisters. Many applicants spoke to the Forum of their confusion, when discharged back to their family home, to find they had new brothers and sisters of whom they were unaware. Other applicants spoke of their deep distress at losing contact with siblings who lived in the same establishment as them but were separated because of policies on age and gender so that gradually the bonds of kinship were broken.

- 21 The following quotations and comments concerning siblings illustrate the information provided to the Forum.

“If you haven’t got family, you are a nobody. You know when someone in a family dies, you grieve for them; we were grieving all the time - but we didn’t know what we were grieving for...I have nobody.”

“The care system split us up. We had no bond; now we are argumentative rather than close.”

“I was close to my two brothers. I always defended them. I have more scars for my brothers than for myself.”

“I felt guilty because I was taken out of the home and my two younger sisters were left behind...When mum collected me I wasn’t allowed

to say goodbye to my sisters...I was taken out, I felt guilty just leaving them there...I felt terrible for my younger sisters all these years.”

- An applicant told the Forum that her older sister and two brothers returned to their mother in England but she was left with a sister in a designated establishment. At twelve, she was flown to England with her sister to be returned to her mother’s care and her mother was a complete stranger to both of them. Their mother had had two other children whilst they had been in care.
- An applicant told the Forum that she and her sisters were separated when they were received into the children’s home. The older two sisters were denied contact with her. She recalled holding her sisters hands through railings separating the different parts of the establishment. She became emotional asking: “why wasn’t I allowed to mingle with them; embrace and hold them?”

## **Chapter 3: The Applicants' Experiences**

### **How they are Presented in Chapters 4 and 5**

- 1 Chapters 4 and 5 of this report are based entirely on what applicants told the Forum about their experiences in designated establishments. As noted earlier, the term designated establishment is used to signify an establishment that met the terms of reference of the Inquiry. Throughout the report the terms “children’s home” and “home” are also used as synonymous with designated establishment because those were the terms most often used by applicants in their meetings with the Forum.
- 2 The information in these chapters is not tested evidence, nor is it the outcome of a series of structured interviews. Some participants were ready to recount their experiences without any prompts from the panel members; others, who were unsure about how to tell of their experiences, accepted the panel members’ offer to help them get started by asking some introductory questions, usually focusing on what they knew of the reasons for their initial admission to care.
- 3 This part of the report is not an exhaustive series of quotations but rather comments based on what people said, supported and enlivened by a selection of quotations that reflect the voices of those who took part.  
  
The information in Chapters 4 and 5 is arranged by period, establishment type and gender of applicant. The years spanned by the Inquiry – 1922 to 1995 – have been grouped into three periods:
  - Period 1 – 1922 to 1955
  - Period 2 – 1956 to 1975
  - Period 3 – 1976 to 1995These periods have been chosen to reflect significant changes in legislation and public policy in the care of looked after children in Northern Ireland.
- 4 The designated establishments in which applicants were resident as children have been grouped into three broad types:
  - Voluntary
  - State
  - Juvenile Justice
- 5 Voluntary establishments were those provided and managed by voluntary institutions such as the main churches and charitable bodies. State

establishments were those provided by local welfare committees and other state agencies. Juvenile justice establishments were those in which the majority of the children and young people were placed further to coming through the juvenile justice system.

- 6 As explained above, the information given by applicants to the Forum in respect of each establishment type is organised by gender so, for example, in looking for information about the care experiences of females in juvenile justice establishments in the 1960s the reader should turn to Chapter 4, Period 2 and Females: juvenile justice.
- 7 Some applicants' placements in designated establishments began in the later stages of one period and continued into the early stages of the next. In those cases their experiences are included in the period in which they spent the greater part of their placement. Other applicants who had more than one placement, with one in one period and another in the next, will have their experiences in each placement included in the period in which it occurred. These details are significant in that it is therefore not possible to simply add the numbers in certain tables in each period in the report and arrive at a number equivalent to the total number of applicants who met the Forum; such totals could be greater than the actual number of applicants, as some applicants had multiple placements.
- 8 Inevitably, in view of the variations in the extent and detail of the information given to the Forum and the panel members' commitment to reflect fairly the information given, there are differences in the focus and scope of some of the paragraphs and tables in each period in Chapters 4 and 5 of the report. For example, in Period 3, 1976 – 1995, a smaller proportion of applicants complained about fewer aspects of daily living experiences than those in Period 1, 1922 – 1955 and Period 2, 1956 – 1975; a reflection, perhaps, of changing standards and resources in residential childcare, over time, in Northern Ireland.



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## Chapter 4: Applicants' Experiences of Care

### Period 1: 1922 – 1955

#### Introduction

- 1 Seventy-two applicants – 47 men and 25 women – who had been in residential care at some stage in their childhood in the period from 1922 to 1955 spoke to the Forum about their experiences. The oldest male applicant from this period was born in 1926 and the youngest in 1953. The oldest female applicant from this period was born in 1927 and the youngest was born in 1949.
- 2 Thirty-two of the applicants – 21 men and eleven women – had been sent from six voluntary establishments in Northern Ireland to Australia under the child migrant scheme. Only their experiences in designated children's residential establishments in Northern Ireland are included in this report. Thirty-eight of the applicants, 24 men and fourteen women, entered the care system between 1939 and 1945, the years of the Second World War.

#### Placements in the Care System

- 3 The number of establishments by type in which applicants had lived is summarised in the following table; the numbers of applicants who had been placed in each type of provision are also included.

Applicants in Each Category of Provision			
Establishment type	Gender	Number of Establishments	Number of Placements
Voluntary	Male	7	43
	Female	8	24
State	Male	6	6
	Female	1	1
Juvenile Justice	Male	1	2
	Female	-	-

- 4 Almost twice as many men as women who had been in a designated establishment in Period 1 came to the Forum. At the time they applied to the Inquiry they ranged in age from 83 years to 69 years.

The table below sets out the age range of those who applied.

Applicants/age range	60 to 69 years of age	70 to 79 years of age	80 to 89 years of age	All Applicants
Males	11	29	7	47
Females	10	10	5	25
<b>All applicants</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>72</b>

- 5 Most of the men and women in Period 1 had been placed initially in establishments that were part of the voluntary sector, the majority of them under Roman Catholic management. These establishments were large, accommodating up to 150 children. Those who had been in state care had lived in smaller establishments with provision for as few as ten children. One applicant had been in a specialist residential home for children with hearing, speech and sight disabilities and two others had had a placement in a juvenile justice establishment – a training school. Another had been in a workhouse with his mother and brother and he was cared for in that setting for some years.

## Circumstances of Admission into the Care System

- 6 Some applicants described in detail the circumstances that led to their being placed in children’s residential care. Others spoke, as far as they could, about their childhood circumstances but some, despite persistent research, still had little information about their parents and wider family circle. They spoke of a longing – a gap to be filled – to know more about their families, and some were still deeply affected by the lack of information about their family backgrounds.

## Order of Admission to Care

- 7 For the great majority of applicants in Period 1, their first placement was to be their only placement in designated establishments. A few applicants had previously been in foster care and so their admissions to designated establishments are included in the following table as second admissions.

Order of Admission to Care					
Establishment Type	Gender	First	Second	Not known	Total
Voluntary	Male	33	5	1	39
	Female	21	3	-	24
State	Male	5	1	-	6
	Female	1	-	-	1
Juvenile Justice	Male	-	2	-	2
	Female	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		60	11	1	72

## Age at Entry to the Care System

- 8 The ages of the applicants when first admitted to a designated establishment ranged widely. Of note is the fact that half of both the men and the women had been admitted as very young children, ie two years of age or younger.

Age at Entry														
Establishment	Gender	<1	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	10+	Total
Voluntary	Male	12	4	7	2	4	4	2	3	1	-	-	2	41
	Female	7	2	2	1	2	5	2	1	2	-	-	-	24
State	Male	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	1	-	-	1	1	6
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Juvenile Justice*	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>20</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>		<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>72</b>

**Note:** There are no entries in the juvenile justice section because for the two applicants who had placements in a juvenile justice establishment those placements were not their first admission to care.

## Duration of Placements in the Care System

9 A review of the duration of placement in the various types of establishment indicates that two thirds of the applicants spent five or more years of their childhood in at least one establishment and almost a fifth of them had been in establishments for ten or more years in Northern Ireland. The table below presents this information by establishment type and gender.

		Duration in Years															
Establishment	Gender	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
Voluntary	Male	1	4	4	5	2	4	4	4	7	4	3	-	-	-	-	1
	Female	2	-	1	1	4	4	5		1	3	1	1	-	1	-	-
State	Male	4	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Female	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Juvenile Justice	Male	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>8</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>		<b>1</b>

**Note:** The figures indicate placements, not applicants.

## Age at Discharge from the Care System

10 Some applicants were sent from their residential establishments back into their family homes. Others were fostered and some, at the age of fourteen and older, were placed in work, in a few cases in the establishment in which they had been living. An analysis of their ages at discharge from the care system and the establishment type from which they were discharged is given in the table below.

		Age at Discharge																
Establishment	Gender	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	Total
Voluntary	Male	-	1	1	2	4	2		10	6	2	2	2	2	2	4	1	41
	Female	1	-	1	1	5	1	1	1	2	1	-	2	4	2	2	-	24
State	Male	1	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Juvenile Justice	Male	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
	Female	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>72</b>

## Applicants in each Type of Provision

- 11 The great majority of applicants in this period, 69, had one placement in a designated establishment but three had more than one. Two applicants, both men, each had two placements and one man had been in three establishments. The table below summarises this information.

Establishment	Male	Female	Total
<b>Voluntary</b>	43	24	67
<b>State</b>	6	1	7
<b>Juvenile Justice</b>	2	-	2
<b>All</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>76*</b>

**Note:** The figures indicate placements, not applicants.

## Referral Sources/Agencies

- 12 The circumstances that led to their placement in designated establishments were remembered by almost a third of the applicants. Nine of the men who had been placed in voluntary establishments spoke about family members seeking the assistance of the Church in having them placed in care. In a few cases, this was an outcome of a family's wish to conceal the birth of a child born out of wedlock; in others it reflected an unmarried mother's struggle to maintain her child in the absence of family and other support. Some placements were arranged by Church authorities because of concern for the welfare and mental health of the mother or both parents. Five of the male applicants knew that there had been an intervention by two or more authorities that led to their being placed in designated establishments. For example, one man said that the local clergyman had taken him and his foster brother to an establishment where they were visited every three months by a welfare officer. Another man spoke of the police and welfare services intervening and, with the assistance of the Church, arranging for him to be placed in an establishment. One applicant was in a state establishment with his mother and remained there for some years before being fostered.
- 13 The circumstances relating to the referral of the female applicants in this period mirrored those of the males, although a higher proportion of them were referred by family members with the involvement of the Church. Two of them were placed in care by the order of a court. A summary of the referral sources, where known, is given below.

Referral Source/Agency	Male	Female
<b>Welfare Authorities</b>	4	1
<b>Clergy/Religious Orders</b>	6	3
<b>Courts</b>	-	1
<b>Police and Welfare</b>	3	-
<b>Family</b>	3	2
<b>Family and Church</b>	-	2
<b>Probation/Education Board</b>	-	1
<b>Not known</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>15</b>

- 14 Earlier it was noted that three of the men had been in two or more establishments. One applicant as he grew older transferred from a voluntary establishment that catered for children up to eleven years of age to another that accommodated older children. Another applicant transferred from a voluntary establishment to a juvenile justice establishment and the third applicant moved from a state establishment to a juvenile justice establishment into a voluntary establishment. In the latter case the initial placement had been a temporary measure whilst decisions were taken about longer term placement options.

## Reasons for Admission to Care

### Males: Voluntary Sector

- 15 Many of the male applicants had been born to unmarried mothers who found it very difficult to raise their children because, as applicants told the Forum, of lack of financial and family support and negative societal attitudes. Most of these applicants had very little information about their birth mother or maternal family, despite some saying they had searched exhaustively for it.
- 16 Several of the five male applicants whose parents had died when they were children said there was no one within the family network who was able or willing to care for them. One applicant, who was part of a large sibling group, said that his mother had died in childbirth, his father was away in the Army and he and his siblings went to live with their grandmother. Their grandmother was unable to cope and the children were placed in several designated establishments. One applicant said his parents died within six months of each other and there was no one able to care for him. Two



male applicants were placed in designated establishments as their foster mothers had died. The reasons given for admission are summarised in the following table.

<b>Reasons for Admission</b>	
<b>Parents Unable to Cope</b>	24
<b>Abandonment</b>	8
<b>Court Order</b>	-
<b>Parents Deceased</b>	5
<b>Unknown</b>	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

#### **Males: State Sector**

- 17 Male applicants in state establishments were placed there for reasons similar to those of their contemporaries in the voluntary establishments. Two male applicants referred to their parents being unable to cope, with one commenting that his mother was experiencing mental health difficulties. Two other applicants said that their parents were deceased. One of these applicants was in his placement in a designated establishment for a very short period of time as it was planned that he would move to a long-term foster placement. Two male applicants chose not to comment on or did not know the reasons for their admittance into residential care.

<b>Reasons for Admission</b>	
<b>Parents Unable to Cope</b>	2
<b>Abandonment</b>	-
<b>Court Order</b>	-
<b>Parents Deceased</b>	2
<b>Unknown</b>	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>

#### **Males: Juvenile Justice Provision**

- 18 One of two applicants had been cared for initially in a state establishment and was moved from there to a juvenile justice establishment. Subsequently

he was transferred to a voluntary establishment from which, eventually, he was discharged from care. The other had been placed initially in a voluntary establishment and, as a result of absconding, was transferred to a juvenile justice establishment from which he was discharged from care.

**Females: Voluntary Sector**

- 19 Female applicants who were in voluntary establishments during Period 1 gave reasons similar to those of the male applicants for having been placed in those establishments. Most of them said their parents were unable to cope and this resulted in their reception into care. The table that follows lists the reasons given for admission.

<b>Reasons for Admission</b>	
<b>Parents Unable to Cope</b>	13
<b>Abandonment</b>	8
<b>Court Order</b>	2
<b>Unknown</b>	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

- 20 Eight female applicants, who told the Forum that they had been abandoned, referred to being born to unmarried mothers. Some of the female applicants commented that they had very little information about their birth mothers or maternal families with some speaking of their sadness and frustration that having tried as adults to get information, they had not been successful.
- 21 Three female applicants said their mothers had died and there were no others in their family networks willing or able to care for them. Three female applicants said that their mothers had been unwell, including one whose mother had a physical disability and another whose mother suffered from mental and emotional ill-health.
- 22 One applicant said she was removed from her family because of homelessness; her parents could not afford to pay the rent and the family “were literally thrown out into the street.” One applicant said that she thought she was taken into care as her parents had an alcohol addiction and the children in the family were being neglected. Two female applicants said they were taken into care under a court order. One of these applicants had special needs and had not been attending school. The other recalled her mother bathing her, along with her siblings, in preparation for their

removal by welfare officers from the family home. This female applicant said, with sadness, that her mother wrote her a letter years later in which she said she felt as though she had “locked her children out” and she had an enormous sense of guilt for handing them over to officials.

### **Females: State Sector**

- 23 The only female applicant placed in a state establishment was admitted into care with her sibling as her mother had died and her father was unable to care for his children.

### **Memories of Admission: Male and Female Applicants**

- 24 Few of the men and women in Period 1 have memories of the day of their admission to a children’s home as many of them were babies or very young children when that occurred. What they now have learned about the circumstances of their admission is the outcome of access to their personal records, other records held by the designated establishments and contacts later in life with family members and family friends and neighbours. However, as noted earlier, some had been unable to gather such information and remain uninformed about their childhood circumstances.

### **Aspects of Care in the Residential Establishments**

- 25 The experiences of the 47 male applicants and of the 25 female applicants, who were in designated establishments during Period 1, are set out in this section of the report under voluntary sector provision, state sector provision and juvenile justice provision categories. Applicants’ accounts are described by gender within the three types of provision. Applicants’ accounts of the five general care conditions of food, clothing, heat, bedding and personal care are included in this section. Where any of these experiences are described as abusive or neglectful, this information is included in the abuse/neglect section of this report.
- 26 The first part of this section covers the reports made by 41 male applicants who had a total of 43 placements in seven individual voluntary establishments. The second part of this section covers the experiences of 24 female applicants who had a total of 24 placements in eight voluntary establishments.

### Males: Voluntary Provision

- 27 Approximately half of the 41 male applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments recalled their experiences of day-to-day living in children’s homes. Their opinions of their care conditions are set out in the following paragraphs.

#### Diet

- 28 Twenty of the applicants commented on the food they had been given. The consensus was that the food was adequate or poor and some of them remember being hungry all the time. Types of food mentioned included porridge:

“in a bowl with salt poured into a hole in the middle of the serving, bread and dripping for breakfast,” and “very fat meat for lunch.”

One applicant said that he “was not fed well, just scraps; I thought jam was a luxury. We got an apple and orange at Christmas.” On the other hand, two applicants spoke appreciatively of the food served. Another said

“Times were hard during the war and the staff did their best for the children” and the other said he “was grateful for the care after the neglect at home.”

Diet	Voluntary
<b>Male</b>	
<b>Good</b>	-
<b>Adequate</b>	12
<b>Poor</b>	8
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not Disclosed/No Memory</b>	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

#### Clothing

- 29 Twenty-one male applicants made reference to the clothing they were given in voluntary establishments. For the most part they were not critical of the clothes provided. One applicant spoke about being given ill-fitting clothes and said that “the underpants were often too small; when I got a pair that fitted it was bliss.” Another reflecting back on the clothes provided said that as soon as he was discharged he got a new suit made. He felt he was shaking off the old and putting on the new.

<b>Clothing</b>	<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>Male</b>	
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	-
<b>Adequate</b>	10
<b>Poor</b>	9
<b>Very Poor</b>	2
<b>Not Disclosed/No Memory</b>	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

### Personal care

- 30 Male applicants gave little detail about their personal care. The general view was that the personal care provided was adequate or poor. Some described shared baths and shared bathwater with Jeyes Fluid in the water causing discomfort to their skin. They objected to the fact that by the time they got to the bath, the water was dirty. Others commented on the lack of privacy at bath time and having to stand, undressed, in a line waiting for a bath. One of the men recalled having his hair cut when he was four; he told how he was held down in a chair and because he did not know what was going to happen, he struggled against those holding him down and received a cut from the scissors as a consequence. The male applicants' opinions of their personal care is summarised in the following table.

<b>Personal Care</b>	<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>Male</b>	
<b>Good</b>	-
<b>Adequate</b>	11
<b>Poor</b>	10
<b>Very Poor</b>	2
<b>Not Disclosed/No Memory</b>	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

### Bedding

- 31 None of the male applicants made detailed comments about the beds or bedding in their children’s homes. Generally, those who made any reference to bedding were at least satisfied with the comfort and warmth of their beds and spoke more about the dormitory, bathroom and toilet arrangements and supervision during the night. Some referred to older boys being in charge and supervising the dormitories; others spoke of a nun having sleeping accommodation in an adjoining room or “cell” with a curtained window through which she could monitor the children when they were in bed.

<b>Bedding</b>	<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>Male</b>	
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	-
<b>Adequate</b>	13
<b>Poor</b>	4
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not Disclosed/No Memory</b>	24
<b>Total</b>	41

### Heating

- 32 In summary, and apart from two references to good heating, most of the sixteen men who commented on this aspect of their care thought the heating was adequate or poor; “of its time” was a view shared by a few. Their opinions of this aspect of their care are set out in the following table.

<b>Heating</b>	<b>Voluntary</b>
<b>Male</b>	
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	2
<b>Adequate</b>	9
<b>Poor</b>	3
<b>Very Poor</b>	2
<b>Not Disclosed/No Memory</b>	25
<b>Total</b>	41

### Work in the Voluntary Establishments

- 33 The men’s memories of work in their voluntary establishments were consistent with those of the women who came forward. They had a range of daily duties including bed-making and helping clear tables after meals. Twenty-four of them (more than half) referred to tasks that they regarded as work that had to be done on a regular, usually weekly, basis. For most of them, these tasks included scrubbing and applying polish to, and buffing, floors. One man said that he and his friends had to polish wooden doors, wainscoting in the corridors and wooden staircases. He said they also had to clean and polish floors in the chapel, the dining rooms, the study halls, the kitchen and the lavatories. Some said much of the floor work had to be done on their hands and knees and others referred to buffing the floors with cloths tied to their feet. It was reported that, in one establishment, groups of boys linked arms and shuffled down long corridors, polishing as they progressed. Several referred to a chant they said when polishing floors

“River and back, river and back; I’ll put the broom across your back”

a chant that related to the nearby river and the punishment that could be meted out if the pace of work slackened. It was reported that this cleaning work was carried out on Saturdays for the most part, all year round. A few referred to additional cleaning having to be done, usually linked to expected special visitors and events.

- 34 Some of the men said that, in season, they had been given work to do on neighbouring farms. For example, some had potato-picking duties; others had been asked to help cut field grass for hay-making using scythes. They said they had to work “from morning to night” and received “nothing in return.”

### Religious Practice

- 35 Religious practice was an integral part of the daily routine for those applicants in Period 1 who had been cared for in voluntary, church-run, establishments. From what 30 of the male applicants related, it was evident that the day and the average week were punctuated and infused with religious observance and teaching that included:
- prayers each morning before breakfast and in the evening
  - prayers before and after lessons in school
  - religious education at school

- mass at regular intervals, for some on a daily basis
- confession.

- 36 A few of the men spoke with fondness of having been selected to serve as altar boys and of the affirmation they took from this. Others spoke about the enjoyment they experienced from singing in the church. Several men said they were able to recite the Benediction in Latin as the boys learnt this in parrot fashion – even though, as one man said, they did not always know what it meant. This man was also in the choir and spoke with real warmth about the nun who trained and conducted the choir; other male applicants spoke equally appreciatively of the same member of staff.
- 37 Generally, those men who recalled aspects of religious practice did not complain about it. Eleven of the applicants in Period 1 said that they had no memories of religious practice in their establishments. That group included a number of those who had been sent to Australia as young children.

### **Play and Recreation**

- 38 When talking about their childhoods in care, two thirds of the applicants had no memory of any play-time or recreation. Some had no recollection because they were so young when they left their children’s homes, for example to return to family or foster care, or, in other cases to travel to Australia. Others said emphatically there was no playtime or recreation.
- 39 The average day, as reported by a number of the applicants, was filled with religious practice, domestic duties and schooling. Many of them talked about the absence of toys and the lack of books. One said that in his establishment there were some books but the children were not allowed to read them. Several applicants referred to the extent to which they had to remain quiet and still when children of their age would have been playing indoors and out.
- 40 Five of the men remembered playing outside in big fields. They said they played football and other games and often had no proper footwear; if boots were too big they “had to stuff them with straw to make them stay on.” Some of these men also enjoyed climbing trees in the grounds of the establishment and two spoke of an outside playground where they could run and play. Others who were in designated establishments in the latter part of Period 1 mentioned watching TV from 5.00pm to 6.00pm each night of the week. One man said that he had acted in a play and that



was a good memory; he also sang in the choir and the choir took part in the Belfast Feis. Another said that he was taught Irish dancing and was a member of the band where he learned to play the double bass. There was mention of a wind-up gramophone, and someone who had been in one of the voluntary establishments in the later part of this period talked about films being shown on Thursdays. Two of the men recalled days out to Millisle and eating ice cream at the beach.

### Medical Care

- 41 Less than half of the male applicants recalled having received medical care during their placement in designated establishments. A summary of the nature of the medical care cited is shown in the following table.

Medical Attention	Voluntary Male
Infirmery	1
Medical Inspection	1
Immunisation	2
GP	1
Designated Medical Person	2
Dentist	5
Hospital	2
Nurse	5

### Applicants' Experiences of Discharge from the Care System

- 42 Twenty-one of the men who had been in voluntary establishments in Period 1 were sent to Australia. Their memories of leaving care in Northern Ireland focused on what they remember of being told about going to Australia and of some aspects of the process and preparation, including being taken out to get new clothes for the journey and the new country.
- 43 The twenty male applicants who, as children, had been discharged from care in Northern Ireland summarised their experiences as follows:
- Three were transferred to foster care.
  - Five were placed with farming families. Most of them had been put to work on the farm, generally for very long hours every day of the week including Sunday. One said "I worked from 6.00am to 10.00pm daily

in return for basic board and lodging. I had no opportunity to make friends and develop socially.” Another described a similar routine; he had been sent to a farmer when he was fourteen. He said the work was heavy but “at least the farmer’s son was working alongside me.” The farmer’s son left and the applicant was left to do the work of two people. After some time, the farmer took him back to the establishment and told the staff he was not working hard enough.

- Three returned to their families.
- Two were accommodated locally, in one case in a hostel and in the other in digs, and given jobs in Belfast, one as a van boy, the other in a furniture factory.
- Two were given work in establishments run by the same religious order as that in charge of their former establishments.
- The other five applicants did not provide information about their experiences of discharge from care.

### **Post-Care Support**

- 44 Six of the male applicants who had been in voluntary establishments and who left care in Northern Ireland, told the Forum that jobs and lodgings had been arranged for them. Two of those men recalled that they were also given new clothes on discharge. One of the men was given a job in maintenance in another children’s establishment provided by the same religious order in the Republic of Ireland.

### **Females: Voluntary Provision**

- 45 Just over half of the 24 female applicants who had been in voluntary establishments in this period had little or no detailed memory of the accommodation and aspects of the care they had experienced; as one said

“I remember experiences and incidents more than the everyday things.”

Some of those who had no recollection of food, clothing, sleeping accommodation and so forth, had been sent as child migrants to Australia from six of the voluntary establishments when they were as young as five. Their recollections, as with those of their male counterparts, relate more to the experience of being chosen to go to Australia and the journey and their care in that country.

### **Diet**

- 46 Fourteen of the female applicants commented on the food they had been given. The consensus was that the food was adequate or poor and some

of them remember being hungry and, in season, stealing apples from a neighbouring orchard to fend off their hunger.

The following table summarises their views.

<b>Diet</b>	<b>Voluntary Female</b>
<b>Good</b>	-
<b>Adequate</b>	9
<b>Poor</b>	5
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not Disclosed/No Memory</b>	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

### **Clothing**

- 47 Thirteen of the female applicants made specific reference to their clothing when in establishments suggesting that it was basic; some garments were second or third hand and some, such as pinafores and underwear, were made on the premises. School uniform was mentioned by one woman who said that it was uncomfortable because the cloth used – serge – was very stiff. Their views are summarised below.

<b>Clothing</b>	<b>Voluntary Female</b>
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	-
<b>Adequate</b>	8
<b>Poor</b>	4
<b>Very Poor</b>	1
<b>Not Disclosed/No Memory</b>	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

### Personal Care

- 48 Only a few female applicants spoke of the personal care in their establishment. Some applicants described baths with Jeyes fluid causing discomfort to their skin, some commented on the lack of toothpaste and others on the absence of toiletries unless their families brought some in for them. As one woman pointed out, that arrangement meant that some children never had basic toiletries while others did, thus adding another form of differentiation between the children. Their opinions about their personal care are summarised in the following table.

Personal Care	Voluntary Female
Very Good	-
Good	-
Adequate	6
Poor	4
Very Poor	4
Not Disclosed/No Memory	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

### Bedding

- 49 Just over half of the female applicants made comments about the bedding. Generally they were at least satisfied with the comfort and warmth of their beds. The following table represents the range of their views.

Bedding	Voluntary Female
Very Good	-
Good	1
Adequate	8
Poor	2
Very Poor	2
Not Disclosed/No Memory	11
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

### Heating

- 50 Ten of the female applicants commented on the heating in their establishment. Their opinions were favourable, in the main, with just two recalling being very cold. Their opinions are summarised in the following table.

Heating	Voluntary Female
Very Good	-
Good	1
Adequate	7
Poor	-
Very Poor	2
Not Disclosed/No Memory	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>

In summary, and apart from one reference to good heating and one reference to good bedding, most of the 24 female applicants who had been living in voluntary establishments, and who commented on this aspect of their care, thought their clothing, food, personal care and bedding were adequate.

### Work in the Voluntary Establishments

- 51 The female applicants' memories of work in their establishments were similar to those of the men. In describing their daily routine in care, eleven of the 24 women spoke, often with strong feeling, about the work they were given on a regular basis – that is, in addition to the duties of bed-making, tidying their dormitories, clearing tables after meals and other tasks that were part of the daily routine of their time in residential establishments. The commonest form of work the applicants described was cleaning and polishing floors. Some referred to this as work that had to be done on Saturdays and described activities such as scrubbing floors, applying polish to wooden floors and buffing the floors to bring up a shine, as one said “until you could see your face in it.” They said they were first given this work when they were seven or eight years old and they were required to do it for the duration of their placements. The work included responsibility for cleaning floors in long corridors, floors in accommodation used by staff and, for some, floors in the adjacent church.

- 52 Two female applicants said that when they were older they were given duties in the laundry. One of them added that she didn't mind this as "you were given bread and jam as you went along." Another female applicant said that, as a child in care, she had to prepare the bodies of the dead for burial. This involved helping to wash and dress the deceased, and putting pennies on their eye-lids. She had to do this in the "dead house" – a separate building nearby. The dead were those who had lived and had been cared for in a neighbouring residential care centre for older people.

### **Religious Practice**

- 53 Religious practice was an integral part of the daily routine for both male and female applicants in Period 1 who had been cared for in voluntary, roman catholic, establishments. A third of the female applicants referred to daily and weekly religious observance and teaching that, as for the men, included:

- prayers each morning before breakfast and in the evening
- prayers before and after lessons in school
- religious education at school
- mass at regular intervals (for some, on a daily basis)
- confession.

Generally, those female applicants who referred to aspects of religious practice did not complain about it although one woman spoke with feeling about the discomfort in her knees after long periods of prayer, especially in Church on Sundays.

### **Play and Recreation**

- 54 When talking about their experiences in establishments, two-thirds of the female applicants had no memory of any play-time or recreation. Some had no recall because they were so young when they left their establishments. Others said emphatically there was no playtime or recreation; one woman spoke of:

"dark rooms and dark people with no encouragement for children to be themselves."

- 55 The average day, as reported by a number of the female applicants, was filled with religious practice, domestic duties and schooling. Many of them said they had no toys to play with; others commented on the absence of books. Several referred to the extent to which they had to remain quiet and still when children of their age would have been playing.

- 56 A female applicant spoke about having piano lessons and going to Irish dancing; another referred to one hour of play a day and a third said that girls of different ages played in different places in the establishment. Five applicants, as was the case with three of the male applicants, reminisced about holidays in Glenariff, Co Antrim, walks on the beach and swimming in the sea. Another of the female applicants said that, in the establishment in which she was placed, there were four swings for hundreds of girls and she never got to sit on any of them.

### Medical Care

- 57 Seventeen of the 24 female applicants told the Forum that they had received medical care on one or more occasions during their placement in designated establishments. Four referred to attendance of their doctor; others said they were cared for in their establishment’s infirmary and several spoke of “medical inspections”. Three of them referred to having received dental treatment. The following table summarises the information they gave to the Forum.

Medical Care	Voluntary Female
Infirmary	3
Medical Inspection	3
Immunisation	1
GP	4
Designated Medical Person	1
Dentist	3
Hospital	-
Nurse	2

### Applicants’ Experiences of Discharge from the Care System

- 58 Female applicants spoke readily about their experiences of being discharged from care. Their memories of leaving and “moving on” were often sharply defined and recounted with considerable emotion. Eleven of the female applicants in this period left voluntary establishments to go to Australia under the child migrant scheme. They talked about the selection process, the mixed feelings of excitement and uncertainty about what they would see in the new country and the sense of sadness at leaving friends and, in some cases, siblings.

- 59 Four of the other female applicants said they were returned to their mothers when discharged from their establishments. In one case, the applicant and her siblings had been collected from a voluntary establishment by their mother. When she got home, she was sent out to work to earn her keep. In the family home, she had to sleep in a bed with six children, the children of the man with whom her mother was living. Another female applicant talked about her father coming to collect her and taking her, with an older sibling, to England where they were expected to work in a fruit and vegetable shop. She said she was very unhappy there as she did not know her father as a “Dad” and had no relationship with him.
- 60 Two other female applicants had been taken to work, in one case in a hospital and in the other in a private nursing home for older people, both establishments under the management of the same religious order that was responsible for the establishment in which they had been resident. Two female applicants had been discharged into foster care; in one case the applicant left a voluntary establishment and was placed with three of her siblings in the same foster home.

### **Post-Care Support**

- 61 Most of the female applicants who had been discharged from care when they became fourteen years old, or during the year following their fourteenth birthday, made no reference to post-care support and assistance being provided. One of them told the Forum:

“I got my own job, left the next day and no-one ever enquired if I was alright.”

That said, from what some described in their accounts of where they went and what they did after leaving, it was apparent that some of the voluntary establishments made arrangements to place “leavers” in work and in hostels or “digs”.

- 62 A female applicant commented on leaving care as follows:

“I was taken without any preparation to work in a private home for the elderly that was also managed by the religious order that had been responsible for my care.”

Five other female applicants spoke of being returned to family members on discharge.



### **Males: State Provision**

- 63 The six male applicants who had been placed in state establishments in this period said little about the nature and adequacy of their care. Their primary concern was to talk about abusive experiences and those are included in Chapter 4 of this report. Those of them who commented on their care had generally favourable memories of their care with one applicant saying that his establishment “was a great place for children.”

### **Diet, Clothing, Personal Care, Bedding and Heating**

- 64 Four of the six male applicants commented on the food they had been given in their establishments, with two considering the food to be adequate in quantity and quality and two expressing dissatisfaction. The others made no comment. Three of the applicants recalled that their clothing and personal care were adequate. Three did not talk about those aspects of their care. Two of the applicants referred to their bedding as adequate - “comfortable” as one described it. None of the other four made any reference to bedding. Three of the six applicants told the Forum that the heating in their children’s homes was adequate. The other three did not comment on heating.

### **Other aspects of Care: Work, Religious Practices, Play and Recreation, and Medical Attention**

- 65 None of the male applicants who had been cared for in a state establishment commented on work as part of their daily routine, nor did they refer to religious practices or play and recreation. Two of the applicants recalled having medical attention, one in the form of a medical inspection and the other a hospital admission. They made no further comment about either experience.

### **Applicants’ Experiences of Discharge from the Care System and Aftercare**

- 66 None of the six male applicants who had been in a state establishment made reference to experiences of discharge or aftercare.

### **Females: State Provision**

- 67 The one female applicant who had been in state care as a child indicated that, in general, she was well-cared for. She did not talk about specific aspects of her care.

### **Males: Juvenile Justice Provision**

- 68 Neither of the two male applicants who had a placement in a juvenile justice establishment commented on the standard of their care.

### **Aftercare**

- 69 One of the two male applicants who had been in a juvenile justice placement spoke appreciatively of the arrangements made by the establishment when he was discharged. Lodgings were organised and he received assistance with the weekly payments. In addition, a job was arranged for him. He said that:

“(the establishment) had been helpful to him and got him started in employment.”

## **All Establishments: Inspection, Positive Experiences and Education**

- 70 The following section, arranged by establishment type, includes the recollections of applicants in Period 1 regarding inspections, the response of the establishments to inspection, applicants’ positive experiences and education. As will be seen in subsequent paragraphs, there were some of these aspects of care experiences that only a few of the applicants could recall or chose to speak about.

## **Memory of Inspection and Visits from Outside Organisations and Agencies**

### **Males: Voluntary Provision**

- 71 Only six of the 41 male applicants remembered anything that might have been part of an inspection process. Some applicants referred to visitors arriving occasionally but said that the children were not informed in advance about their arrival or given details about their role, adding that sometimes they found out later who the visitors had been. More often than not, they said, they had been clergymen or important lay people.

### **Action in Voluntary Establishments in Response to Inspection**

- 72 Only three of the 41 male applicants were able to recall action taken by the care staff in anticipation of, and during, inspections. One of them said that the children were warned in advance of the inspectors’ visits and were told how to respond to any questions. The others remembered that

the premises were cleaned specially for the occasion. They pointed out that staff members were always present during the inspectors' visits and none of them had any memory of being spoken to by any of the visitors. One remembered that some children were hidden in another part of the premises during the inspection.

#### **Females: Voluntary Provision**

- 73 Five female applicants said they remembered people and circumstances that might have been part of an inspection, such as the premises being cleaned very thoroughly and the children being told to keep quiet and only to speak if spoken to by a visitor. They said no one told them anything about the visitors who appeared from time to time, adding that, occasionally, they found out afterwards who the visitors had been.

#### **Action in Voluntary Establishments in Response to Inspection**

- 74 Two female applicants were able to recall action taken by the care staff in anticipation of, and during, inspections. Both said that they were given better clothes to wear and also reported that the premises were cleaned specially for the visitors coming.
- 75 Generally the information given about their care by most of the applicants suggested that they were not aware of any formal or even informal monitoring and assessment of the provision or their general progress. A few remembered being prepared to read, recite and sing for visitors but they did not know why the visitors had come to their establishments.

#### **Males and Females: State and Juvenile Justice Establishments**

- 76 None of the six male applicants in state establishments could recall any activity in their children's homes that might have been part of a monitoring or inspection visit. Consequently they were unable to recall any action taken by care staff or others that might have been a response to inspection findings. The sole female applicant who was resident in a state establishment made no reference to monitoring or inspection. Neither of the men who had placements in juvenile justice establishments referred to any memories of inspection or monitoring.

## Positive Experiences

### Males: Voluntary Establishments

77 Nineteen of the 41 male applicants who had been in voluntary establishments told the Forum about memories of positive experiences and these fall into three broad categories:

- people who were kind to them or bonded well with them;
- special events and trips away; and
- making good friends.

The other 22 applicants made no mention of positive experiences. As noted elsewhere in this report, some of them had left their establishments to go to Australia and said they were too young to remember their care in Northern Ireland.

78 The positive memories recounted included the quotations below.

“I had a real bond with one of the care staff; she taught me to play the violin and encouraged me to sing, telling me that I had a wonderful voice.”

“I was very attached to...(a member of the care staff). She was very good to me and on my Confirmation I was given her name. She died and I attended her funeral as an 11 year old. This still remains very painful for me.”

“I was very attached to...(a member of the care staff) who was a kind, motherly figure and showed me real love and affection.”

“(a member of the staff) was very kind and caring. She taught me Irish, and became my mentor helping me to get a scholarship to attend grammar school.”

“(a member of the staff) was a ‘shining light’ for me. I was very fond of her and she cared for me very well. I sang in her choir and she gave me violin lessons.”

79 Several applicants spoke very fondly of the families who took them out from time to time. One male applicant spoke of the kindness of a family from North Belfast. He described a big family of very modest means who did not hesitate to take him out, along with his sister, as often as allowed, possibly three or four times a year. Another spoke of his sponsors for Holy Communion as being “great people” and their house being “like heaven.” They took him to the pictures and gave him sweets before he “had to go back to hell.”

- 80 The table that follows presents a summary of the types of positive experiences mentioned by nineteen applicants. Some mentioned more than one type, hence the total exceeds the number of applicants.

Positive Experiences	State Male
Helpful staff	6
Other helpful people, including friends	5
Fondly remembered events and outings	14
None	2
None mentioned	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>41</b>

#### Females: Voluntary Establishments

- 81 Ten of the 24 female applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments made no mention of positive experiences and, of that number, five who had been sent to Australia as young children said that they had no memory of that period of their care. Two of the others asserted that they had no positive experiences at any stage. For the remaining twelve women, the most commonly mentioned good memories were of people, usually care staff, who had been kind to them and also of events, especially holidays and Christmas parties. Comments made included the quotations below:

“...the local priest was kind and related well to us; he stood up for us and we felt safe around him; the care staff did not like him.”

“...(a member of the care staff) was nice.”

“...two other nuns were kind, brilliant. I would not class them (ie the staff) all the same.”

“I enjoyed trips to Donegal and being able to sleep in a hay barn.”

“I remember being taken to the pantomime and being given a bag of sweets as I went in.”

“Local people were kind and brought gifts to the home. I really liked the decorations at Christmas.”

“Two lay staff were good to us; one would leave turnip skins for us to eat and the person taking out the slop food from the convent would let us raid the bucket.”

“I enjoyed getting sweets from the Orangemen when they paraded past the home.”

“I appreciated the care after neglect at home when my father was in hospital and circumstances in the family were poor.”

“I made such good friends there.”

- 82 The table that follows presents a summary of the positive experiences mentioned by female applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments. Some mentioned more than one source of positive experience hence the total exceeds the number of applicants.

Positive Experiences	Voluntary Female
Helpful staff	3
Other helpful people, including friends	4
Fondly remembered events	7
None	3
None mentioned	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>27</b>

### Males and Females: State Establishments

- 83 Four of the six male applicants who had been in state establishments did not refer to positive experiences. Of the other two, one said he was in a great place for children. The other talked about having a good ally in the workhouse. This was a man with a club foot; a rat-catcher who had a blackthorn stick and who protected him. He was also a scholarly man, who told him when it was safe to go out, in other words, when there were no predatory men in sight.

The one female applicant who had been in state care in this period commented that:

“the children’s home was a good place; I had no concerns about the staff or the care provided.”

### **Males: Juvenile Justice Establishments**

- 84 The two male applicants who had been placed in juvenile justice establishments spoke briefly but positively about aspects of their care, one saying that the person in charge was kindly and looked out for him. The other reflected that it was better than the voluntary children's home he had been in previously and he enjoyed the trips to the seaside.

### **Education**

- 85 The majority of the applicants from this period, from all types of establishment, had attended schools, some on the same site as their establishments and some in the neighbouring community. These schools catered for children in the five to fourteen age range, the normal age range in schools at that time. Re-organisation of education in the later 1940s changed provision to primary schools catering for five to eleven year olds and secondary schools catering for eleven to fifteen year olds. Some applicants who were in designated establishments in the latter years of Period 1 attended secondary school, having transferred from primary school at eleven years of age.

### **Males: Voluntary Provision**

- 86 Most of the 41 male applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments in Period 1 had received their schooling on-site, in accommodation set aside for teaching. Others from the voluntary sector had attended an adjacent school provided by the local parish or by the same religious orders that managed their establishments. In both cases, there were members of staff whom they knew both as teachers and as staff/adults in their establishments. That, for some applicants, was an unhappy arrangement as they saw “no hiding place” from some staff who were particularly threatening or harsh to them. Generally the applicants did not comment on the standards or quality of their education.

### **Females: Voluntary Provision**

- 87 Fourteen of the 24 female applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments made no comments on their experience in school. It bears repeating that many of them had left care in Northern Ireland before they were six years old and so had limited, if any, experience of formal education.

88 The ten who remembered something of their education had little to say that was positive. Generally their remarks were negative and included comments such as:

“The teacher was very strict, she beat us regularly and I was always in trouble. Two lay people came in and they were very nice to us but we had very little education. One of the lay teachers asked me to help with her babies’ class which I liked but I left school with no skills.”

89 One female applicant criticised the standard of education saying that she had been doing well at school before admission to the establishment but once she was placed in the on-site school she made very little further progress. Another said that she did not attend school but was made to do cleaning instead and to this day is unable to read and write. A third woman said that she was sent to work in the on-site laundry and so, effectively, her education ended when she was thirteen. She said that, as a result, she was deprived of access to books and reading material. An applicant told the Forum that she was assigned to a “slow learners” class where she was neither taught nor learned anything. Another spoke of her experiences attending an off-site school where she said children from the children’s home were teased and looked down on by others.

90 Fifteen of the female applicants said that they left school without formal qualifications. One woman completed her education at school in England. When she left Northern Ireland she could not tell the time or count and was barely able to write. She said that in her new school in England she excelled in religion.

#### **Males: State Provision**

91 The six male applicants who had been in state establishments attended schools in the local community. They made no comments on the adequacy of the education they received.

#### **Females: State Provision**

92 The one female applicant who was placed in a state establishment believes that she lost out as her education was inadequate. She said she was “good with her hands” but that was never recognised and built upon.

#### **Males: Juvenile Justice Provision**

93 Both male applicants received education on site during their placements in a juvenile justice establishment. They made no comments on the standards or quality of their education.



## Conclusion

94 From the above, it is evident that for many of the applicants the time they spent in care was the most significant part of their childhood years. They knew no other home and, over time, the establishment in which they had been placed became their home. The experiences they were to have in care are now the substance of their childhood memories and, as a number of them explained, they can see both good and bad in what they recall. For them, as they expressed it so clearly, the challenge is living with what they should not have experienced, in what was meant to be a caring and protective environment.

## Period 2: 1956 - 1975

### Introduction

95 The Forum heard from 125 males and from 80 females who were in designated establishments in the period 1956 to 1975. The oldest male applicant who met with the Forum was born in 1941 and the youngest was born in 1968. The oldest female applicant who met with the Forum was born in 1944 and the youngest was born in 1972. Twenty-four of the applicants who were in designated establishments in this period were sent to Australia through the child migrant scheme. Only their experiences in care in Northern Ireland are included in this report.

### Placements for Male Applicants in the Care System

96 The 125 males, who spoke to the Forum, were placed in 35 establishments in Northern Ireland. Of those 35 establishments, twelve were in the voluntary sector, sixteen were in the state sector and seven were categorised as juvenile justice provision. In total these applicants had 236 placements.

97 Some applicants were placed in more than one establishment and/or in more than one type of establishment during their time in care, for example they were initially in the voluntary sector and later in state or juvenile justice provision or they moved to another establishment within the same sector, for example, from one state establishment to another. The number of placements per applicant are set out below.

<b>Number of male applicants</b>	60	46	8	6	4	1
<b>Number of placements</b>	1	2	3	4	5	6

Fifteen of these applicants had had previous placements in the Republic of Ireland. The family of the applicant who had had six placements had led a nomadic lifestyle and he had been placed in children’s residential establishments in England, Scotland, the Republic of Ireland and, finally, Northern Ireland.

### Placements for Female Applicants in the Care System

98 Eighty females who spoke to the Forum were placed in 33 separate establishments in Northern Ireland during this period. Of those 33 establishments, 22 were in the voluntary sector, nine were in the state sector and two were categorised as juvenile justice provision. The female applicants had a total of 125 placements during their time in the care system.

99 Some applicants were placed in more than one establishment and/or in more than one category of establishment during their time in care, for example, they were initially in the voluntary care sector and later in state or juvenile justice provision or they moved between establishments within the same sector, for example, from one state establishment to another. The number and types of placements per applicant are set out below.

<b>Number of female applicants</b>	47	24	6	3
<b>Number of placements</b>	1	2	3	4

Five applicants had previous placements in the Republic of Ireland.

### Applicants in Each Type of Provision

100 The following table shows the number of male and female applicants placed in each type of provision. Please note that some male and some female applicants transferred between the various sectors of care provision.

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Voluntary</b>	<b>State</b>	<b>Juvenile Justice</b>
<b>Male</b>	82	20	27
<b>Female</b>	74	10	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>156</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>34</b>

## Circumstances of Admission into the Care System

101 Most applicants who met the Forum had little or no written information about the circumstances of their admission to care. Some applicants, because of their age when received or removed into care, were fully aware of the circumstances that led to their admission. Other applicants were reliant on information gleaned from parents, siblings or other relatives or, in a small number of cases, from staff at the establishment they had attended. The information presented below comes directly from the applicants and not from official records for, in the majority of cases, most applicants had not received copies of their records at the time they were seen by the Forum. The following paragraphs cover the age range and length of time applicants spent in the care system in Northern Ireland. It does not cover periods spent in care in the Republic of Ireland, England or Scotland or in Australia.

### Age at Entry to the Care System

102 As shown by the table below, the majority of male applicants were taken into care aged between six and fourteen years old while the majority of female applicants were admitted to care when aged between two and ten years old.

Age at first placement	Male	Female	Total
<b>1 year or under</b>	22	12	34
<b>2-5 years old</b>	29	25	54
<b>6-10 years old</b>	36	22	58
<b>11-14 years old</b>	32	11	43
<b>15-17 years old</b>	6	10	16
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>205</b>

### Duration of Placement in the Care System

103 The following table shows that the largest proportion, 41 per cent, of the 205 applicants who came to the Forum, spent between two and five years in the care system in Northern Ireland.

Years in care	Male	Female	Total
< 1 year	23	14	37
2-5 years	55	29	84
6-10 years	22	15	37
11-14 years	15	17	32
15-17 years	10	5	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>205</b>

## Age at Discharge from the Care System

104 The majority of male applicants were discharged from the care system when they were in the fourteen to sixteen age range, while the age on discharge for females was more even widely distributed.

Age discharged	Male	Female	Total
< 10	17	20	37
10-13	24	17	41
14-16	69	19	88
17+	15	24	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>205</b>

## Reasons for Admission

105 From the information provided by applicants it was apparent that the main reasons for the admission of the male and female applicants to the care system were as follows:

Reason for Admission	Male	Female	Total
Parents unable to cope	30	28	58
Abandonment	27	15	42
Court Orders	30	12	42
Parents deceased	3	6	9
Other reasons	7	8	15
No information	26	10	36
Health	2	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>205</b>

The types of court orders mentioned by applicants or referred to in papers they brought with them to their meeting with the Forum included place of safety orders, committal orders – fit persons, orders for detention and training school orders.

- 106 The main reason given for admission to care for both males and females was that their parents were unable to cope. Within that group, the reasons that led to the admission of children to the care system were often a combination of circumstances. These included poverty, single parent households (mostly single mothers), overcrowding in very poor quality and inadequate accommodation, unemployment, domestic violence, alcohol abuse, mental and physical disabilities, desertion by one parent, imprisonment of one parent, death of one or both parents and homelessness either through inability to pay the rent or having to vacate the family home because of sectarianism. Children who were abandoned to the care system were, in the main, born outside marriage and remained in establishments for most of their childhood with few opportunities for fostering or adoption. In some instances it appears permission to place the children in another family was forbidden by their mothers. Many applicants had no knowledge of the circumstances of their fathers.
- 107 A small number of children who were abandoned were the children of mixed faith relationships and when problems emerged there was little or no support from extended family or from either community. One applicant said “we belonged nowhere.”
- 108 Other reasons for admission to care included sexual or physical abuse by parent(s), serious neglect, absconding from unsafe care, own homelessness in teenage years, non-attendance at school, disability following accidents and unplanned pregnancy in teenage years.

## Memories of Admission

### Male Applicants

- 109 Thirty-seven male applicants had no memory of their admission into the care system; many of those had been very young at the time. The remaining 88 male applicants had some recall. Within the group of male applicants in this period a significant number were placed in a large residential establishment which had a remit to accommodate children of primary school age. Most of them transferred to another large establishment, the remit of which was to accommodate boys aged approximately eleven years of age and upwards.
- 110 A large number of the applicants who had been placed in care for a significant period of time talked of how they had witnessed older residents moving at age eleven or thereabouts to their new placement. Some

applicants commented that although they knew that they were going to move, there was no explanation about what the process entailed or where they were going. The boys moving to their next placement would often be part of a peer group and were transported by minibus by their new “carers” to their subsequent placement. One applicant remembered that he was terrified of leaving as he had been told by staff:

“You thought it was bad here...wait until you get to...They are a lot worse. You had it easy here.”

Some applicants said they had been looking forward to their next placement as they were hopeful that it would be an improvement on what they had experienced. Some recalled feeling excited as they would be able to have contact and reconnect with their sibling(s).

- 111 A concern noted by applicants was that their first placement, where many applicants had spent a large part of their childhood, was staffed predominantly by females and they had very limited contact with adult males. In their new placement, the staff group was very much male-dominated and this was described by some as unfamiliar and, initially, very unsettling.

Some comments from male applicants illustrate their recall about their care admission.

“On admission we were given rosary beads and told if we lost them we would get a hiding. We were terrified of losing them.”

“I remember when I was four or five struggling in the arms of staff to get down to follow my mother who was leaving me.”

“I was taken from court, I was asked on admission if I was related to... (sibling) and told if I was anything like him I was in for a rough time.”

“I’ve no clear memory of the actual admission but I remember the first night and hearing my younger brother crying. We were all made to sleep with blankets over our heads.”

“At the age of eight I was told by...(named outside agency) that I was going on holiday to a big house and not to worry as I’d have a great time. As a result of this lie, every week I lived in expectation of being collected by my parents but it never happened and I was very disappointed. That’s a life-long memory.”

“My mother deserted the family; she took my older sister with her. My father took the remaining children to...then father walked us up the long avenue to...My heart sank. I was received by (named staff). All smiles. It didn’t last.”

“My father drank heavily. One day my brother came to our school and took me to my older sister’s house. A woman who was there explained that because of my dad’s drinking, my mother had left the family. Dad said ‘you’re all orphans now.’ My older brother asked me if I wanted to stay with dad or go into a home. My older brother had opted for the home and so I followed him.”

### Female Applicants

- 112 Seventeen female applicants had no memory of their actual admission because of their age at that time. Sixty-three applicants had some memory, often one of feeling confused and uncertain. No applicant described any preparation for admission to care either by their family or by professionals involved. The following comments from applicants provide an insight into their experiences.

“I was taken to court with my brothers and sisters...I was not aware that I could be sent away for not attending at school. I was very shocked. My parents were shocked...they were good parents but with a disability. We were well supported by the community in our original home. We had to move to an area where we had no local support system.”

“My mother came from the country...we were living in a town (named), some family members had a disability, we were isolated, the GP gave mum anti-depressants, she got hooked, the priest got the nuns to take us.”

“My parents were in a mixed marriage; large family, very overcrowded wee house. Mum went to the clergy for assistance, they sent a letter to the welfare, and took us to the home; the family stayed away.”

- 113 An applicant, one of ten children, who was removed from her family when she was fourteen, told the Forum what happened to her:

“My dad was a street angel and house devil; I was youngest of a large family. The priest advised my mother to send me away for training.”

- 114 Another applicant who was absconding to avoid abuse in a care situation and who was subsequently placed in a training school said “nobody asked me why I was running.”

- 115 An applicant placed in the care system at three years old told the Forum her experience of not being told her story while in care:

“I was told my mother died in childbirth, I accepted that...I was not told I had a brother in the same place as me...we did not know of each other. Years later I met a cousin who told me my mother was still alive (single mother). Why was I not told the truth?”

- 116 Some of the applicants had a clear memory of their actual admission to the establishments and one applicant described it as follows:

“I was taken there by car. I remember big gates, a big driveway up to it. They cut my hair off; they used a razor on my neck. I was put into a bath with Jeyes Fluid in the bath water. I was given toast, tea and put to bed. I had no explanation of what was happening.”

- 117 Some applicants spoke of the preparation on the day of their admission although they did not know what they were being prepared for. One applicant, both of whose parents were deceased, remembered the day she was taken into the establishment:

“They (family members) took me from school, took me to the hairdressers, and then to (named home)...my nightmare began as we went up the long drive and I realised this was different.”

Another applicant, again who had lost both parents, told the Forum:

“We all got new clothes and went up to my granny’s street; all the neighbours were out... they were crying...everyone was crying. I was confused. We went up the road, then my little sister was taken at once to the nursery...I was crying and told to stop.”

An applicant sent when she was fifteen to a mother and baby facility told her story:

“I was fifteen, he was seventeen. We were from very different communities...I was pregnant...neither side was happy. My mother reported him for unlawful carnal knowledge...he got sent down. I was sent away for safety from both families.”

An applicant who was three when she went into care explained what happened:

“My mum had a bad stroke when my youngest brother was born...the family took all of my brothers and sisters but for me and my sister... when mum improved the others went home...she tried to get us back... staff kept saying we were doing well and it was best to leave us.”



- 118 Another applicant who was separated from her two brothers in the car that drove them from the courtroom explained “I lost everything that day.” An applicant who was removed from a very neglectful home was pleased when she got to the establishment where she was to live for the next twelve years: “It was lovely and clean, my bed was clean and I was fed.”

## Referral Source/Agencies

- 119 Sixty of the 125 males and 31 of the 80 female applicants did not know whether or not they had been referred to the establishment where they were placed. The following table sets out what applicants understood in relation to referral agencies.

Referral Source/Agency	Male	Female
<b>Not known</b>	60	31
<b>Welfare authorities</b>	18	17
<b>Local clergy</b>	18	12
<b>Courts</b>	22	12
<b>Police</b>	3	3
<b>NSPCC</b>	4	3
<b>Vincent de Paul Society</b>	-	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>80</b>

## Aspects of Care in the Residential Establishments

- 120 The experiences of the 125 males and of the 80 females are set out in this section of the report under voluntary sector provision, state sector provision and juvenile justice provision categories. Applicants’ accounts are described by gender within the three individual sectors. Applicants’ accounts of the five general care conditions of food, clothing, heat, bedding and personal care are included. Where any of these experiences are described as abusive or neglectful, this information is included in the Abuse/Neglect section of chapter 4 of this report.

## Voluntary Provision

- 121 The first part of this section covers the reports from 82 male applicants who had a total of 120 placements in twelve individual voluntary establishments.

The second part of this section covers the experiences of 74 females who had a total of 90 placements in 20 voluntary establishments.

**Males: Voluntary Provision**

- 122 Eighty-two male applicants spoke to the Forum regarding their experiences of day-to-day living within the establishments in which they were placed. Their opinions of their care conditions are set out in the table below.

Aspects of Care	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very bad	No memory/ not disclosed	Total placements
<b>Diet</b>	3	37	37	7	36	120
<b>Clothing</b>	3	41	18	2	56	120
<b>Heat</b>	5	36	8	3	68	120
<b>Bedding</b>	5	39	7	1	68	120
<b>Personal care</b>	4	32	31	8	45	120

**Diet**

- 123 Some of the male applicants who described their diet as very bad referred to the quantity rather than the quality of the food. Applicants who remembered the food as very bad, spoke of the food being inedible and of feeling hungry on a regular basis. In other circumstances, applicants explained that the food, at best, was not to their liking and described being given lumpy porridge, stews and over-cooked vegetables.
- 124 Applicants made the following comments with regard to their diet:
- “The food was basic....we had no choice.”
  - “I had to eat porridge and fatty bully beef.”
  - “The food was basic: cabbage, macaroni, hard baps with margarine and yesterday’s doughnuts.”
  - “I was starving all the while.”
  - “I was hungry and ate raw potatoes out of the ground and used to try to steal food from the pantry.”
  - “Eggs went to the staff and not us boys.”

Several applicants recounted that a significant issue with food was that the older boys were able to take more than their fair share, leaving the younger boys with less to eat.

### **Personal Care**

- 125 Many applicants who described personal care and hygiene practices as very poor were placed in two large establishments in the 1950s and early 1960s when showers were not available and where shared baths with liberal use of Jeyes Fluid were customary. Applicants described a lack of privacy, sharing towels or sheets that were often very wet by the time they could be used, as they were the last children in the queue. One applicant described rough handling by a local barber who attended at one establishment; he said “we were lined up like sheep.”

### **Other Care Provision**

- 126 Applicants did not enter into great detail about their clothing, heating or the supply of bedding in their placements. Some applicants stated that the boys wore the clothes they were given. They described hand-me-down clothing and said there were no options for them to choose from. One applicant reported that the shoes he was given were ill-fitting and had left his feet deformed as a result. Many aspects of the care experiences of the males who spoke to the Forum appear to have changed for the better from the mid-1960s onwards.

### **Work**

- 127 Forty-three of the 82 male applicants did not comment or were too young to remember any experiences of having to work when in their placements in the voluntary establishments. The remaining 39 applicants commented as follows: ten applicants described being responsible for chores such as helping to prepare food, laying the table for meals and keeping their bedroom tidy; two applicants commented that they enjoyed helping out, with one receiving extra pocket money for successfully completing his chores. None of these ten applicants viewed their chores as onerous.
- 128 Twenty-nine applicants felt the work they were required to do was excessive and a few applicants viewed it as punitive. One applicant said that he was made to work on the farm every day after school, every weekend and holiday period. Several applicants recounted that their weekly duties consisted of having to wash, wax and polish long wooden corridors every weekend. Some of these applicants recalled having to wear rags on their feet to make the floor shine. One of these applicants commented that

there was an electric buffer in the store room but it was not allowed to be used. Another applicant commented:

“We were made to polish shoes and if not done properly, we got thumped by the older boys.”

- 129 Several applicants spoke of having to work on the adjacent farm with one applicant commenting that he was kept from school in order to complete his chores. The duties applicants spoke about involved tending to the animals, picking potatoes and stacking hay. Several applicants gave accounts of being hired out to neighbouring farmers to dig potatoes and receiving no payment for their work: “It was slave labour, you got nothing for it.” Some of these applicants said they were sent to farms across the country and it was dark when they left their establishment and dark when they returned.

### **Religious Practice**

- 130 Some applicants did not refer to this aspect of life in their establishments. Other applicants said they had always had their religious beliefs and that this has remained very important for them. One applicant recounted that “the staff were gentle people who often prayed.”
- 131 A number of applicants referred to having to attend their place of worship daily, taking Communion and attending Confession. This was not always described negatively or to their detriment. Some applicants said they had lost their faith, but in later life, had returned to it.
- 132 Some of the applicants who described religious practices in their placements as excessive and taking precedence over other care factors such as their education and social development recounted the following:
- “...religion - morning, noon and night.”
- “It was constant – you were up every morning at 6.30 – 7.00 to serve Mass” (and he particularly remembered Easter as he was serving at High Mass and Low Mass, as well as saying the Rosary and Benediction).
- “Where was God when this was happening to us?”
- “Religion was thumped into you...it turned me off religion.”
- “I didn’t like it; I hate it; detest it. I don’t care about religion; I resent religion. You were either working or praying.”
- “I remember kneeling by the bed and being freezing cold and having to pray.”

“It was perpetual – non-stop. Praying, Mass, Angelus, choir.”

“Staff were obsessed with religious practices and routines for children.”

“The home was more concerned with religion than education.”

- 133 One applicant said that he was stopped from going to stay with his grandmother with whom he had a strong attachment, as she was not taking him to church. The staff believed his grandmother was bringing him to another church. This still resonates with the applicant as he was very tearful when relating this to the Forum. Another applicant recounted being made to kneel for long periods of time in church because of what he described as “minor infringements of the rules.”

### **Play and Recreation**

- 134 Fifty-one male applicants made no mention of, or complaint about, recreational facilities and activities. The remaining 31 referred to a range of activities that were available to them. These included watching television and sporting facilities such as a swimming pool, table tennis room, hurling pitches and basketball courts. Applicants referred to a playroom and outdoor swings in the grounds of one of the establishments. A few applicants recalled fond memories of being taken to Christmas parties provided by local businesses and being given presents.

- 135 Two applicants described going to the nearby town disco at the weekend, if they were not on home leave. Equally, a number of applicants were regularly taken to seaside resorts for a few weeks over the summer period and spoke of spending most of their time on the beach. An applicant remembered visitors being allowed to come at Christmas, once or twice over the years. They brought gifts for the boys, such as roller skates, which they were allowed to keep. One applicant when speaking of the recreational facilities referred to having nothing but a few old swings adding:

“one day was the same as the next....I was doing things at eleven that I did when I was five.”

### **Medical Care**

- 136 A large number of males did not comment on medical interventions, including dental examinations and treatments.
- 137 Fifteen male applicants commented on the lack of treatment from medical professionals. This included applicants who spoke of being beaten by a staff member, two of whom were hospitalised for these alleged attacks.

One recounted that, as a result of his attack, he had a head injury but was not brought for a medical examination or treatment. One applicant gave an account of an assault when he was stabbed by another resident but he was not taken to hospital.

138 Another applicant recalled a doctor visiting the establishment and the children getting their inoculations. This applicant also referred to being taken regularly to the dentist for treatment. Two applicants described having serious ailments as children, requiring them to be hospitalised. Three applicants recounted being on bed-rest in their establishment and being cared for by staff members. An applicant was hospitalised as a result of a severe beating by a member of staff who hit him on the head with a wooden towel rail (similar to a large rolling pin). This applicant was an in-patient in hospital for a significant time as he alleges his skull was fractured.

139 The following quotations and comments are typical of the information provided to the Forum:

“I was sick for three weeks and I’ve no recollection of being seen by a medic but only of being left in my bed in the dormitory.”

“I was taken to the local hospital following a fall from benches.”

“A doctor would come up and treat or examine the boys.”

“When I was three or four years old, I injured my leg when playing in the yard. I received stitches. Another incident occurred when I was around twelve or thirteen years old and making rugs. My eye was knocked out of its socket and I went to hospital for two weeks. I didn’t want to return to the home as I was pampered in the hospital.”

“The GP would visit but rarely. I had blisters (an allergic reaction to tomatoes) and was kept off school for two weeks and treated well by kitchen staff who gave me soup.”

“Older boys took the younger children to the dentist.”

An applicant recounted being very under weight as a child and always fainting but has no memory of being taken to see a doctor.

### **Applicants’ Experiences of Discharge from the Care System**

140 Twenty-eight of the 82 male applicants did not discuss their discharge arrangements or their experiences of leaving their residential placements. The remaining applicants did not always talk in detail but the following information was recounted to the Forum.

“I went home to a father who abused us.”

“I was sent back home to my father who was an alcoholic and violent... Nothing had changed.”

“I was sent home to a very violent household and nobody checked up on us.”

- 141 Some applicants who were discharged from care at fifteen or sixteen years of age spoke of the frightening and dangerous experiences they were exposed to once they had left residential care.

“When I left school I got work in a laundry but I still lived at the home. One day when I returned, I was met at the side door and told by a member of staff ‘you are leaving today’. I didn’t get a chance to say goodbye to anyone and I was placed in a boarding house. On my first night there, I was raped anally by a drunken man.”

“I was put with my older brother in a boarding house and a man tried to sexually assault me.”

“I went to work in...looking after horses and slept in a barn. I ran away to live with an uncle in the city...approved by the welfare, but that didn’t work out.”

“I left school as a fifteen year old on the Friday and a few days later, I was taken to ... to work with old people.”

“I was put in digs with other ex-residents. I received no support.”

- 142 Some applicants gave accounts of the loneliness and isolation they felt as they realised they were alone for the first time in their lives and they had no support systems in place. They felt abandoned for a second time. One applicant described what he referred to as his release:

“It was the loneliest day of my life. I had a bag, the same as the Chancellor’s, with two sets of underwear, socks and a suit in it. I had no parents, no family.”

- 143 Some applicants said they felt different from their peers who had grown up in family care. They explained this as not just dealing with the stigma and shame of growing up in the care system but more a feeling of being different. As said by one applicant,

“I felt as though I was on the outside” and described other teenagers as seeing him as “simple.”

Another applicant reflected, “I didn’t know a single pop star or a film star” and said “I was unable to relate to others who hadn’t been in care.”

- 144 Some of the applicants were discharged to, or managed to find, lodgings. There was a general consensus that the quality of the accommodation provided was poor, overcrowded and two of the witnesses described further serious sexual abuse by older men in their accommodation. Between 1970 and 1976, those discharged described their terror at being placed in areas where tensions in the community were very high. Some of the applicants, who had been in long-stay care and placed in a rural setting, felt they were not fully prepared to deal with the Troubles and felt very vulnerable when they left care. An applicant, who had been in residential care and discharged in the 1970s, commented:

“I knew nothing of the Troubles....I was thrown into the midst of chaos.”

- 145 A few applicants said they became involved in paramilitary organisations as a way of getting some protection or even a sense of belonging. Following his discharge, one applicant was very seriously assaulted when he wandered into an area where he was stopped by a group of males and questioned about his religion. His pockets were searched and his rosary beads were found. This applicant had to be hospitalised for some time as the result of the severe beating he received. Other applicants made the following comments in regard to their discharge:

“There was rioting at the end of the road. I didn’t know what to expect.”

“There were bombs going off. I was frightened.”

- 146 One applicant, discharged at fifteen years of age and who remained under the care of Social Services until he was eighteen years of age, said his social worker found lodgings and work for him. He reflected that leaving his care establishment was a very sad time for him as he was entering into a world he didn’t really know nor understand. He also missed the residents who were like family to him.

### **Post-Care Support**

- 147 In total, six male applicants said they were offered appropriate post-care support, and described this as getting assistance with welfare benefits and housing. Applicants who spoke of their discharge from care felt there was little help to assist them to reintegrate back into family life or develop the life skills they needed to manage in the community. Applicants told the Forum the following about the conclusion of their time in care.



“I was put in digs with other ex residents and received no support.”

“I had no preparation for leaving – I was just told I was going when I arrived back from school. I was sent to a hostel in Dublin.”

“I had no idea where I was going, no aftercare, and no preparation for leaving – only digs, where subsequently I was sexually abused.”

“I had no preparation for discharge apart from being given work boots and, on the day of leaving, being given a girl’s coat, playing cards and religious icons.”

“I had no social worker and at sixteen I was on the streets. I didn’t know about sex or women...I feel angry still.”

“I was never given a childhood.”

“I was given a suitcase and a religious picture with ‘Wishing you all the best’ on the reverse.”

“At fifteen years of age, I was told it was time to leave. I was called into head staff member’s office and told ‘You are going out into the big bad world’. I left with what I had on me and a small suitcase with a pair of short trousers, a tank top, a vest and underpants.”

“I was placed with a family and given a job on a building site pulling nails out of timber. I had no other assistance.”

### Females: Voluntary Provision

- 148 Seventy-four female applicants spoke to the Forum about how they experienced day-to-day living in the establishment in which they were placed. Their opinions about aspects of care are set out in the table below.

Aspects of Care	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very bad	No memory/ not disclosed	Total Placements
<b>Diet</b>	-	14	30	13	33	90
<b>Clothing</b>	4	29	22	2	33	90
<b>Heat</b>	2	35	12	2	39	90
<b>Bedding</b>	3	34	13	4	36	90
<b>Personal care</b>	11	9	28	17	25	90

The table shows that, across the five aspects of care, two were more often the subject of negative comments than others. These were diet and personal care and hygiene.

## Diet

- 149 The quantity and/or quality of the food provided in the voluntary sector was described as adequate or good in relation to 31 placements. In 33 placements, the food was described as being poor or very bad. The reports relating to poor food were not time specific but were distributed across the entire time period (1956-1975). The reports of the food being described as good came largely from applicants who had been placed in smaller establishments where choice and preferences were more easily provided for.
- 150 The following comments typify the female applicants' reported experiences:
- “Poor quality food, not enough to eat, I was always hungry. I was forced to eat semolina and bread pudding even though it made me sick.”
  - “...I ate food that was down for the dog as I was so hungry...I still feel so guilty about this.”
  - “The food was very bad, bread and dripping, grisly fat stew, it was inedible, I was always hungry.”
  - “The food included cold lumpy porridge and greasy fries. I was always hungry.”
  - “There was donated food but this was not given to the children.”
  - “I picked chewing gum off the ground as I was in constant hunger.”
  - “If you refused to eat the food (inedible fat, gristle) they would take it away but then bring it back until you ate it. I wasn't starved but I was hungry and would steal food if the opportunity arose.”

## Clothing

- 151 The provision of suitable clothing was described as adequate or good by applicants who had been in 33 of the 90 placements, while in 24 placements it was reported that the clothing provision was inadequate. The complaints concerning clothing focused on the sharing and the uniformity of the clothing provided. These applicants spoke of what they regarded as unreasonable demands that clothing had to be kept pristine for long periods of time, and that they had to have their sleeves rolled up.
- 152 A number of applicants attended school near the establishment and most of them said that they “stood out” as their uniform was of a sub-standard quality when compared to that worn by the other girls in school. In some placements the shoes provided were second-hand and ill-fitting. Several

applicants recalled that getting a pair of shoes of the right size was a lottery. Towards the latter part of this period there were more positive descriptions of applicants being taken shopping for new clothes, being allowed to have choices in the selection of their clothes and the introduction of individual clothing allowances.

### **Personal Care**

153 The second aspect of care about which applicants expressed negativity was personal care including: bathing arrangements, practices regarding menstruation and general personal grooming. In 45 of the 90 placements this aspect was described as poor or very bad, while just 20 of the 90 described this as satisfactory.

154 The following comments illustrate the experiences recounted by the applicants:

“There were shared baths and shared drying towels. The only item for self care was a wash cloth and very small towel.”

“There was no privacy at all. Jeyes Fluid was mixed into the bath water and so much was used it left brown marks on your skin. We had to strip to the waist to wash regardless of age.”

(Menstruation) “We had to go and ask for sanitary towels. the staff might say ‘I gave you one this morning’; no extra baths were allowed, legs became chaffed, it was embarrassing.”

“At bath time we were like animals in a shed lined up ready, one child in the bath, one sitting on the edge of the bath washing her feet, others lined up awaiting their turn in the same water.”

“There was no sex education or training in personal hygiene...I left ignorant of the developments I would experience in puberty...I was not taught about menstruation.”

“I wet the bed and was not allowed to wash myself before school.”

“I was made to sleep in a wet bed with my younger sister – it was a cold wet bed. I had to bath after all other younger girls were washed – the water was dirty and slimy.”

### **Other Care Provision**

155 The other areas of care provision commented on by a minority of applicants were heating and bedding. Where comments were made, they were generally positive.

## Work

- 156 Thirty-five of the 74 female applicants who were placed in voluntary establishments in Period 2 advised the Forum that they did not have to perform any onerous work tasks while in their placements. Of that number, some applicants were too young to remember as they were in nurseries and some were happy that the chores they had were not taxing. Other applicants had no recall of undertaking work duties or did not refer to any during their meetings with the Forum.
- 157 Thirty-nine applicants in placements in the voluntary establishments spoke of being allocated work on a constant basis from age five upwards. Work included a range of tasks from bed making, scrubbing, waxing and polishing floors, being responsible for younger children including babies who required feeding during the night, spring-cleaning classrooms, scrubbing toilets and bathrooms and caring for elderly residents in adjacent accommodation. Working in industrial-style laundries was reported as a constant feature by some applicants and most of them had been given this work from twelve years upwards. Some applicants recalled working at big tubs from age eight and having to stand on steps in order to reach the large sinks.
- 158 The majority of the establishments were described as places where the children did the everyday work to keep the accommodation clean. The work was described as onerous, often beyond the age capability of the child. It was noted by applicants that a very high standard of work was expected. The staff or older residents supervised their work and if they were unhappy with the outcome, then it had to be redone. Some applicants spoke of being kept off school if they had not finished their chores in the morning; some remembered being kept away from recreational facilities and some had to undertake extra work late into the evening as punishment. The following comments and descriptions from applicants are indicative of the experiences shared with the Forum:

“Every day I had to get up at 6.00am and had twenty-four babies’ nappies to change (my younger sisters helped). We dressed the babies, changed sheets if needed, washed nappies and put them to soak in Napisan. We had Mass, breakfast and school. If there was no school we brushed the floor, washed the tables and chairs, dusted and looked after babies... I was always working.”

“We were made to lay out the dead. One time when I was about nine years old, I had to go with my friend (another resident) and lay out an

old lady with whom I had had a good relationship. This lady was an amputee and both of us had to bath and lay her out.”

“Regularly I had to bring a trolley down to the ‘dead house’ and tend to the corpse – hair, powder puff etc.”

“I had to paint my bed every summer – it had a cream metal frame – and I had work in the laundry and in the old people’s home.”

“I had to clean six toilets and floors each morning before school...my work was inspected and if I failed then I had to do it again...school was not the main thing.”

“I was made to polish floors and work in the morning before and after school – on cold tile floors on bare knees polishing with no respite.”

“...life was filled with house-work...cleaning and scrubbing in the children’s home and in the classrooms and...replacing light bulbs. There was little time to be a child.”

“I was made to work in the laundry and the washroom but, when I couldn’t manage the ironing (I burned the clothes!), I was then sent to the stitching rooms.”

### Religious Practice

159 Thirty-five of the 74 female applicants made no reference to religious practices in their placements. Eighteen of the 39 applicants who did comment on religious practices spoke of attending Mass on a daily basis, of regular morning and evening prayers and of attending other services. Religious observance was described as part of everyday life. Comments about religion were more common in the accounts of those who had placements during the 1950s and 1960s and were less prevalent in the 1970s, although attendance at Sunday services and morning and evening prayers continued to be mentioned. For some applicants their religious observance was accepted as good or positive, while for others it was regarded as something that was overemphasised and not welcomed.

160 Some comments from applicants illustrate what the Forum was told about religious practices.

“We had to say the Rosary nightly and got sent to Benediction every other night...in Confession I had to say that I had done something wrong and confess.”

“I had to go to the early Mass some weeks...part of some rota. Then off to retreats for three days each year...no talking was allowed. We always were made to kneel to say the Rosary each and every night.”

“It was pray, pray, pray...before breakfast, Rosary after school...pray for every Tom, Dick and Harry all the time ...when President Kennedy died...they hauled us all out of bed to pray for him...If a nun died...she was laid out in an open coffin... we had to go in and pray for them.”

“We were always praying...the staff would get children up in the morning by clapping and immediately all would jump out of bed and on their knees to pray. Prayers last thing at night and first thing in the morning. The nun would still be very alert even when she was in her cell...we all said our prayers.”

“Services on Sunday morning, Sunday school and services in the evening ...I was smacked across the face in God’s name...“God would not want you to do that’ I was told.”

An applicant who had been in a home in the 1970s, said she “enjoyed the smell of incense and loved the Benediction.”

### **Play and Recreation**

- 161 Forty-five of the 74 applicants did not discuss or refer to any recreational facilities. From the comments of 29 female applicants it became evident that many establishments had outside play areas and some equipment. This equipment was described by some as being rusty and inadequate, particularly in the larger establishments given the numbers of children accommodated there. The following are typical of comments made about outdoor play facilities:

“The play ground/yard outside had a climbing frame – a rusty climbing bar.”

“Other equipment – such as a slide – was presented by a donor but this was removed by staff.”

“There was some play equipment but girls were not allowed to climb.”

“The noise level was awful...no peace...I tried to find a quiet place to read.”

Many experienced the play yard as a place of fear because of the noise or the danger of being knocked over as girls charged around. For others, it provided an opportunity to be outside and a place of enjoyment, even if only for a short period.

- 162 Recreation also included access to some television shows, watching films on Sunday evenings, and having record players. During the late 1960s and early 1970s, in some establishments, the older girls had a separate sitting

room which made life more comfortable for them. In one establishment, bikes were provided and the older girls were allowed to cycle into the local town on Sundays.

Comments made by applicants included:

“TV was switched on for the News. At Christmas time we were allowed to watch.”

“We had occasional access to television - any kissing on TV meant the telly was always turned over.”

“... me and another girl were watching ‘Top of the Pops’ and mimicking Pans People dancing – I was told I was immoral. I was made to stand outside the staff room for hours.”

“Each group had a sitting room. We could watch limited TV, there was more freedom once I turned fifteen. There was a big room with music but we were only allowed in there occasionally...any noise and you would be sent out.”

- 163 Many applicants spoke fondly of going out to parties organised for them by local businesses and the joy of getting a present and eating food not normally available to them. They spoke of the excitement in the build-up to such outings and the disappointment and hurt if permission to attend was withdrawn for some misdemeanour. Most, but not all, applicants recalled that the presents they were given were removed on return to the establishment.
- 164 Some applicants referred to going on walks on a Sunday and this was welcomed as providing an opportunity to get out and for some it provided the only opportunity to see their sisters. For others it was a painful experience in that they felt humiliated at having to walk in a crocodile line.
- 165 Other recreational activities commented on included dancing classes, playing in bands and attending the Feis or other competitions. In establishments where music and singing were encouraged, those who were not musically talented were allocated extra chores instead.
- 166 A number of applicants described being taken on holidays for a week to a local seaside area. These holidays were generally spoken of as a time when the girls had more freedom and time to enjoy themselves. However, for some of the older girls the routines of cleaning, washing up and caring for younger children filled their days when they were on holiday.

- 167 Seven applicants spoke of experiencing little or no recreational activities. Instead, they were engaged in work chores, kept indoors or away from play. An applicant who was placed with a younger sibling spoke of the emphasis on completing chores after school to the detriment of playtime:
- “my chores took all my time after school...I constantly looked out for my sister...little room left for any recreation...I was frightened all my time there.”

### Medical Care

- 168 Fifty-seven applicants did not remember, or did not refer to, any medical care in the establishment in which they were placed. Some of the seventeen applicants who described medical care referred to a variety of interventions including immunisations, general practitioner visits and/or clinic attendance, hospital attendance or admission, being placed in a sick bay on site and dental treatment. Others did not remember any medical interventions when they believed their illness or injury would have warranted attention. The following comments illustrate what applicants told the Forum:

“I was diagnosed as coeliac and given the wrong types of food. As a result, I was frequently sick. I was taken to...Hospital following a particularly severe beating from the woman in charge of the home.”

“The doctor called, he saw the new children, he checked them. I think it was fortnightly. I saw him once, I had bad flu. If you were ill, other children were responsible for bringing up food or medicine to you. A girl with jaundice was isolated and it was my job to bring her all her food and medicine. A kind member of staff brought me gruel with sugar when I had flu.”

“I recall being asked by the dentist about teeth hygiene and I told him that there was no toothpaste in the home. He contacted the home and I was made to stand on a chair for hours and was hit with the side of a ruler on my knuckles by a member of staff.”

“I never saw a doctor or nurse – I had scabs on my head which another child was made to brush out; it was very painful, I passed out. There was no medical help.”

“My knee split open and would have required stitches, but I was not seen by a medic.”

“Injuries caused by staff were hidden. If you were bruised you had to wear tights and were given a note for school so no PE. At hospital you were not allowed to speak, staff did all the talking.”



“I suffered from severe acne when I was a teenager and got no medical attention for it.”

“They looked after cuts and grazes, and used iodine and Jeyes Fluid. I had ringworm and was taken out to a clinic.”

### **Applicants’ Experiences of Discharge from the Care System**

169 The 74 female applicants who were in 90 placements in the voluntary sector spoke to the Forum about their discharge from those placements as follows.

- Thirty-four applicants were discharged home at various ages.
- Twenty applicants left the establishment to commence working.
- Seven applicants were placed in adoptive or in long-term foster care families.
- Four applicants were sent to juvenile justice establishments because they were absconding.
- Four applicants were transferred to establishments in the state sector.
- Three applicants were sent to laundries run by religious orders where they remained for some years. As reported to the Forum, applicants did not have a choice in this matter.
- Two applicants went to other placements: one to further education, where she lived-in and one joined the armed services.

### **Post-Care Support**

170 Only seven applicants told the Forum that they had been offered good support after leaving the care system. Most applicants described little or no preparation for leaving their placements and many applicants who were sent home reported that they were by then estranged from their families and communities and went back to strangers. Applicants reported being told they were leaving only on the day of their departure or at best the day before. Some comments from applicants illustrate how this aspect of care was experienced.

“I was placed on an aeroplane unaccompanied to...where I was met by mother who was like a stranger... there was no support from anybody...I was just told I was going home tomorrow.” (The applicant was twelve at the time.)

“I ran away, was brought back, couldn’t settle, next thing I was put in a van and landed in...most of the people there were very old...I never got out...it closed when I was about 25...lucky me.”

“I was given a job in the convent... cleaning, serving food to visitors... answering the door etc. I got £4 per month, and food and board. Eventually one of the other girls got me a job in a factory. I left and started living.”

“...I was sent back to them (parents) why? I had been taken away because he (father) was abusing us...he just continued.” (This applicant returned to care at a later point.)

- 171 A small number of applicants who persistently ran away from the establishment in which they were placed were sent to juvenile justice establishments. One applicant who ran away at thirteen was convicted of an offence. She told the Forum that the staff from her first placement did not prepare her for this possibility and she did not understand what had happened in court: “No one explained to me.”
- 172 Very few applicants talked about being trained in basic life skills such as cooking, budgeting and shopping. For many of the 20 applicants discharged into work, often living in hostels initially, life was for some years very difficult as they struggled to master the basic necessary skills for survival. This was particularly true for those applicants who had been raised largely in institutional settings in the care system.
- 173 Many, but not all, applicants described that an initial job had been found for them. They had no work or life skills so the jobs were at a very basic level, for some no work was secured. Many left Northern Ireland shortly after their discharge from care to seek work in England. Many of those had no family contacts to fall back on but some were fortunate to be living with, or in contact with, people they knew from their placements who were helpful and supportive.

### **Return Home**

- 174 Thirty-four applicants were discharged to the family home. For some this was a good and positive experience and they rebuilt their lives as a family unit. Comments included:
- “Soon as they got a house...we were home. I never told them what had happened...how could I?”
- “...after a few months...the court sent us home. Welfare would still visit; we saw them for years...eventually the visits stopped.”
- 175 For many applicants going home meant returning to families from whom they had become estranged; their parents had new partners who were strangers to them. They had new siblings or half-siblings and they were

expected to settle down and attend new schools or go to work in new communities and, in a few cases, in entirely new countries. For some, the underlying family difficulties of alcohol misuse, physical or sexual abuse or domestic violence had not changed and many of the applicants in these situations left home as quickly as possible. Some applicants said that they felt their families had only taken them out to make them ‘unpaid skivvies again’ while others spoke of parents sending them out to work as soon as possible and taking all their wages.

### **Adoptive or Long-Term Foster Care**

- 176 Seven applicants were discharged to long-term families; three were adopted while four remained in long-term foster care. Two of them went to foster or holiday families who had befriended them while they were in the establishment and this was described as a very happy outcome. One applicant, whose mother was a single parent, described being adopted at age five. Her mother signed the legal papers. When the applicant traced her mother in later life she discovered that her mother had not been fully informed about the meaning of adoption and that all parental rights had been removed from her. The adoptive placement was a very positive one and the applicant became tearful when speaking about her adoptive parents as they are now both deceased. These types of placements out of long-term residential establishments were made mostly in the late 1960s and in the 1970s.

### **Reporting Abuse**

- 177 Most applicants left the care system and did not speak further about their childhood or any abuse that occurred until some ten years or more had passed. The 42 applicants who described some or all of the aspects of their experiences in the establishments spoke to their partners or counsellors. More recently, applicants have spoken to the police. A few applicants have told their own children as they grew up or asked questions about their background and family of origin. Most applicants spoke of wanting to avoid the stigma of being raised in care, or placing the burden of their experiences on the shoulders of their children. The fear for everyone was that no one would believe them and some expressed their relief at finally having the opportunity of speaking freely of their past.

### **State Sector Provision**

- 178 Twenty male applicants had a total of 30 placements in 16 individual state sector establishments. Ten female applicants had a total of

eleven placements in nine individual state sector establishments. These placements included residential child-care establishments, hostels, residential medical settings for children and young people and an assessment and reception centre. The establishments in the state sector were smaller residential units admitting both male and female children of a similar age range, for example primary or secondary school aged children. Most applicants spent a maximum of one year in each placement and for some applicants their placements lasted for a few months only.

- 179 This section of the report is divided into two parts. The first part covers the experiences of male applicants in state sector placements while the second covers the experiences of female applicants.

#### **Males: State Provision**

- 180 The twenty male applicants who spoke with the Forum had a total of 30 placements in sixteen individual state sector establishments.
- Fourteen of the establishments were smaller, community, residential units admitting both male and female children of a similar age range.
  - One establishment admitted males only.
  - One establishment was a medical setting undertaking assessment and treatment of children and young people.
- 181 The following indicates the number of placements of applicants in the state sector.
- Thirteen male applicants had one state sector placement only.
  - Four male applicants had two state sector placements.
  - Two male applicants had three state sector placements.
  - One male applicant had four state sector placements.

#### **Other Care Placements**

- 182 Following their placements in state establishments, three applicants were transferred to three different voluntary establishments. Additionally, two male applicants were admitted to two different juvenile justice establishments.

#### **Care Conditions**

- 183 Several male applicants either had no memory of, or chose not to comment on, the general conditions in their placement, such as food, clothing, heating, bedding and personal care provided. The remaining applicants described the care amenities in their placement(s) as either

adequate or good. None of the male applicants expressed any complaints about the general care conditions in their state establishments.

184 One applicant who had had two placements in the state sector, differentiated between both establishments, describing the care in one as “not too bad” and the other as “pure torture.”

185 One applicant recounted positive memories of his placement in a state establishment. He described his placement as:

“a supportive family environment. I have no complaints; I have the height of praise for the ethos and practice.”

186 One establishment in the state sector had education on site. Children resident in the remaining state establishments, if of school age, attended school within the community.

187 The following comments give a sense of applicants’ views of their state care provision:

“Staff were not all bad; there were some nice people but also bad apples.”

“I was very unsettled and resented the strict regime. I was missing contact with my family, hiding and running away frequently.”

“I absolutely hated it from day one. I was scared there all the time.”

An applicant described a gang of about five older Belfast boys who were in the establishment:

“There were three other boys in the home as well as me who were not street-wise. The older boys were engaged in street disturbances and I saw staff give them money regularly. My social worker Miss...was a young woman and she never entered the home...after day one. She saw me in her car round the corner from the home.”

188 An applicant described his placement as “positive” and referred to three members of staff as “lovely to me.” Another commented that his placement “worked very well”. He was very enthusiastic about and appreciative of his care. Other positive views expressed included:

“The housemother was warm and all staff very approachable. I was taken out each Saturday by...to her parent’s home for tea.”

“I had lots of food, clothes were clean and a clean bed. I was never hit, I could talk to people.”

“I was happy in every way in...”

“I loved it – I felt settled and secure in my placement.”

“It was a happy place, it gave you a warm feeling.”

“Overall it was very positive and I could see my sisters.”

- 189 Those applicants who commented on the recreational facilities available to them described toys and games, involvement in extra-curricular activities and, in certain establishments, grounds in which they could play. One applicant reported the following:

“There was a common room for games, and residents could also play outside...it was an open establishment...you were not locked in.”

One applicant who was approximately nine years of age when in a state establishment, described his daily routine as follows:

“I was up at 7.00am, had to wash, dress, get breakfast and then go to school. I returned from school at half past three and changed out of school uniform. We had games and would sometimes play outside. I did homework and had tea. We went off to bed at around 8.00pm after supper which was tea and biscuits.”

### **Religious Practice**

- 190 Seventeen of the twenty male applicants who had been in state establishments did not mention religious practice when describing their experiences. Of the three who did, two spoke positively about this aspect of their care while one believed this to be excessive and said the following:

“The officer in charge was very religious, services twice on every Sunday, Sunday school, evening catechism”.

### **Applicants’ Experiences of Discharge from the Care System**

- 191 Seven of the twenty male applicants did not give any detail about their discharge arrangements from state establishments. Six of the twenty male applicants were returned to family care. Three of the twenty male applicants went on to find employment and accommodation. Two of the twenty male applicants were transferred to another establishment in the voluntary sector. Two of the twenty male applicants were transferred to juvenile justice establishments.

### **Females: State Provision**

- 192 Ten female applicants who spoke to the Forum were placed in nine different establishments in the state sector. One of those applicants had two placements in different establishments in the state sector. One placement was made in 1959 while the other ten placements were in the

1960s and 1970s. All ten applicants were in their placements for one year or less.

### **Care Conditions**

- 193 The female applicants made no complaints about food, clothing, heating, bedding and personal care. In some of their establishments provision was described as good, while some applicants did not comment at all on these aspects of their care.
- 194 In general, recreational facilities were described as adequate with appropriate toys or games available. Recreation, where mentioned, fitted the normal pattern for children and young people. Eight of the nine applicants in state establishments made no reference to having to complete tasks or chores. One applicant had to work in a laundry attached to her placement in the 1970s when she was in her mid-teens. She got paid a small amount for the work, which was described as arduous, and she had to pay for all her personal toiletries out of that sum.
- 195 Religion was not commented on by any of the nine applicants to the Forum and there was no comment in relation to medical care except for one applicant who remembered a general practitioner attending.
- 196 Comments from applicants included:
- “...was a lovely children’s home.”
- “It was great...we mixed together...boys and girls...we got on well... when my father came to bring us home...I wanted to stay.”

Applicants in state establishments went to local schools and there were no complaints about the education they received.

### **Discharge from State Care**

- 197 Four of the ten female applicants were discharged home from their placements in this sector. Three of them were transferred to placements in the voluntary sector, two left to go to hostels and working life and one was admitted to a psychiatric facility.

### **Juvenile Justice Provision**

- 198 This section of the report is in two parts, the first dealing with the experiences of the male applicants and the second dealing with the experiences of female applicants who were in juvenile justice establishments.

### **Males: Juvenile Justice**

- 199 Twenty-seven male applicants who spoke to the Forum had experienced 39 placements in seven individual establishments within the juvenile justice sector.

### **Placement Duration**

- 200 Twelve of the male applicants had spent one year or less in a juvenile justice setting whereas seven applicants had spent two years, two applicants had spent three years and two had spent four years in a juvenile justice setting. Four applicants had spent five years in a juvenile justice setting.

### **Other Care Placements**

- 201 Twenty male applicants each had one placement in a juvenile justice establishment during this period and of those:
- three had been in one or more voluntary sector establishments before their admission to a juvenile justice establishment
  - one had been discharged from a juvenile justice setting and then placed in a voluntary establishment
  - three male applicants had re-admissions into juvenile justice establishments.

Four male applicants had two placements each in different juvenile justice establishments. One male applicant had three placements in different juvenile justice establishments. Two male applicants had four placements each in four different juvenile justice establishments.

### **Reasons for Admission**

- 202 As indicated earlier, some of the male applicants were not aware of the reasons for their placements in juvenile justice establishments. Equally, some chose not to speak of the reasons why they were sent to such establishments. Twelve male applicants said they were the subjects of court orders granted through the youth courts. The Forum heard that applicants were sent to juvenile justice establishments for the following reasons:
- truanting from school
  - antisocial behaviours such as petty theft
  - absconding from a children's home or running away from the family home



- out of control and challenging behaviours and assault
- breach of a supervision order.

203 Applicants gave the following information to the Forum about the reasons for their admission.

- Two applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments previously, said they were sent to juvenile justice establishments due to persistent absconding.
- An applicant commented that the arrangements to place him in secure accommodation were facilitated by staff in the voluntary and the juvenile justice sectors, without the involvement of any external agencies or authorities.
- One applicant who was admitted as a twelve or thirteen-year-old under a court order for truanting and discharged five years later, told the Forum that he thought, at the outset, he would be detained “for a few months, not for five years.” He concluded that the absence of his father resulted in him being overly punished for what was described as a relatively minor matter. He could not understand why he was sent away from his mother for such a significant length of time.
- One applicant was admitted as a fourteen-year-old under a court order “for loitering with intent” in a shop. He was discharged from placement two years later.
- One applicant was sentenced to a “period of training” after many court appearances.
- One applicant was sent by the youth courts for many minor offences such as stealing groceries after his father had deserted the family.
- One applicant was placed as an eleven-year-old by the magistrates court in response to an incident when he assaulted another child in a park.
- One applicant was sentenced to four weeks detention when he was eleven or twelve years of age.
- One applicant was sent to a juvenile justice establishment as a holding placement before he was detained in another establishment, as he was persistently absconding (this applicant had a history of three placements).
- One applicant was a member of a paramilitary organisation and charged with possession of a firearm at fifteen years of age. He was remanded for six months and then sentenced to three years detention.

### Care Conditions

- 204 Fifteen male applicants had no memory of or did not disclose any details of the food, clothing, bedding or heating they were provided with in their placements. Seven male applicants described the food and clothing as good or adequate and one applicant described the food as very good. Four applicants who were in placement in the late 1950s and early 1960s described the food and the clothing provided to them as poor.

“We all wore short trousers.”

“Absconders wore white shorts, even out on walks to mark them out.”

“Rubbish clothes, short trousers or later baggy long trousers.”

“Christmas dinner was a jam sandwich (no butter) and glass of milk.”

### Work

- 205 Some applicants spoke about being made to work in their establishments. The following comments are representative of what they told the Forum.

“I cleaned the bedroom and corridors; I was sent out in school holidays to pick potatoes for farmers; I was promised half-crown a day. I never saw it. I was fed by farmers when out and this was better than the food in.”

“At weekends the Belfast boys went out whilst we had to clean and polish the three dormitories using blankets on our feet.”

“We cleaned and polished the dormitory every Saturday.”

“If we misbehaved, we were made to clean the place – we were kept out of school to do this.”

“I worked in the laundry and in the kitchen; I had cleaning duties including mixing the floor wax and waxing the floors; I acted as messenger for teachers taking notes from class to class constantly; I became the personal servant of the ... I worked in the vestry and the shoe-maker’s shop; I worked in the gardens in the holiday home.”

“I had to do the floors by walking up and down with cloths on my shoes to polish them for hours.”

“I had to clean the showers.”

“I had to work in a staff member’s house, a mansion, where I dusted, cleaned and polished.”

“I spent six months in the kitchen washing pots and pans; I had dermatitis from my hands being in water and soap all the time. The skin was falling off me.”

“I worked in the shed on scrap metal; pulling spikes out of metal all day.”

“I was made to scrub large stone floors with a scrubbing brush. If you didn’t do as required, you got a slap on head and face.”

“I had to clean toilets with a toothbrush and was hit if not satisfactory.”

One applicant commented that in his opinion:

“the allocation of duties to the boys depended on whether or not staff liked you.”

### **Religious Practice**

- 206 Of the 27 applicants who had been in juvenile justice establishments seventeen did not mention religious practice. Ten applicants, all resident in one establishment, spoke of religious practice but this was not described as excessive. One applicant told the Forum he was an altar boy, which he enjoyed. Two applicants referred to the usual Mass on Sundays.

### **Recreation**

- 207 Some applicants referred to a number of recreational opportunities including:
- two-week summer holidays
  - band
  - boxing and football
  - swimming
  - television
  - football, table tennis and snooker
  - hurling, Gaelic football
  - half hour “association” time daily.

### **Medical Care**

- 208 Most of the male applicants did not discuss medical interventions or treatment. However some applicants made a passing reference to a designated medical person, whom they understood to be a nurse, based on site and part of the staff complement. Three applicants who had been in juvenile justice establishments commented on medical attention as follows:

“I was badly injured on two separate occasions by staff. One time, I was taken to a local hospital and on the second occasion, to another hospital. Medical staff did not ask about the injuries.”

“I was put in the infirmary when head-butted by another resident and I had to have my nose reset.”

“I was taken to hospital for x-rays when my ribs were broken during an assault by a member of staff who beat me with a hurling bat.”

### **Discharge from Juvenile Justice Placements**

- 209 Eleven of the twenty male applicants were discharged home to family care. Two male applicants went to live in digs and both secured apprenticeships. One applicant commented, as an aside, that the boys who had been in his establishment were known as “bad boys” and his peers were told not to associate with him.
- 210 One applicant returned to his juvenile justice establishment as a day pupil to complete his education. Another spoke of the assistance he received when, at sixteen years of age, he was discharged from his placement and staff had arranged for him to commence an apprenticeship. Otherwise, applicants did not make reference to post-care support. One applicant was discharged to a voluntary establishment. Six applicants were transferred to other juvenile justice establishments and their experiences are included in Period 3 of this report.

### **Females: Juveniles Justice Provision**

- 211 Seven female applicants had seven placements in two individual establishments in the juvenile justice sector. Five female applicants each had one placement in one individual juvenile justice establishment as follows:

- Two applicants were placed in establishment in the late 1950s and early 1960s. One of them was placed there for four years and her sister was placed for nine years. These two siblings entered into this placement as a result of non-school attendance.
- Two applicants were placed in the early 1960s – one applicant had a placement of three years duration and the other had a placement of two years duration.
- One applicant was placed for one year in the early 1970s.

Two other applicants were placed in another juvenile justice establishment as follows:

- One applicant had a placement of three years duration in the late 1960s.
- One applicant had a placement of one year in the 1970s.

### Reasons for Admission

- 212 Some female applicants did not know why they were placed in some establishments. The information they gave to the Forum indicated the following in relation to placements in the juvenile justice sector:
- Five applicants appear to have been subject to a training school order. Two of those were siblings who were not attending school. One of the siblings was very young and there was no other child of similar age in that placement.
  - One applicant, who had a short-term placement, appears to have been subject to a place of safety order and placed in this environment because a suitable, more appropriate placement to meet her needs was not available.
  - One applicant did not know the reason for her placement.

### Care Conditions

- 213 Five of the seven female applicants did not speak about the basic care provision facilities in the juvenile justice establishments. Two applicants, who had criticisms of the basic standards, described the food as poor. One applicant also felt that personal care was poor. Their description of the overall situation as experienced was as follows.

“I was the youngest child there for six years. I had no friends of my own age. There was a great deal of violence and hard physical work. I was always the youngest. The food was poor at times but emotionally the place was very cold. Although I was a small child, I was not allowed by staff to get any comfort from others.”

“They had rewards points and a grade system – 90 points were required for a home visit. I was referred to by a number...We had two sets of uniform and had to change on Monday. The pants were not new when I got them. I got only three sanitary towels a day but I was not allowed to wash my pants.”

### Work in the Establishments

- 214 Six of the seven female applicants described having a heavy workload during their placements in juvenile justice establishments.
- One applicant spoke of having to clean stairs and banisters, do the laundry, and wash tiled walls using a toothbrush to clean grouting. She described being made do it all over again if the staff thought her work not good enough.

- Another described cleaning and polishing the chapel and dormitory: “Lots of kitchen work, laundry work, weeding, making up hot water bottles for staff. The girls kept the place pristine.”

Others told the Forum that:

“Work was a constant...scrubbing, washing, polishing chapel, dormitories and staff quarters. Kitchen and laundry work included washing soiled sanitary pads belonging to staff.”

“We had to scrub floors (there was a buffer to polish floors) we had to do knitting, embroidery and sewing and the items we made were for sale. I had to hand wash 34 pairs of knickers and socks.”

### **Religious Practice**

- 215 All but one female applicant spoke of religion as part of their daily life, including daily Mass, Rosaries and Confession. One applicant described her experience:

“...I had to go to church each Sunday but we were made to sit in a segregated area... there was no mixing.”

Another applicant described her experience as follows:

“Religion 24 hours a day; seven days a week praying, chapel, retreats in silence, in classroom a lot of religion, and we were tested on catechism.”

### **Recreation**

- 216 Five of the seven female applicants described some form of recreational activity in the two juvenile justice establishments. This included netball teams, daily walks, dancing classes, and some time to watch television in the evenings. There was an annual holiday to a residential facility that was used by many organisations during the summer. This was described as often requiring heavy cleaning before it could be used: “we spent the first week cleaning it out.” One applicant whose placement at age fifteen was for three years duration in the late 1960s spoke of locked doors and no outside play except for a hike on Saturdays.

### **Medical Care**

- 217 The Forum heard from four of the seven female applicants concerning the availability of medical services in their establishments. It appears both establishments had a dedicated staff member available to deal with medical issues. This position changed over time. Two applicants attended

hospital while in their placements; one was for a routine admission while the second admission was in respect of ongoing bedwetting.

- 218 One applicant described how an infection was dealt with:

“she (named staff member) was meant to look after ill girls. She put my infected finger in boiling water; that burnt two of my fingers.”

Another applicant described how she cut her leg on a rusty iron post whilst on a walk and was given no medical attention and still has a deep scar from the injury. The same applicant described that she was taken to the beach and made to stay out in the sun and sustained sun burn. She had cancer in later life in the same area where skin was blistered and she noted her concern that she had been exposed to extreme heat with no protection.

- 219 Two applicants from the same establishment described the trauma of undergoing medical examinations on admission. These were described as extremely invasive with no explanation for what occurred before, during or after the procedure. Neither applicant was prepared for this. One had a full inspection on admission including an internal examination. The other was taken to the doctor and her legs were placed in stirrups; she was subject to a medical examination and no explanation was given. “They just did it.”

### **Applicants’ Experiences of Discharge from Care**

- 220 Four of the seven female applicants were discharged home to parents or to relatives from their placements in the juvenile justice sector. Two applicants went out to work and lived in hostels initially, while one applicant was placed in a children’s residential establishment. Three applicants reported receiving some help after leaving the system. Some of their reported experiences were as follows.

“...they got me onto a course; I was not told about it in advance. The routine was that a case appeared; the girls would wonder who was leaving. I was called out; I had very little to leave with. I was taken to Belfast to a convent and made to go back to (her establishment) every weekend. I just walked out one day and went home; no one checked.”

“I was under supervision until I was 21 years old but the supervisor insisted on coming to work interviews and explaining my background. The supervisor was annoyed if she was not told of any change in my job or boyfriend...She interviewed boyfriends for suitability. I got married before I was 21 without permission from the supervisor.”

- 221 Three applicants did not recall any assistance following discharge from care and their observations included:

“There was no preparation...I was farmed out...a home girl good to scrub, clean and bleach...cleanliness was next to godliness.”

“I was playing a netball game when this person (named) came. I wasn't sure who she was but she removed me to a great aunt. I didn't know her...My family didn't want me...I had no chance to say goodbye to my friends...I never saw anyone else again.”

## All Establishments

- 222 The following sections of this report include all applicants who were placed in establishments whether designated as voluntary, state or juvenile justice provision. Included are applicants' memories of their experiences of inspections or other visits, the positive comments they made about their care and their contact with other residents or personnel.

## Memories of Inspections and Visitors from Outside Organisations and Agencies

- 223 The majority of applicants, both male and female, had no memory of any visits by Inspectors or other personnel from either the statutory or voluntary sector charged with monitoring the provision of care afforded to them. Some applicants recalled visitors from outside organisations. However they did not always know the role or function of the visitors. Applicants believed that among the visitors some were from organisational headquarters and some were designated official inspectors from the Health Ministry, Home Office, Education Ministry or from welfare committees.
- 224 A common feature of inspections and official visits, as applicants told the Forum, was that the children and young people did not have opportunities to speak to visitors on their own.

“The staff were always present, always supervising.”

### Male Applicants

- 225 Of the 125 male applicants in care, 98 gave no account of remembering any official visits. Twenty-seven applicants had some recollection of visits but most could not be certain exactly what the status of the official visitors was.



226 Eleven male applicants had some memory of an inspection and of other officials visiting the establishment in which they were placed. The following is taken from comments they made to the Forum:

“The welfare visited regularly; they spoke to me. I never told what was going on as older boys had warned us that it would get back to staff and we would be punished.”

“I remember a woman visiting; I think she was from the welfare. I was always placed at the front of the line.”

227 An applicant spoke about three people coming who were possibly from a Government Ministry. Untypically, he and other children were allowed to enter the sitting room where they saw toys. The children were given an extra blanket and a nice quilt. A member of staff was smiling and helping a child with a jigsaw puzzle. He said this was not the usual course of events. Once the officials left the home, the toys were immediately removed and this room became off limits to the residents again. Some of the comments made by the applicants set out below:

“They were only with you for a few minutes before they went upstairs for the best grub. I couldn’t tell them, they wouldn’t have listened. They put you there in the first place; they would not admit their mistakes.”

“I don’t remember inspections as such, but if there were any visits from people outside everywhere was cleaned including staff rooms. The dining room was set and we were not to talk. We were hidden away. When they had left, everything reverted back to normal.”

“If visitors came, no one from outside would ask how you were, I never saw a welfare office; if visitors did come, you were told to keep your mouth shut.”

“A special service took place when church dignitaries visited.”

“We were told ‘You be on your best behaviour, we are having visitors today’ but we never would know who they were.”

“Social workers and others visited, but the staff were always alerted. They would see children in the parlour at the front of house on the ground floor.”

“I remember one visit by a social worker.”

228 One applicant referred to a Secretary of State visiting and enquiring about his welfare. He felt unable to talk about his care as the wardens were present. Another applicant described a visit by a Secretary of State

following a great deal of publicity and said he was taken to his cell as it was well kept. All residents were warned in advance that they would “be killed” if anyone complained.

### **Female Applicants**

229 Sixty-nine female applicants had no memory of any inspections during their placements. Eleven female applicants had some recall of visits and recounted their experiences to the Forum as follows:

- “...they called the Inspectors ‘the Ministry’ but we didn’t know where they were from, who they were or how to approach them.” This applicant said that a concert had been arranged with Irish dancing; she recalled the children being told to say how happy they were, how good the staff were and being told to smile.
- The provision of special clothing was commented on by some applicants who said the children were given nice clothes and made to perform songs or dances for a visitor, but the nice clothes were removed once the outsider left.
- One applicant mentioned being told inspectors were due. She never knew where they were from but recalled that the night before they would be told people were coming and they were to be on their best behaviour. New things including toys, dolls and books which the children had not seen before would be brought out. However they were taken away after the people left. She wondered why the inspectors didn’t pick up on children’s reaction to the toys or how new they were.
- Another applicant said that it was known when inspectors were coming to the establishment: “We cleaned everywhere, the beds all dressed, new clothes...all removed when left. We were well warned to be careful how we answered questions.”

230 The Forum was told about one classroom inspection:

“The teacher...had a blackthorn stick she would use to beat us on our legs and...an inspector came into classroom...we gave the right answers to his questions. He saw the stick and asked the teacher what it was for. She lied and said it was her pointing stick; then to illustrate the point she used it as such.”

231 Other visitors referred to by the applicants included a bishop, committee members and a number of groups known to the girls as “the benefactors”. One applicant described one such visit as follows:

“I was coached and dressed up for benefactors calling...a couple with maybe two children. I had to stand up...I remember hating it...having to stand for children and say hello.”

- 232 Another memory that was recounted was the visit of a film crew and an applicant recalled new toys and garden equipment put out for the occasion. The girls were warned not to ask where they came from. The applicant said everything looked brand new and was taken away as soon as the television crew left.

### **Applicants' Comments on Positive Experiences**

- 233 This section covers the positive comments made by both male and female applicants who spoke to the Forum and who were placed in the care system between 1956 and 1975. Most but not all applicants to the Forum had some positive memories of their childhood in the care system.
- 234 Many applicants had positive memories of family visits, even if these were few. These visits were described as being closely watched by staff and they were never left alone with family members without supervision. Some applicants were allowed out to spend weekends and holiday periods with family members including extended family members and they really enjoyed this, but dreaded having to return to the establishment. Many applicants did not know their siblings and some spoke of their joy at getting to see brothers and sisters on the rare occasions when meetings were permitted.
- 235 Many applicants had very fond memories of families who had befriended them and who took them out for breaks as often as they were allowed. The families were not always allowed to take the same children each time but some managed to do so, while at other times it appeared to be a lottery and different children were chosen to go out. A small number of applicants spoke of their foster families' wishes to adopt them but stated that this request was refused. They said they were never told why, but one applicant recalled that her foster family was refused permission to adopt and did not return to the establishment again “...my life might have been so different.”
- 236 Most importantly, applicants spoke of the friends they made during their childhood in the establishments; they saw them as family and spoke about the support they provided in adult life.

## Male Applicants

237 Most male applicants spoke about their positive memories and experiences in the care system. Their comments included:

“(staff named) was dead on, lovely. On St Patrick’s Day, he would ask you your name and if it was Patrick he gave you half a crown. One year a lot of boy’s names were Patrick! He was a good member of staff who had time for you.”

“The staff did their best.”

“A member of staff who was working a short period of time was my saviour.”

“He (a member of staff) took all in hand, made you feel important, enlightened you about your future.”

“A particular member of staff was very good to me. Any money I received he would keep it for me and write it in a book and keep a record when he gave me any – he always knew how much I had because of his record book. He was an older member of staff, very genuine – it was nice to have a friend.”

“Mr and Mrs...my house parents were very good to me; they cooked me breakfast...I saw them as grandparents.”

“I liked this home, particularly once I was placed in the smaller units.”

“One of the staff recognised me as a loner and befriended me teaching me how to play with a set of playing cards.”

“I was sent to buy stamps from the post office – I really enjoyed the freedom.”

“My accommodation was warm and comfortable and clean...I had my own allotment and grew vegetables.”

“I enjoyed going out to stay with a family in Newtownards.”

“I liked playing football in the fields in the grounds and I was taken fishing to the Skerries.”

“My primary school was a fantastic place – really, really good.”

“At Christmas, Easter and summertime, I was taken out by a very wealthy family...both school teachers. They bought me and another lad from the home new clothes.”

“I enjoyed being taken out by a family for three weeks, three years running but then I was extremely upset when it was time to return and I always pleaded to stay. Leaving was like going from heaven to hell, crossing a line of sunshine over to pure darkness.”

### Female Applicants

238 The female applicants who spoke about positive memories referred to going out to foster families as being of great importance to them. Most were very appreciative of the kindness they received and spoke of being accepted and enjoying being able to be a child. A few applicants had more negative experiences and one applicant told the Forum of her mixed experience with foster families:

“Some families were good to you but others treated you as a skivvy... like a maid not a holiday.”

Another applicant talked about the anxiety of the selection process for such outings:

“Going out was great but if I was not chosen I hated staying in...missing friends and having to do chores including cleaning the classrooms. I felt they were my family.”

239 Other positive memories included:

- preparing for and taking part in the choir and annual competitions
- putting on a Christmas show for staff, Bishops and other dignitaries
- being taken on outings and holidays
- Christmas parties arranged by outside firms, “We got nice food, toys and forgot where we lived.”

240 Twenty-five applicants spoke very warmly about one or more members of staff. Most often the staff members were kitchen staff or other staff who were not in positions of power in the establishments. The following comments are representative of what they said:

“...lay care staff, a gem. They let us stay up to watch ‘On the Buses’ behind their back.”

“Very good kind staff in the kitchen.”

“...very kind, I only saw her in the kitchen.”

“...a very good, kind and gentle person but she was in the nursery.”

A member of staff was referred to as a “ray of sunshine”. She painted flowers on walls, found out the birth dates of the girls and had a cake for their birthdays.

- 241 Other applicants' comments on staff members included:
- “...she had very kind eyes. I think she understood what...was up to but she had no power.”
  - “She was a lovely considerate caring person.”
  - “She was very nice and would sneak food to us, if we were made stay in; she would let us out when she knew it was safe to do so.”
  - “They actually were interested in us.”
  - “He was the best.”
  - “The music teacher was very straight, a lovely man...he never hit anyone.”
  - “...he was very good and his classroom was a haven.”
- 242 One applicant who was discharged in the early 1970s described the food provided as “very good” and the washing facilities as “excellent.”
- 243 Christmas Day within some establishments was experienced as a very enjoyable time with better food and some small presents.
- “Christmas was good, the girls put on show for all the staff, no outsiders came, the staff liked you if you were doing things for them. The show had to be perfect. On Christmas Day you got an apple, an orange and sometimes a pair of slippers.”
- 244 The Forum heard of many positive experiences from applicants placed in the smaller, community based establishments.
- One described her establishment as “one big family.” She liked the co-ed set-up and all the children got on well together.
  - Another said her establishment was run by a family of a different religious faith: “they were lovely people, kind to us; they never raised their voice to us. There were lots of toys there.”
- 245 Other positive comments included:
- “I felt safe – the staff were lovely people. People were treated as human beings.”
- An applicant referred to the food being good, including having sausages and toast, boiled eggs and a cooked dinner on Sunday with meat, vegetables and jelly and ice cream. All the girls had to work but this was not seen to be excessive or inappropriate.

“I don’t remember anything bad. Years before it may have been horrendous but although hard, I was not abused. I am a survivor not a victim.”

### **Contact with Other Residents and Personnel Post-Care:**

#### **All Establishments**

246 This section describes what male and female residents told the Forum about contact they had had with other residents or personnel after they had left the care system.

#### **Males: Contact with Other Residents**

247 Eighty-two male applicants did not discuss having any contact with other ex-residents. The remaining 43 male applicants mentioned some contact either in the past or more recently with their co-residents from the care system. For four applicants this contact was with their brothers and sisters who had also been in care. Some applicants referred to meeting ex-residents on the street or in social circumstances. A small number of applicants said they met their co-residents while serving custodial sentences. The following comments were made by applicants in regard to contact with other residents with whom they had been in care.

“I had a sequence of custodial sentences and came across some of the lads from ... in other penal establishments. I also saw some of them later when released from custody.”

“I have seen a number of my contemporaries over the years, including some when I was in jail.”

“I met former residents in prison in England most commonly in... Prison.”

“I meet them from time to time in bars and clubs.”

“I see former ‘home boys’ in and around Derry regularly.”

“I continue to receive support from an ex-resident.”

“I still remain friends with former residents.”

An applicant referred to a friend whom he was very close to – they had been in care together. This friend was “like a brother” but he was shot dead soon after being discharged from care.

### Contact with Personnel

248 Ninety-nine male applicants said they had no contact with any members of staff from any establishment in which they were placed. Some of those applicants commented very strongly that they had no wish ever to have any form of contact with staff. Twenty-six male applicants said they had recent, distant or ongoing contact with staff from an establishment in which they were placed. Some applicants had actively searched for staff whom they remembered in a positive light as they wished to reconnect and thank them for the kindness they had shown. Applicants made the following comments in regard to contact with staff:

“I had contact with some members of staff whom I remember fondly.”

“I maintained contact with some staff who had been kind to me and I visited them when in Northern Ireland.”

“I have subsequently met a staff member from the home and also a former schoolmaster who helped my son at the same school as I had attended.”

“I visited the teacher who used to take me to his home during holidays.”

“When I was in my thirties I made contact with a staff member to try to get information about my family.”

“I visited my housemother some years after having left ... and she apologised to me for her behaviour towards me.”

249 Other male applicants made reference to not wishing to have any form of contact with either their co-residents or staff. Some of these applicants chose to move away from Northern Ireland or distance themselves from their counterparts who had also been in care. A few applicants said they wanted to start life afresh and to form relationships without people knowing about their background, for example:

“I moved to London in my late teens and have remained there ever since.”

“I tried to shut out all memories and wanted no contact with others.”

“I was gradually distanced from my siblings, a separation that was to last for many years.”

### Females: Contact with Other Residents

250 Fifty-six female applicants advised the Forum that they had had no contact with other residents after they left their care placements. Seventeen had some contact with other residents on an ongoing basis while seven



applicants had established contact more recently. The contact with other residents includes contact with siblings that had not been allowed or encouraged during their placements. Some comments from applicants illustrate the points they wished to make.

“I’ve kept in contact with some of the other ex-residents. They were my family.”

“No contact was allowed in the home. If you pass another person you know had been there, you would not acknowledge each other. I am still being controlled.”

“I regularly attend reunions, I’ve welcomed other residents into my home and helped them with support...doing what some older residents had done for me.”

“With two siblings I attended a reunion of former residents.”

### **Contact with Personnel**

- 251 Sixty-three female applicants told the Forum they had no contact with personnel after they left the establishment in which they were placed. Eight applicants had some ongoing contact, while four applicants had contact in the past but not more recently. Finally, five applicants had made contact with personnel more recently. The following comments and quotations from applicants are typical of the information provided to the Forum.

“At a reunion 27 years ago I met a teacher who used to beat me with a wooden spoon. I challenged her at the reunion and was told ‘I made you a harder and stronger woman’.”

“I have continued to have contact with (named officer in charge) over the years.”

“I have been in contact with the establishment to try to get information about my siblings and family circumstances.”

“I have received an apology from the...for the abuse I experienced in the home they had responsibility for.”

“I was fond of one staff member in particular and put flowers on her grave despite all the cruel things I saw her do.”

“The staff and other ‘laundry girls’ made my wedding dress and I was married in the chapel.”

One applicant summed up what many said to the Forum:

“I tried to deny ever being there...I was completely ashamed of my placement there. I felt in some way it was my fault.”

## Education

252 The great majority of applicants, both male and female, who attended the Forum and who were resident in establishments from 1956 to 1975 referred in some way to their education. The information they gave is summarised below.

### Males

253 One hundred and nineteen of the 125 males who spoke to the Forum made some comments on their education. The great majority of them remembered their primary education whether in schools nearby or, more commonly, on-site at the establishments in which they were placed. One hundred and five male applicants were of secondary school age when still in establishments. It is notable that some males recalled that the establishment in which they were placed, and that catered for older boys aged eleven upwards, in on-site educational provision, did not provide a secondary school curriculum until the late 1960s. In those circumstances, although those applicants were of secondary school age, they were still receiving education based on the primary level curriculum. Most male applicants reported they finished their compulsory education aged, on average, fourteen or fifteen years.

254 Twenty-five male applicants told the Forum they had participated in some further education. This included attending youth training schemes or courses in colleges of further education. Some applicants went on to join the armed services where they were able to benefit from further education. A small number of applicants, who were in the care system in the 1970s, achieved good GCSE results and went on to university in later life.

255 Many male applicants expressed disappointment at their lack of educational skills and lack of qualifications arising from their educational experiences in care. They described being referred to as “dunces” and to being belittled in the school environment. Many expressed the view that teachers, on the whole, did not treat them as equal to other children in the school setting. Many of the male applicants reflected that their potential went unrecognised or was ignored within the education system.

## Females

- 256 Seventy-eight of the 80 females who spoke to the Forum made some comments concerning their education. The majority of the female applicants had clear recollections of attending primary education, whether on-site at the establishment in which they were placed or in their communities. Slightly fewer female applicants went on to attend secondary school and the vast majority of those attended school in the community, either near their homes or adjacent to the establishment in which they were placed. The majority of applicants finished their formal education aged fourteen or fifteen.
- 257 Twenty-one female applicants were involved in some form of further education. Many of those had pursued educational opportunities as adults, while a small number undertook vocational training such as secretarial courses, pre-nursing courses or catering courses prior to leaving the establishments in which they were placed.
- 258 For a majority of female applicants, experiences at school were described as difficult. Applicants spoke of feeling and being treated differently from other pupils and many said they left school unable to read and write. Some said they devised ways of covering up their lack of education and described feelings of inadequacy because of their lack of basic skills. Many applicants expressed a view that their life chances were minimised as a result of poor education and that this left them ill-equipped for life in the outside world.

## Period 3: 1976 - 1995

### Introduction

- 259 The Forum heard from 69 males and from 34 females who were in residential establishments covered by the terms of reference of the Inquiry in the period from 1976 to 1995. One male was born in 1959, 39 males and sixteen females were born in the 1960s, 25 males and fifteen females were born in the 1970s, and four males and three females were born in the 1980s.
- 260 Some applicants had placements in more than one establishment and in more than one type of establishment during their time in care. Initially applicants could have been in voluntary establishments and later in state or juvenile justice establishments or they could have moved to another

establishment within the same sector, for example from one state establishment to another.

## Placements for Applicants in the Care System

261 One hundred and three applicants were admitted into 47 different establishments during this period. As can be seen from the following table, of the 47 individual establishments, fourteen were in the voluntary sector, 21 in the state sector and twelve were in the juvenile justice sector. Eighteen of these establishments accepted both male and female children, seventeen establishments accepted male children only and twelve establishments accepted female children only.

Category of Establishment	Number of different establishments	Male and Female	Male only	Female only
<b>Voluntary</b>	14	6	4	4
<b>State</b>	21	11	6	4
<b>Juvenile Justice</b>	12	1	7	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>12</b>

## Number and Types of Placements

262 Forty-five applicants had one placement in care, 37 applicants had two placements, eleven applicants had three placements, eight applicants had four placements and two male applicants had five placements.

Total number of placements in establishments.

Number of Placements	Male (69)	Female (34)	Total (103)
<b>1</b>	31	14	45
<b>2</b>	25	12	37
<b>3</b>	6	5	11
<b>4</b>	5	3	8
<b>5</b>	2	0	2

- Seventeen applicants moved from a voluntary establishment and, of that number, eight applicants transferred to another voluntary establishment, five applicants transferred to a state establishment and four applicants transferred to a juvenile justice establishment.

- Twenty-six applicants moved from a state establishment and, of that number, seven applicants transferred to a voluntary establishment, six applicants transferred to another state establishment and thirteen applicants transferred to a juvenile justice establishment.
- Fifteen applicants moved from a juvenile justice establishment and, of that number, five applicants transferred to a voluntary establishment and ten applicants transferred to another juvenile justice establishment.

The placement moves of applicants both within and between different categories of care placements were varied and complex, with fewer applicants experiencing a long term placement in one establishment than was evident in Periods 1 and 2.

## **Circumstances of Admission into the Care System**

263 This section describes the circumstances that led to the admission into care of the 69 males and 34 females between 1976 and 1995. As noted previously, most applicants who met the Forum had little or no written information about the circumstances of their admission to care. The information available to the Forum came directly from the applicants and not from official records, as most applicants had no documentation when they met with the Forum. The following paragraphs cover the age range and length of time applicants spent in the care system in Northern Ireland.

## **Age at Entry to the Care System**

264 The age on first admission into the care system of male applicants across the three establishment types ranged from less than one year up to seventeen years of age, with the majority of applicants aged between six years and seventeen years of age on admission. In general, on admission the older males were placed in juvenile justice establishments. Likewise, the age of female applicants on admission into the care system ranged from less than one to seventeen years of age, with the majority of applicants aged between six years and seventeen years of age. The female applicants who were admitted to juvenile justice establishments were aged between thirteen and fifteen on admission.

## Duration of Placements in Care System

265 The following table shows that the largest proportion, over fifty per cent, of the 103 applicants who met with the Forum spent between two and five years in the care system in Northern Ireland during this period.

Years in care	Male	Female	Total
< 1 year	21	7	28
2 – 5 years	32	22	54
6 – 10 years	9	4	13
11 – 14 years	7	1	8
15 – 17 years	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>103</b>

## Age at Discharge from the Care System

266 The majority of both male and female applicants were over fourteen years of age when discharged from the care system in this period as shown in the table below.

Age discharged	Male	Female	Total
<10 years	4	2	6
10 – 13 years	9	3	12
14 – 16 years	31	12	43
17+ years	25	17	42
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>103</b>

## Reasons for Admission

267 From the information provided by applicants, it was apparent that the main reasons for the admission of the male and female applicants into the care system were as follows:

Reason for Admission	Male	Female	Total
Parents unable to cope	8	7	15
Abandonment	1	4	5
Court orders	50	12	62
Parents deceased	0	1	1

Reason for Admission	Male	Female	Total
<b>Other reasons</b>	2	1	3
<b>No information</b>	8	7	15
<b>Health</b>	-	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>103</b>

- 268 Most applicants did not have the exact detail of the type of court order under which they were admitted into care. The types of court orders referred to by applicants or documented in papers they brought with them to their meeting with the Forum included, place of safety orders, committal orders – fit person orders, orders for detention and training school orders.
- 269 The main reason given for admission into care for both males and females was that they were subject to a court order. A large number of the male applicants who were placed in juvenile justice establishments said they were sent to a secure setting because they were truanting from school or for anti-social behaviour such as assault and motor theft. Several applicants were placed in a juvenile justice unit for absconding from their establishments.
- 270 The second most common reason given by applicants for admission into voluntary and state establishments was that their parents were unable to cope. Some applicants said their parent(s) had a disability or illness, misused alcohol or that there was domestic violence within the family home.
- 271 Other reasons for admission into care included being abandoned by one or both parents, death of one or both parents, special educational needs, breakdown of fostering or adoptive placements, disability following accidents and unplanned pregnancy in teenage years.

## Referral Source/Agencies

- 272 Two-thirds of the applicants in this period said they were referred to a residential establishment by an organisation or agency of some kind.

In summary:

- The largest number, 43 applicants, said they had been referred by social services or welfare agencies and four applicants said they had been referred by an education authority.

- The second highest number of referrals originated from the courts/ youth justice and the police. Thirteen applicants said they had been referred by the court/youth justice services. Five male applicants and one female applicant said they had been referred by the police.
- One female and two male applicants said to their knowledge, there had been no referral by an organisation.
- Thirty-three applicants did not discuss the referral source.

The information that applicants gave to the Forum about the referral sources is summarised below:

Referral Source/Agency	Male	Female
<b>Not known/not referred</b>	26	10
<b>Welfare authorities</b>	22	21
<b>Local clergy</b>	-	-
<b>Courts</b>	12	1
<b>Police</b>	5	1
<b>NSPCC</b>	1	-
<b>Education</b>	3	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>34</b>

## Memories of Admission and Changes of Placements

273 This section contains some direct quotations and comments from both male and female applicants on their recollections of their admission into the care system across all three types of designated establishments.

“I was taken there by a social worker. I believe I was seduced into accepting to go there. From my records I think staff (from first placement) wanted me to go and although the welfare department initially resisted, they then agreed.”

“My parents were alcoholics. We didn’t exist to mum and dad, all they wanted was drink. A woman came in a car with no warning. The four of us sat in the car, my parents waved goodbye. We had no idea where we were going. She told us we were going to see horses on a farm, so I was excited. We went up a long driveway and staff took us in. They grabbed my arm roughly. I had never seen a nun before. There was a smell of incense. It was a very dark place. The social worker left and never returned.”



“I transferred from...following my sister reporting allegations of abuse. Then I was immediately removed, made a ward of court and placed in another children’s home. I was absconding frequently from there and being troublesome generally. Eventually I was sent to a more secure placement.”

“We were a big family. There was constant domestic violence, my mother couldn’t cope, my father was always drunk and violent.”

“I was taken to court and from there to a children’s home. I didn’t understand the nature of a court order.”

“I was admitted because of truanting and antisocial behaviour. My initial placement was for one month but that was repeatedly extended, month by month, to almost a year.”

“I was transferred to...as the robbery charges were dropped but replaced with criminal damage charges because of an incident in the previous establishment.”

“I was placed in...in the care unit because I had become uncontrollable at home. Although it was a ‘care’ placement, there was no care.”

“I was given a sentence for non-school attendance. My mother was unable to get me to go to school, and following two admissions to...I was then sent to be detained in...for one to three years.”

“I was admitted to...but I continued to run away and got caught when I, with others, stole a car. I was glue sniffing at this time too.”

“I had three periods of admission: one for breaking a window in my school, another for underage drinking, and the last for assaulting the police when they caught me. My sentences varied from one to three months.”

“I was pregnant because I was naive about sexual matters. I told a member of the family who told my mother. Mother was ill with cancer at the time, so a social worker came and took me to...I didn’t know where she was taking me.”

“My mother had poor health and abandoned me when I was a baby. I had mental health needs as a child and was assessed by a psychologist when in the children’s home.”

“When my foster placement didn’t work out I ran away to (children’s home) as I knew my brother lived there and that it was a good place. I was allowed to stay. My mother was still unable to look after us children.”

“I was born to a single mum but reared by grand aunts until they died. Then I went to cousins who neglected me. The welfare were always involved with my family.”

“My parents were alcoholics and there was domestic violence from my father. My mother left the family home and my father was unable/unwilling to care for us.”

“I was being sexually abused from eight years of age by a close relative. Social Services decided it was not safe for me to remain at home as my mother couldn’t protect me.”

“I remember trying to climb over the wall at...(first placement) and the social worker getting me into her car (a mini) and driving me to...I remember kicking, screaming and swearing in the back seat. I don’t remember being told why I was being sent there.”

“I had run away from home and was living rough. After some weeks I was caught by the police and taken to a police station first and then to the home.”

## Aspects of Care in the Residential Establishments

274 Overall, less than half of the applicants referred to aspects of the standard and extent of care that they received when in their placements in the various establishments. Those applicants who did, spoke about the provision of clothing and food, the standard of personal care they received and, in some cases, about the bedding and heating in their residential establishments. In relation to clothing, bedding and heating, the majority of applicants commented that they had no memory of these aspects of care or made no comments about them. Some applicants, who had more than one care placement, offered some comparisons about the provision of care between the residential establishments in which they had been placed. The views of those who did comment on aspects of care are set out in this section of the report by gender under voluntary provision, state provision and juvenile justice provision.

### Males: Voluntary Provision

275 Male applicants spoke to the Forum regarding their experiences of day-to-day living within the establishments in which they were placed. Their opinions of aspects of their care conditions are set out in the tables below. In the tables the numbers refer to placements, not individuals.

### Diet

- 276 Generally, male applicants were satisfied with the quantity and quality of the food provided in their establishments. However, applicants in seven placements were dissatisfied with the food provided, saying that it was monotonous, and applicants who had been in two other placements described food as very poor.

Diet	Voluntary Male Placements
Good	3
Adequate	13
Poor	5
Very Poor	2
Not disclosed/no memory	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

### Clothing

- 277 Most applicants who spoke to the Forum about the provision of clothing were very satisfied with what they had received. In Period 3, a clothing allowance was available for each child and greater choice of clothing was possible. The applicants' opinions of the clothing available to them are summarised in the following table.

Clothing	Voluntary Male Placements
Very Good	-
Good	2
Adequate	14
Poor	1
Very Poor	-
Not disclosed/no memory	18
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

### Personal Care

278 Applicants’ comments on personal care were mixed. Approximately one third of them described personal care as being poor or very poor. Complaints related to a lack of privacy in shower areas, the lack of availability of adequate hot water and a fear of the shower area where, in some placements, abuse was a constant threat. The following table is a summary of their views.

Personal Care	Voluntary Male Placements
<b>Good</b>	2
<b>Adequate</b>	10
<b>Poor</b>	8
<b>Very Poor</b>	2
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	13
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

### Bedding

279 An applicant described the standard of bedding in his placement as very poor, with insufficient blankets and infrequent changes of sheets and pillow covers. Generally, the applicants who made any reference to bedding were at least satisfied with the comfort and warmth of their beds. This aspect of care was not mentioned at all in relation to seventeen of the 35 placements.

Bedding	Voluntary Male Placements
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	2
<b>Adequate</b>	14
<b>Poor</b>	1
<b>Very Poor</b>	1
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	17
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

## Heating

- 280 There were two references to the provision of good heating in the placements and twelve applicants said that the standard of heating was adequate. As can be seen in the table below, this aspect of care was not mentioned by the majority of applicants.

Heating	Voluntary Male Placements
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	2
<b>Adequate</b>	12
<b>Poor</b>	-
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>35</b>

## Work in the Establishments

- 281 Most of the male applicants who had been in voluntary establishments made no comment on or complaint about having to work or complete chores. Several applicants referred to having routine duties including setting and clearing tables, washing and drying dishes and keeping their bedrooms tidy, but these were not said to be onerous or excessive. A few male applicants referred to a reward system whereby they received pocket money for successfully completing their chores.
- 282 One applicant, who was fifteen years of age when in his placement, was made to work in the garden instead of attending school and, he believes, his education suffered as a result. Another applicant talked about changing circumstances in relation to work.

“Work differed over time. Initially there was a big farm and older boys were kept from school to work on the farm. The farm was sold off and we got work and money for picking stones in neighbouring farms and gathering potatoes. I acted as a general handyman in the holidays when most other boys had gone home. I got paid and bought cigarettes and drink.”

### Religious Practice

- 283 No reference was made to religious practice by the majority of male applicants who were placed in care during this period. Ten applicants spoke about religious practice in their placements. Seven spoke of religion being a constant feature of their daily living. One of these placements was described by two applicants as placing a huge emphasis on religion to the exclusion of everything else. They said they were constantly told of their sin and the need to clean it away. They went to chapel before breakfast and had other forms of religious observance during the day and each week. Another applicant said the school curriculum was displaced by religious education. Two applicants mentioned attending Mass on Friday and Sunday in another establishment. In contrast, two other applicants described the religious ethos and practice as “not excessive.”

### Play and Recreation

- 284 Some applicants commented that there were limited or no play opportunities in their establishments. They referred to a lack of toys and having to play outside with little or no play facilities. Other applicants referred to a TV room, movies, excellent sporting facilities, a swimming pool, an all weather pitch, gymnasium, table tennis room, being taken out on trips and attending a disco. The following comments represent the range of information given to the Forum.

“It was clear that play was not part of the life in this establishment.”

“I spent most of my free time in fields with friends; we were taken to discos near the end of our time there.”

“We were taken on camping trips.”

“The home had a dog and we enjoyed playing with it.”

“I really enjoyed the gymnastics there.”

“There were excellent sporting facilities.”

### Medical Care

- 285 Only a few of the male applicants who had been in voluntary establishments made comments about, or expressed any concerns in relation to, the medical care provided. The following are some of the comments they made.

“I have no memory of any medical intervention. I hurt my ankle badly when I jumped from a window; it was left to heal itself. Once, I was

taken to the GP but I'm not sure when or what for. I think a social worker took me, not a staff member."

"I had psoriasis; and was told by the hospital not to have baths. But I was given baths despite medical advice to the contrary."

"I was frequently ill and left on my own in my room for four or five days. No one cared when I was there. I was taken to the City Hospital regularly by a staff member who told me I was dying. My condition was never explained by anyone."

### Females: Voluntary Provision

- 286 Thirteen female applicants spoke to the Forum regarding their experiences of day-to-day living in nineteen placements in the voluntary sector. Their opinions of their care conditions are set out in the tables below.

#### Diet

- 287 The majority of female applicants did not make any reference to the quantity and quality of the food provided. In five placements, food was described as good or very good while in four placements the provision of food was described as poor or very poor.

Diet	Voluntary Female Placements
Good	2
Adequate	3
Poor	3
Very Poor	1
Not disclosed/no memory	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

#### Clothing

- 288 Most female applicants who met the Forum did not refer to the provision of clothing in this period. In four placements clothing was described as adequate and in three it was described as poor. The lack of comment by female applicants on this aspect of their care mirrors the pattern of comment made by male applicants and possibly reflects the availability of clothing allowances and the greater choice afforded in selecting personal clothing.

<b>Clothing</b>	<b>Voluntary Female Placements</b>
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	-
<b>Adequate</b>	4
<b>Poor</b>	3
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

### Personal Care

289 Of the ten comments made by female applicants on personal care, five were positive and five were negative. One applicant described herself as “sore from scrubbing.” Another applicant spoke of being made to bath in cold water when she wet the bed, but generally the lack of comment suggests that this aspect of their care was not an issue for many applicants. The table below contains a summary of the opinions expressed to the Forum.

<b>Personal Care</b>	<b>Voluntary Female Placements</b>
<b>Good</b>	1
<b>Adequate</b>	4
<b>Poor</b>	4
<b>Very Poor</b>	1
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

### Bedding

290 Most female applicants did not refer to this aspect of the care they received. The bedding in three placements was described as poor. These placements were in establishments in the early part of Period 3 when dormitory provision was still in use. The sleeping accommodation in that part of this Period was described as cold and lacking in adequate bedding.



The table below highlights the lack of comment on bedding expressed to the Forum.

<b>Bedding</b>	<b>Voluntary Female Placements</b>
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	1
<b>Adequate</b>	1
<b>Poor</b>	3
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

### Heating

- 291 Most of the female applicants who had been cared for in voluntary establishments did not refer to the heating in their accommodation. The table below indicates the pattern of comments made. There were two references to the provision of heating as being below standard and this again refers to older establishments where long corridors and dormitory style sleeping arrangements may have made the provision of adequate heating difficult. One female applicant who had experienced multiple placements in different voluntary establishments referred to one of the establishments as a “cold, unfriendly and unhappy place” and said that she felt “hungry, cold and sore from scrubbing.” She described a subsequent placement in positive terms saying, “I would go back now if I could.”

<b>Heating</b>	<b>Voluntary Female Placements</b>
<b>Very Good</b>	-
<b>Good</b>	-
<b>Adequate</b>	3
<b>Poor</b>	1
<b>Very Poor</b>	1
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

### **Work in the Voluntary Establishments**

- 292 Several female applicants said that their responsibilities included having to clean the premises. One applicant commented that from the beginning of her placement, she had to scrub the floor and work in the laundry. Another female applicant commented that she had to brush and scrub the floor of the home, even when she was a very young child. One applicant described a range of duties including helping the younger children to get dressed, doing the laundry for her group, especially the bed-wetters and cleaning the floors and toilets.
- 293 A female applicant recounted that she, along with her two sisters, had to look after the babies and toddlers. A daily routine involved having to dress, toilet and feed the younger children. During term time, the sisters had to complete their chores before having their own breakfast and then get themselves ready for school.
- 294 Several female applicants placed in voluntary establishments during this time told the Forum that they were responsible for significant household chores within the care establishment. Another female applicant described the duration of her placement in a voluntary establishment as “wretched years.”

### **Religious Practice**

- 295 Eight female applicants made no reference to religious provision during their time in voluntary establishments. Five female applicants talked of Mass, Confession and also prayers. One applicant went on a retreat and two talked of attending church on Sunday. One applicant said she felt humiliated as the children were made to walk to church in “crocodile fashion” along the street.

### **Play and Recreation**

- 296 Some applicants commented that there were limited or no play opportunities and said that there were few toys and nowhere to play indoors. One applicants said they were not allowed to play: “homework after school and then early to bed.” Another applicant spoke of spending her time knitting and sewing clothes for babies. Some applicants described being taken out to the local swimming pool and others referred to a TV room and occasionally watching movies.

### Medical Care

- 297 Six of the female applicants commented on the medical care provided. Three said there was a general practitioner linked to the establishment. Two others told the Forum that they were given medication and one of these said she was misdiagnosed with epilepsy when she actually had a heart condition.

### General Comments

- 298 Both male and female applicants who had moved from one establishment to another in the voluntary sector said the care they received varied from establishment to establishment. Some described the care system within establishments as good, while others said that the care they received was deficient. The quotations and comments that follow are typical of what those who described poor experiences told the Forum.

“My world was gone. I have keen memories of a cold wind whistling in long corridors, darkness and no opportunity to be a child. If you acted like a child you were punished.”

“It was like hell in the middle of nowhere.”

“It was like a concentration camp. I hated the place. You were treated like an animal.”

“It was horrible, I was very unhappy there. I was denigrated; I was punished unreasonably and on occasions locked out in a type of solitary confinement. I can’t recall any positive experiences.”

An applicant said that he cried himself to sleep and he did not know why he was there. Another applicant referred to feeling very isolated as he had no one to turn to.

- 299 Some of the applicants were placed in a large establishment with chalet style accommodation and a house-parent staff model. They referred to the house parents taking responsibility for general household tasks and one said “the home was good” and “I really liked this home.”

- 300 One applicant who had been placed in two establishments made comparisons between both placements commenting:

“In the second you were treated with kindness, showered with attention and food, unlike the first.”

Some applicants commented on the differences in staff behaviour within the same establishment noting that some staff were good but others were not. One applicant said several times that he was very happy in the establishment but qualified this by saying “except for the abuse.”

- 301 One applicant reflected that he felt well cared for and respected. Another applicant said he really enjoyed the place and the freedom. He said that the residents were allowed to go out and they were taken for trips in the minibus. One applicant said:

“It was such a relief – like a holiday camp” and another stated that it was a “real escape from the abuse suffered at home with my parents.”

### **Males: State Provision**

- 302 The male applicants who in total had experienced 32 placements in state establishments in this period said little about the nature and adequacy of their care. The information they provided on aspects of their care is set out in the following paragraphs.

#### **Diet**

- 303 Seven applicants considered the food provided in their placements to be adequate or good. There was no reference to this aspect of care in respect of 25 placements.

<b>Diet</b>	<b>State</b>
<b>Male Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	2
<b>Adequate</b>	5
<b>Poor</b>	-
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

#### **Clothing**

- 304 Comments about the provision of clothing in 24 of the 32 placements in state provision were few. In one placement the clothing provided was described as poor and in seven others it was described as adequate or better.

<b>Clothing</b>	<b>State</b>
<b>Male Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	2
<b>Adequate</b>	5
<b>Poor</b>	1
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

### Personal Care

- 305 Few comments were made by male applicants about the standards of personal care in respect of 24 of the 32 placements in state sector establishments. Six of the establishments were described as providing adequate or good care while provision in two establishments was described as poor.

Personal Care	State
<b>Male Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	2
<b>Adequate</b>	4
<b>Poor</b>	2
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	24
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

### Bedding

- 306 No comments were made to the Forum about the provision of bedding in 25 of the 32 placements in state provision. Four placements were described as good or adequate and bedding was described as comfortable. In three of the placements, the provision of bedding was described as very poor.

Bedding	State
<b>Male Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	1
<b>Adequate</b>	3
<b>Poor</b>	-
<b>Very Poor</b>	3
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	25
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

### Heating

- 307 Four placements were described as having adequate or good heating. There was no comment made about heating in the other 28 placements in the state sector.

Heating	State
<b>Male Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	1
<b>Adequate</b>	3
<b>Poor</b>	-
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	28
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>

### Work in the Establishments

- 308 The male applicants who had been in state establishments made no mention of having to work. Three applicants referred to having to complete routine tasks such as cleaning shoes and laying the table, but these were not described as excessive or onerous.

### Religious Practice

- 309 None of the applicants in state sector care made any comment or complaint about religious practices.

### Play and Recreation

- 310 Male applicants who commented on play and recreation spoke of having access to a pool table, a playground, a trip to an amusement park and being taken swimming.

### Medical Care

- 311 No comments or complaints were made about medical care. Five male applicants said they had placements in a medical facility. One male applicant referred to dental care.

### Females: State Provision

- 312 The female applicants who spoke to the Forum had been in 26 placements in the state sector provision. The following paragraphs outline the information they provided to the Forum on aspects of their care.

#### Diet

- 313 The majority of female applicants who were in placements in the state sector did not comment on the food provided. The food in seven placements was described as adequate or good whilst in four placements the food was described as poor or very poor.

Diet	State
<b>Female Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	4
<b>Adequate</b>	3
<b>Poor</b>	2
<b>Very Poor</b>	2
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

#### Clothing

- 314 The large majority of female applicants did not comment on the clothing provided in their placements. The seven who did described the standard of clothing as adequate or good.

Clothing	State
<b>Female Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	4
<b>Adequate</b>	3
<b>Poor</b>	-
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	19
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

### Personal Care

- 315 The majority of female applicants who were in placements in the state sector did not comment about their personal care. The standard of provision in nine placements was described as adequate or good whilst in three placements personal care was described as poor or very poor.

Personal Care	State
<b>Female Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	6
<b>Adequate</b>	3
<b>Poor</b>	2
<b>Very Poor</b>	1
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	14
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

### Bedding

- 316 Most female applicants who were in placements in the state sector did not comment on the standard of their bedding. The quality of provision in five placements was described as adequate or good whilst the provision in one placement was described as very poor.

Bedding	State
<b>Female Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	3
<b>Adequate</b>	2
<b>Poor</b>	-
<b>Very Poor</b>	1
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

### Heating

- 317 The majority of female applicants who were in placements in the state sector did not comment on the provision of heating. The standard of heating in five placements was described as adequate or good whilst in respect of one placement it was described as poor.



Heating	State
<b>Female Placements</b>	
<b>Good</b>	4
<b>Adequate</b>	1
<b>Poor</b>	1
<b>Very Poor</b>	-
<b>Not disclosed/no memory</b>	20
<b>Total</b>	<b>26</b>

### General Comments

- 318 Comments made by female applicants about their placements in state provision varied widely with some describing the placements as very cold and lacking in human kindness while other applicants said that they had no concerns regarding their care in a placement, describing it as “superb” and saying that they had “no complaints.”

### Work in the Establishments

- 319 Three applicants referred to having to complete routine chores such as making beds, assisting with cooking and preparation of the dining room for meals. None of these applicants described the allocated tasks as excessive and no one referred to being made to work for their establishment.

### Religious Practice

- 320 None of the female applicants in state sector care made any comment or complaint about religious practices.

### Play and Recreation

- 321 The female applicants spoke of visiting the cinema and other age-appropriate activities. Some applicants who had previously experienced placements in larger establishments spoke of the pleasure of having more freedom in smaller state establishments to which they had been transferred.

### Medical Care

- 322 There were no comments or complaints made about medical care. Two female applicants said they had had placements in a medical facility. One female applicant said she was taken to see a child psychiatrist. She was unclear as to why that consultation had occurred.

### Aspects of care in Juvenile Justice Provision

- 323 The first part of this section summarises the comments about aspects of their care that male applicants, who had been in 62 placements in the juvenile justice sector, made to the Forum. The second part of this section summarises the comments about aspects of their care made to the Forum by female applicants who had been in 20 placements in the juvenile justice sector.
- 324 Juvenile justice provision accommodated young people who were less than eighteen years of age. Most of the applicants who met with the Forum were sent to these establishments under a court order for a specified period of time. Applicants described the juvenile justice establishments in which they were placed as being largely single gender units, but there were some applicants who were placed in mixed gender units.

#### Males: Juvenile Justice Provision

- 325 One third or less of male applicants spoke to the Forum about their experiences of day-to-day living within the establishments in which they had been placed as children. Their opinions of their care conditions in the 62 placements are set out in the table below.

Aspects of care	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very bad	No memory/ not disclosed	Total placements
<b>Food</b>	7	12	4	-	39	62
<b>Clothing</b>	1	9	3	-	49	62
<b>Heat</b>	1	5	-	2	54	62
<b>Bedding</b>	4	10	2	1	45	62
<b>Personal care</b>	1	9	6	5	41	62

As is evident from the table, the majority of applicants did not discuss any aspects of their care in juvenile justice establishments. Many of their placements were of short duration and where negative comments were made about aspects of care, for example, personal care, these related to a perception that the shower area was unsafe because it was an area where males were susceptible to being attacked either physically or sexually. Applicants who described poor clothing referred to having to wear uniform-style clothing belonging to the establishment that could identify

the applicants. Those who spoke about inadequate bedding referred to single cell units, used as isolation accommodation, where mattresses were on the floor and bedding was limited.

- 326 In summary, two thirds of the applicants in juvenile justice placements made no comment in relation to clothing, food and personal care. A number of applicants described the care provision in their placements as good or adequate. Other applicants described their experiences of being in care very differently. One applicant said that “the law of the jungle reigned” and another applicant said that it was “very disciplined, like a concentration camp, a cruel place.” Another applicant expressed similar views: “It was a sectarian aggressive regime ruled by violence, a cold harsh regime, very harsh and unsympathetic, and violence by staff and other residents was the norm.”

### **Work in the Juvenile Justice Establishments**

- 327 Most male applicants in juvenile justice placements did not refer to being made to work for their establishments. The male applicants who did refer to work said they had to clean their cells to a high standard and talked of having to repeat the task if the result was deemed to fall below the required standard. A few alleged that fault was deliberately found by staff and, perversely and provocatively, some staff criticised the cleaning and insisted on it being re-done even when it was satisfactory. Other applicants recounted that they were made to do the following chores:

- scrub metal buckets
- clean pots
- prepare vegetables in the kitchen
- look after livestock
- work as an orderly.

- 328 Some of the work that applicants spoke about may have been part of a vocational training programme, for example, bricklaying, car mechanics, carpentry and gardening.

### **Religious Practice**

- 329 One male applicant spoke of having to attend chapel every morning where the sermons were always on the perils of breaking the law and being a bad person. Two other applicants spoke of attending Mass and one of them said that there was only a Bible to read in the solitary confinement accommodation.

### Recreation

330 The male applicants who commented on recreational facilities and activities mentioned cycling, football, swimming, snooker and pool, a camping trip and a recreation room with a radio in it. One applicant described the facilities in his placement as being very limited saying “I walked about like a dog in a cage.” Two others spoke of physical education being used as a punishment and having to do a military-type drill.

### Medical Care

331 Three male applicants spoke about being admitted to hospital as the result of drug overdoses. Two applicants who had self-harmed stated that the staff had been instructed not to call for an ambulance. Three male applicants complained that they were not taken to hospital or did not receive medical treatment when they felt it was required, for example, following an assault by another resident or when stitches were required for a wound near an applicant’s eye following an assault by a member of staff.

332 Several applicants commented that there was an on-site nurse/matron. One applicant said that he was escorted to the doctor by four members of staff. One applicant said that the residents were given a medical examination on admission and were made to strip. One applicant said he saw a psychologist during his time in his placement.

### Females: Juvenile Justice Provision

333 Female applicants spoke to the Forum about their experiences of day-to-day living in the establishments in which they had been placed. Their opinions of their care conditions in the twenty placements are set out in the table below.

Aspects of care	Good	Adequate	Poor	Very bad	No memory/ not disclosed	Total placements
<b>Food</b>	-	5	4	2	9	20
<b>Clothing</b>	-	6	1	-	13	20
<b>Heat</b>	-	3	-	-	17	20
<b>Bedding</b>	-	3	4	2	11	20
<b>Personal care</b>	-	5	3	3	9	20

As is evident from the table above, the majority of applicants did not discuss any aspects of their care in juvenile justice establishments and those who choose to speak about care conditions said they were adequate. In two placements, the food was described as “disgraceful” and poor bedding was spoken of in the context of isolation rooms. The regime was described as harsh and cold with very strict conditions and limited liberty within the establishment, which most young females found very challenging. One applicant spoke of her humiliation when on admission she was made to undress and provided only with paper undergarments and a gown. She advised the Forum that she was offered no explanation as to why this was necessary.

### **Work in the Establishment**

- 334 Female applicants in the juvenile justice sector recounted being made to clean and polish the floors on their knees. Some of them said they had to work in the kitchen. One said that
- “the staff didn’t have to do any work as the girls were doing all the cooking and cleaning.”

Other applicants spoke of undertaking chores, including one who commented that there was a cleaning rota and the chores had to be completed before attending school. Another applicant said she had to prepare her own meals as part of her “leaving care plan.” One applicant said she had to work in the stitching room.

### **Religious Practice**

- 335 One female applicant said there were prayers in the chapel before school and Mass every Sunday. One applicant said she was not in favour of having to attend Mass but did so in order to receive her daily allowance of five cigarettes.

### **Recreation**

- 336 Three female applicants said there was no games room. Other female applicants said there was a television for residents and they were taken to a swimming pool and to the cinema.

### **Medical Care**

- 337 Five female applicants spoke of being admitted to hospital, in two cases as a result of taking an overdose of drugs. Two applicants who had self harmed stated that the staff had been instructed not to call for an

ambulance. The establishments were described as having a designated person on the premises who dealt with most medical requirements.

## **All Establishments: Inspection, Positive Experiences, Experiences of Discharge from Care, Contact with Others, Education**

338 This section covers the experiences described by applicants in establishments in all three types of provision: voluntary, state and juvenile justice in Period 3, 1976 to 1995. It covers the following areas: inspections and other visits and positive comments made by applicants in respect of establishments in which they were placed.

### **Memories of Inspection and Visits from Outside Organisations and Agencies**

339 Most applicants had no recollection or did not speak of their memories or recollections of visits from people who came from outside the establishment.

340 Three applicants, two males who had been in juvenile justice establishments and one female who had been in a voluntary establishment, referred to Inspections. One of the male applicants referred to inspectors coming and to the usual routines being changed. For example, the residents would normally get their breakfast from a hatch and when finished would put their leftovers in the “slop bucket” but, when the inspectors came, the staff removed the plates from the residents’ tables. This applicant said that members of staff were always present when the inspectors were on site and the inspectors did not speak with the residents. The other male applicant referred to the board of visitors coming to the establishment and asking residents if everything was satisfactory. He alleged that members of staff had warned the boys in advance of the inspectors’ visit, that they would be “beaten to death” if they spoke to inspectors about what was going on in the establishment.

341 A female applicant explained that she was around twelve years old when she saw social workers for the first time and they visited her every three months. However, she said she felt that no one cared and she was not allowed to talk about life in the establishment. She spoke of visitors/inspectors and having to read for them and sensing that she was chosen as she was an attractive child who could be put forward to bring credit to

the establishment. This applicant said that the establishment was always cleaned before any outsiders arrived. She recounted that none of the visitors spoke to her and she was not allowed to speak to them and the staff were always present.

## Positive Experiences

342 There were many positive comments made by applicants who met with the Forum in respect of the establishments in which they were placed. These are set out below by establishment type.

### Males and Females: Voluntary Establishments

343 Most applicants did not recall or refer to any positive experiences in their placements. The others who did spoke of staff working in the establishments, visits by family members, activities such as sport, trips and outings and weekend contacts with family members. Some applicants regarded their placement in an establishment as, overall, a very positive experience. The following is a selection of the applicants' comments with some quotations.

- An applicant described a member of staff as “brilliant” and said that she got on well with her.
- Another described a member of staff as “an angel, a great woman, a brilliant woman – care was good when you were in her group.”
- One named a volunteer who was excellent and always kind, as was her teacher at school.
- One applicant recalled that the staff and residents were kind to her. She remembered being spoilt as the older people in an adjoining care facility would insist that she have some of their food and told her “you need this more than me.”
- An applicant identified a member of staff as a positive, caring woman who would give the boys a cuddle. He thinks she was aware of the abuse he was experiencing as she said to him “They will be caught and pay for this one day.” He excused her for not telling because she was an older woman and, he concluded, her job would have been at risk.
- One spoke of a senior member of staff who was great but unfortunately left.
- Another described a number of people as “good” including an older boy whom he said “looked out for you” as did a gardener and a maintenance man.

- Another stated that many of the staff were very good, but said that it was those who were in a religious order who caused most concern.
  - Another applicant said that “there were some fantastic members of staff in there who would do anything for you.”
  - One applicant looked forward to his parents’ visits although he said that they were very rare.
  - An applicant spoke of having good friends among the other boys.
- 344 Other applicants referred to the enjoyment they experienced in the production of a Christmas play and being part of the production team, playing with the dog and playing on a boat in the garden of the establishment. Some appreciated being taken on fishing trips by a member of staff who was “like a dad”, and one remembered liking football, having a good maths teacher and getting two ‘O’ levels; another applicant spoke of having the opportunity to go on a six week trip to the USA.
- 345 Some said that they were allowed to attend the disco in a neighbouring village and another applicant, in addition to the disco, mentioned holidays in a seaside town and a visit from a celebrated footballer. An applicant described one establishment as:

“a fantastic place, fantastic team, amazing. I loved this home – I loved it so much that I didn’t leave until I was eighteen and a half years old when I should really have left when I was eighteen years old. I would go back now if I could.”

### **Males and Female: State Provision**

- 346 Most applicants who had been placed in state establishments made no reference to positive experiences in their placements. The minority who did spoke warmly about certain members of staff, contact with family, friendship with co-residents, organised activities and weekend leave. A female applicant said that the senior member of staff in her establishment was very good and explained that the children received an allowance for clothing, were allowed to have a friend around from school and could go into town to shop. Another applicant spoke warmly about the teaching staff and a carer she described as firm but kind. One applicant became so fond of the senior staff in the establishment who showed him warmth and affection that he visited them some years later. Some applicants spoke favourably in relation to most of the staff in their establishments. One female explained that a couple of staff were her favourites and said “they did not abuse you.” One applicant commented that:



“the care staff were nice people...all local; they were elderly but did not appear to really understand the needs of those placed there.”

She described them as being like “nice grandparents.”

- 347 An applicant was thankful that all the children in his family were placed together in an establishment. His brothers were in the same room and his sisters in a separate room but nearby. He described the placement as “a saviour for us all.” He said that they were given a clothing allowance, permitted to help themselves from the fridge and given pocket money. Another applicant liked receiving pocket money and having weekly outings.
- 348 One applicant said that they looked forward to going home on weekends but hated returning to the establishment. Another applicant spoke of being very settled in her placement and had no complaints, whilst another said that the children in his establishment appeared to be allowed to have a more “normal” teenage life: “I liked it.” One applicant referred to being moved from one establishment to another and said that the second establishment was “a gift” in comparison to the other.

#### **Male and Female: Juvenile Justice Establishments**

- 349 Most applicants did not mention any positive experiences in their placements. The following comments and quotations are illustrative of the information provided by those who did. An applicant complimented two of his teachers saying they were “gentlemen and good teachers.” Other applicants described the staff as follows:
- “...firm but kind; most of the staff were very good and caring, supportive.”
- “...some of the staff were 100 per cent, dead on, brilliant, very good to me, kind and helpful, got me through.”
- “...great, dead on. One member of staff was good, gentle as a lamb and another was a lovely man.”
- 350 A male applicant commented that his mother would come and visit him and that the teachers were good. One applicant referred to feeling positive when he had his own bedroom – proper food, a quilt that he described as “fresh”, he ate at proper times and liked the “smell of cleanliness”. He was excited at having a structure to his day. One applicant described positive experiences as follows:
- “I was able to settle. There were good staff, I made friends, I had sporting opportunities, I got home at weekends, I loved the food in

there and went back for seconds. Seven cigarettes a day were issued plus some extra cigarettes given personally by staff.”

An applicant spoke of “some decent staff” but felt that when she found staff she could trust, they seemed to be moved away. One applicant said that she:

“loved it, the best place ever. The staff were so good to you, the nuns were brilliant, completely different – I cried when I left. I am still in contact with them.”

Another applicant felt that the nuns liked her because, she believes, she was so “brutally honest.” One described the staff in one establishment as being “good people”; it was “a respite” from a previous placement as there was no abuse.

- 351 A female applicant said that her mum would visit every two weeks and because she was one of the youngest and smallest residents, the older girls “treated me as the wee sister they never had.” Two members of staff she described as “good” would also take her out. Other applicants also mentioned visits as positive memories. For example, one said his mother, brother and his girlfriend would visit him “I liked that place.” Another referred to her dad visiting every Saturday when she would be taken shopping for clothes. One applicant said that visits home during some holiday periods such as Christmas and Easter were especially positive memories. Some applicants enjoyed being allowed to go home on occasional weekends. One explained “you were allowed to go home providing you had not misbehaved.” An applicant who had experienced abuse acknowledged that “there were some good times in the place.”

## **Experiences of Discharge from Care and Post-Care Support from all Establishments**

- 352 In this period several applicants had more than one placement so their discharge from one establishment was often into another placement. Final discharge for most applicants was to their own family.

### **Male Applicants**

- 353 Only five of the 69 male applicants spoke about the post-care support provided for them. The remaining 64 applicants said none was available or did not mention it. Two of the male applicants spoke of ongoing support and contact with their social workers for some time after they were

discharged from care. One was provided with a flat in the community and the other had a job arranged for him by his probation officer. The following comments illustrate different experiences in the post-care period.

“I was collected by a male social worker. I’d never seen him before and prior to that I didn’t know I was going home. I’ve no memory of any preparation for going home. When I got there, I discovered a new brother and sister.”

“When I reached school leaving age I moved into foster care for about six weeks. From there I went back to my grandfather and stayed for a few months and then moved into digs in the nearest town. I got a place on a youth training scheme and on the way to a job interview I heard my father had died. I went into depression, became homeless and ended up in a refuge for alcoholics.”

### **Female Applicants**

- 354 Many of the female applicants returned home or went to foster families on their discharge from voluntary care provision. The following points illustrate what they told the Forum:

“I returned to the family without any further assistance.”

“I was unprepared for independent living.”

“I received no support having left the establishment; I was just gone.”

- 355 Two female applicants referred to ongoing support and contact with their social worker and from staff in their establishment, which continues to the present day. Three females talked of being provided with a flat; one of these also received a £1,000 leaving care community grant. The other two applicants were found places in community accommodation. Two had also been given some basic items, for example, a towel and some food which they considered very limited, and they commented that they received no money. They were unable to cook or manage money and found the accommodation frightening because of the behaviour of some of the other residents.

### **Contacts with Other Residents: All Establishments**

- 356 For the majority of applicants from this period it is unknown what, if any, contact they have had with other residents after leaving an establishment. Very few details were provided but just over twenty applicants said they had contact both recently and in the past with former residents. Some of the applicants mentioned contact solely in the past: ten said they had only

had contact recently; twenty said they had had no contact at all. Others made no mention of contacts. Most often, the contact that applicants had with other former residents was contact with their siblings with whom they had been placed into care.

### **Contact with Other Staff and Personnel: All Establishments**

357 Very few applicants mentioned having contact with staff or personnel from the establishments in which they had been placed. In some cases, where they had had contact, this had been a chance meeting, for example where the person lived in their local area or the meeting had been in relation to a court case. One applicant mentioned a former member of staff who used to visit him when he was in prison and with whom he would meet occasionally for lunch after his release.

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## Chapter 5: Applicants' Experiences of Abuse

### Introduction

- 1 The definitions of abuse, including neglect, as set by the Inquiry are as follows:

“Abuse was behaviour which either (a) involved improper sexual or physical behaviour by an adult or another child towards a child; or (b) in the case of emotional abuse, was improper behaviour by an adult or another child which undermined a child’s self-esteem and emotional well-being, such as bullying, belittling or humiliating a child; or (c) resulted in neglect of the child; or (d) took the form of adopting or accepting policies and practices, such as numbering children or ignoring or undermining sibling relationships; which ignored the interests of the children.”
- 2 It is important, when reflecting on the applicants’ accounts of the residential care they had received as children in designated establishments, to be aware of the different contexts and ways in which they experienced the abuse they allege. Emotional abuse, although for some applicants a matter of a one-off incident, was, according to many others, the outcome of recurring denigration or intimidation by care staff and/or other residents. Physical abuse was reported similarly, in other words as something that more often was ongoing than one-off and perpetrated by staff and other residents, although individual extreme incidents were alleged. Sexual abuse, for some participants, was an individual incident and for others ongoing; the alleged perpetrators included care and ancillary staff, teaching staff and other residents. Neglect was cumulative in its effects and not often referred to as the outcome of an individual occurrence. References to neglect touched on aspects of continuing care within the establishments and the nature and appropriateness of the education they had received.
- 3 Chapter 5 sets out the abuse that the 428 applicants who met with the Forum allege occurred when they were placed in the care of designated establishments in Northern Ireland from 1922 to 1995. There are three main parts to this chapter namely: abuse that occurred in establishments that were provided by the voluntary sector, abuse in establishments provided by the state sector and finally abuse in establishments that were within the juvenile justice sector. The abuse is described in three broad periods:
  - Period 1 – 1922 to 1955
  - Period 2 – 1956 to 1975
  - Period 3 – 1976 to 1995

## **Period 1: 1922-1955**

### **Introduction**

- 4 This section of the chapter sets out the experiences of 47 male and 25 female applicants when they were placed in the care of 23 establishments in Northern Ireland from 1922 to 1955. The section is divided into three: abuse alleged in voluntary establishments, abuse alleged in state establishments and abuse alleged to have occurred in juvenile justice establishments. Each part of this section describes the experiences of the male and female applicants separately.

### **Abuse in Voluntary Establishments**

- 5 Thirty-six male applicants spoke of abuse in six voluntary establishments. They did not necessarily use the terms adopted in this report to distinguish between the different types of abuse, but rather spoke of what they experienced as part of the narrative they gave in describing their childhood in designated establishments.
- 6 Twenty-four female applicants spoke of abuse in six voluntary establishments. As with their male counterparts, most of them described experiences that included one or more types of abuse. Only three female applicants reported sexual abuse, whereas fifteen of the male applicants alleged they were sexually abused.
- 7 A small minority – including some of those who left Northern Ireland as young children to travel to Australia through the child migrant scheme – had no memory of their care in voluntary establishments in Northern Ireland and no recollections of the kinds of abuse that many of the others described. For those who were sent to Australia as young children, and indeed for those who were older when they left Northern Ireland, their concerns related to the selection process for Australia and how separation impacted on their parental, sibling and extended family relationships and on the friendships they had developed in their establishments in Northern Ireland. Some applicants also commented that in addition to the separation from loved ones, the loss of cultural identity compounded their feelings of anxiety.

## Types of Abuse:

### Males: Voluntary Provision

- 8 The thirty-six male applicants who had been cared for in voluntary establishments referred to one or more types of abuse when speaking to the Forum. The combinations of types of abuse and the number of applicants who reported these are summarised in the table that follows.

<b>Combinations of Abuse Types</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Establishments</b>
<b>Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect</b>	7	4
<b>Physical, emotional and neglect</b>	9	3
<b>Physical, sexual and emotional</b>	5	2
<b>Physical, sexual and neglect</b>	-	-
<b>Physical and neglect</b>	2	2
<b>Physical and emotional</b>	3	2
<b>Physical and sexual</b>	3	2
<b>Emotional and neglect</b>	-	-
<b>Emotional and sexual</b>	-	-
<b>Emotional, sexual and neglect</b>	-	-
<b>Emotional</b>	4	1
<b>Sexual</b>	-	-
<b>Physical</b>	2	1
<b>Neglect</b>	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>6 different establishments</b>

- 9 The same establishment was named by eighteen of those alleging abuse. Physical abuse was alleged by each of those applicants, in addition to other forms of abuse or neglect. Another institution was named by thirteen of those alleging abuse in respect of one or more types of abuse or neglect. Physical abuse was alleged by nine of those applicants, in addition to other forms of abuse or neglect.
- 10 It is important to emphasise that the table above at paragraph 8 does not indicate the number or frequency of individual incidents of abuse or neglect but, rather, the total number of times particular types of abuse or



neglect were mentioned by the male applicants in their meetings with the Forum.

### **Physical Abuse**

- 11 Thirty-one of the men who had been cared for in voluntary establishments in Period 1 reported that particular members of staff were persistent, vicious and wilful in hitting them. There were:
- Twenty reports of physical abuse in one establishment
  - Six reports of physical abuse in another establishment
  - Two reports of physical abuse in a third establishment
  - Three reports of physical abuse, one in each of three establishments

### **Descriptions of Physical Abuse**

- 12 Various means of inflicting pain were mentioned by applicants, including the flat of a hand, a fist, a bunch of keys, a cane, a stick, the leg of a chair, a broom handle, hurling sticks, feet, a leather strap and a belt. Added to these were allegations that some staff pulled boys by their sideburns; four members of staff were said to have lifted boys that way and also by their ears. Throughout their accounts of the physical abuse they reported, the applicants referred to it being intended as a punishment for a misdemeanour on some occasions and on others as gratuitous violence by people – care staff and older boys – who were out of control.
- 13 One man said that the beatings he received from a member of the religious care staff began when he moved into the “juniors section” from the nursery. He said he was beaten constantly by this person – “she took a dislike to me” – and beaten occasionally by other religious care staff. He added that the instruments used to beat him included the leg of a chair. Another man, referring to the same member of staff, said that he was beaten with a stick “a bit like a billiard cue”, and that she used her belt to beat him and other children on the head. The same member of staff was reported by another applicant as using a bunch of keys to strike the children and, from time to time, this resulted in cuts and bruises. He added that when the local parish priest called and noticed the injuries, he told the religious care staff that this practice had to stop.
- 14 Several men spoke of being beaten on the bare buttocks with a stick by religious care staff, sometimes for bed-wetting and on other occasions, as far as they were concerned, for no reason at all. One reason given for a beating was that the applicant as a young boy had been found in bed

without his hands crossed on his chest, the required position for sleep as far as care staff were concerned. He said that the older boys would check for this kind of forgetfulness and punish the younger boys accordingly.

### Physical Abuse by more than one Person

15 Twenty-nine of the men who reported physical abuse indicated the following:

- Twenty-one reported abuse by one person.
- Four reported abuse by two people, either separately or concurrently.
- Two reported abuse by three people, either separately or concurrently.
- Two did not identify how many people were involved in their abuse.

### The Roles of Alleged Abusers

16 Applicants who recounted physical abuse were able to recall the roles or status of those who had abused them. The majority of those referred to were members of the care staff and, in most instances, were members of a religious order. It is noteworthy that of the total of 31 alleged abusers, 22 were members of a religious order or clergy. The details recalled by applicants are set out in the following table.

<b>Roles of Alleged Abusers</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Members of Religious Order/ Clergy</b>
<b>Officer in charge/authority figure</b>	-	7	7
<b>Care staff</b>	2	14	15
<b>Teacher/instructor</b>	1	-	-
<b>Former resident</b>	-	-	-
<b>Other resident</b>	7	-	-
<b>Visitor</b>	-	-	-
<b>Ancillary worker</b>	-	-	-
<b>Totals</b>	10	21	22

### Physical Abuse by Older Boys

17 Seven of the male applicants also described the rough treatment they received from older boys who, they said, had been given responsibility by the religious care staff to look after them at certain times of day. The applicants alleged that the older boys slapped, punched and kicked them,

all in the guise of ensuring that they were behaving properly and punishing them when they considered it necessary. None of the applicants could remember any of the religious care staff intervening when older boys punished – or attacked – younger boys physically and in excess.

### Sexual Abuse

- 18 Fifteen of the men who had been in voluntary establishments reported being subjected to sexual abuse. There were ten reports of sexual abuse in one establishment.
- 19 The abuse they alleged was perpetrated by officers in charge/authority figures, care staff, ancillary staff and by other, usually older, residents. Some experienced sexual abuse as young children, others when they were in their teenage years and almost all of them witnessed sexual abuse of other children or knew of this happening in their establishments. Some of the older boys (fifteen to twenty-year-olds) who were alleged abusers, were said to be former residents who had been kept on by some establishments to work in laundering, baking, farming and general maintenance. One applicant described one of these boys as not being the full shilling. A few of the applicants also spoke of former residents being able to come back to what had been their establishment and having free access to the premises and children, including after bed-time when they also had opportunities to abuse the children.

### The Types and Extent of Sexual Abuse

- 20 The fifteen male applicants who recounted sexual abuse reported this abuse in combination with other types of abuse. None reported sexual abuse on its own.
- 21 The types of sexual abuse referred to ranged from witnessing abuse to anal rape. The full range of types and number of reports of sexual abuse by establishment are set out in the following table.

Types of sexual abuse	Number of Reports*	Number of establishments
<b>Anal rape</b>	5	3
<b>Coercive peer abuse</b>	4	2
<b>Grooming</b>	1	1
<b>Inappropriate fondling</b>	4	2
<b>Masturbation of alleged abuser by child</b>	2	2

Types of sexual abuse	Number of Reports*	Number of establishments
<b>Masturbation of child by alleged abuser</b>	1	1
<b>Oral genital contact</b>	2	2
<b>Witnessing abuse</b>	4	3
<b>Other</b>	2	2

**Note:** “Reports” relates to the number of references to abuse made by applicants during their meetings with the Forum rather than to the number of individual instances of each type of sexual abuse which, for some applicants, allegedly occurred weekly for several years.

- 22 The sexual abuse described by applicants occurred in a number of places including dormitories, toilets, sheds, boiler houses, changing and shower areas. The types of sexual abuse reported included genital fondling, masturbation, oral sex and anal rape. For some applicants, the sexual abuse incidents were few but for most the abuse was ongoing.
- 23 One applicant, who found it very difficult to discuss the details of his abuse and became very emotional as he tried to describe what happened, said that he was abused by “a bloke who worked in the sewing room” who made him masturbate him. The man also took him to the showers, made him strip and beat him severely with a sally rod. Another applicant described being stretched on a laundry rack and being anally raped by older residents and by a priest attached to a local parish. Others referred to genital fondling, masturbation and anal rape by care staff and older residents and indicated that these practices occurred frequently and were well-known to other children. One man said that he was sexually abused “by various people” and that the assaults took place “in the home many times.” The applicants conveyed an impression of some establishments where sexual abuse – as well as emotional and physical abuse – was endemic, part of everyday life for some children.

### **Sexual Abuse: Roles of Alleged Abusers**

- 24 Those referred to as abusers included other residents, with care staff and ancillary workers and a visiting priest also being mentioned. Five of the seven adults mentioned as abusers were members of a religious order.

<b>Roles of Alleged Abusers</b>	<b>Males</b>
<b>Officer in charge/authority figure</b>	2
<b>Care staff including ancillary</b>	4
<b>Teacher/instructor</b>	-
<b>Former resident</b>	-
<b>Other resident</b>	9
<b>Visitor</b>	1
<b>Total</b>	16

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 25 This section of the report refers to emotional abuse that was alleged to have been experienced in voluntary establishments in the period from 1922 to 1955. Emotional abuse covers a range of actions and inactions that deprived the applicants of family and sibling contact, knowledge of their own identity, affection, approval and protection from harm. In their descriptions of emotional abuse, applicants most often referred to practices and routines, such as the separation of siblings, the removal of personal belongings and not being treated as individuals, all of which affected them deeply.

### **Nature and Extent of Emotional Abuse**

- 26 Twenty-six of the male applicants made 28 reports of emotional abuse. There were:
- Fifteen reports of emotional abuse in one establishment
  - Eleven reports of emotional abuse in another establishment
  - Two reports of emotional abuse – one in each of two other establishments.
- 27 The applicants described a number of factors that may have contributed to the emotional abuse they said they experienced. One of the main factors was the fear engendered by the threat of physical punishment and abuse from staff and older boys. In the latter case they spoke of bullying and of “a free rein” being given to the older boys who were placed in charge of the younger boys. They said that life for younger boys was characterised by a sense of threat, with physical abuse meted out by older boys under the guise of “punishment” for some minor misdemeanour or even under a false pretext. One applicant spoke of older boys blaming the

younger children for their own misdemeanours and in this way justifying their abusive behaviour. Several described the fear they felt from seeing other children being beaten by staff and older boys, with one saying that witnessing other boys being beaten was “the very distressing norm”. Witnessing sexual abuse was another cause of the fear and anxiety that many applicants recalled.

### **Personal Emotional Abuse**

28 Some applicants referred to the use of verbal abuse as a dispiriting and hurtful experience and means of control. They spoke of name-calling, of being referred to solely by a number, of being told lies about their families – for example, one man had been told that his mother was dead and only found out years later that she was alive when he was in an establishment. They also spoke of family denigration and of being mocked and belittled publicly for bed-wetting.

29 One applicant recalled being told by a member of the care staff that:

“when you are dying on your death bed, you will want a glass of water and there will be no one there to give it to you.”

This statement has remained with him and still pains him when he recalls it. Another applicant, reflecting what others implied, said that he had been subject to verbal abuse by nuns, who were care staff, and by older boys to such an extent that he thought it was normal. He added that the nuns always made him – and the other children – look down when they were being spoken to and he blamed this for his life-long difficulty in looking at others “in the eye” and standing up for himself. He was convinced this has disadvantaged him in work and life more generally. As he saw it, he thinks he has always been regarded as “shifty” because of his reluctance to make eye contact. Comments made by others included:

“I was not referred to by name, only a number, the number used to identify clothing.”

“I was referred to as a piss bag as I wet the bed.”

30 Witnessing the humiliation of other children was another factor in the emotional abuse recounted by some of the men. Humiliation was mentioned a number of times in association with bed-wetting; applicants spoke of this from direct experience of humiliation and also from the perspective of witnessing others being denigrated for having wet or soiled their beds. One man said that he is still upset by witnessing the actions

of one of his teachers, a nun, when dealing with a little girl who had soiled her underwear. The girl was made to take off her soiled underwear in class and show it to the other children. A male applicant described the practice he said he experienced because of being a “bed-wetter”. The practice involved both emotional and physical abuse, as was often the case in other accounts of abusive experiences. He told the Forum that bed-wetters were put in a cold bath and held down by two boys at the instruction of the nun in charge.

“A third boy poured bucket after bucket of cold water down on top of you.”

### **Exposure to Fearful Situations**

- 31 An applicant said that he had seen a member of the care staff kicking a boy across the floor. He then witnessed the same member of staff beating up the boy’s brother who went to assist him. The applicant remained terrified of this member of staff for the duration of his stay in the establishment. He believed the member of staff would have killed him if he knew he had witnessed some of his abuse of other residents. The men said that some staff – both religious and lay – used the threat of physical abuse as a main means of control and of keeping them subdued. An applicant reflected the views of others in saying:

“It was always in your mind ‘I’m going to get hit by a nun or class boys’. When a nun put boys into cold baths, after they were brought back from running away, I, along with the others, had to listen to screams from bathrooms. The nun was red in face from beating the boys and their cries were like sounds from a slaughter house.”

### **Deprivation of Affection**

- 32 Commonly, applicants referred to the lack of warmth and affection shown to them by most care staff. They contended that they had had to fight for survival and fend for themselves in circumstances where they might have received comfort and encouragement from the staff. Emotional abuse was said to be widespread and systemic in nature. With the exception of a reference to another older male resident as a source of emotional abuse, all the others mentioned in applicants’ accounts of the emotional abuse they experienced were adults – care staff, female and members of a religious order.

### Neglect

- 33 Nineteen applicants made 23 allegations of neglect in the care they had received in respect of diet, clothing, excessive work and education. They made:
- Fourteen reports of neglect relating to one establishment
  - Seven reports of neglect relating to another establishment
  - Two reports of neglect, one in each of two establishments.

### Diet

- 34 Fifteen of the male applicants talked about their diet, all of them saying that the quantity of the food was inadequate and the quality of food was poor. Two of that group blamed the inadequate quantity of food, in part, on the lack of supervision of the children at mealtimes. This allowed the bullies to take more of the food and select the better food. An applicant spoke about his diet in some detail saying that:

“I was often hungry. I ate from rubbish bins – apple peels etc. This was in wartime; we had very basic food, porridge and tea for breakfast, stew at lunch time but little meat, bread and dripping for supper, dripping called ‘chuck’. Older boys might take the dripping from you.”

“Hunger was a passenger always. Porridge and toast for breakfast, bread and lard with cocoa drink for supper. Things improved when we began to get bruised fruit\* from the market. Each child got an apple or an orange and dived in to get share of anything left over. There was a tuck shop in later years as rationing eased.”

**\*Note:** The reference to bruised fruit, above, is related to an arrangement spoken about by a number of residents from the same establishment, in which bruised and damaged fruit was brought to the establishment from a local market.

### Clothing

- 35 Inadequate clothing, including footwear, was mentioned by four applicants as another form of neglect and criticism was levelled at both the quality and fitting of the clothes and shoes. Applicants said that they were frequently uncomfortable because clothes and shoes were too small. Two of them added that they felt inadequately dressed for cold weather and for playing outdoors. One complained about the lack of pyjamas saying that “we had to sleep in our underpants” and another said that he only got socks to wear when he was being taken out of the establishment.



### Other Forms of Neglect

- 36 Other forms of neglect mentioned by more than two applicants included inadequate bedding, medical attention and education. Comments about these included:

“The counterpanes and pillows were kept at the end of the big dorm. We slept with one sheet and one blanket. We were cold.”

“I was wounded badly on the knee having been hit with a stair spindle by a nun. My knee was patched up in the home; it was fractured and never set properly. It was tightly bandaged, but I was made to kneel on it in church even when very painful.”

“The home neglected my need for spectacles; this caused me difficulty in reading and in making progress in school.”

“Very little was taught in school. Catechism was the main topic.”

### Excessive Work Demands

- 37 Nineteen of the male applicants said they were given work that was both heavy and excessive for children. Of the nineteen, the majority – sixteen – described work that involved scrubbing, polishing and buffing floors in long corridors and other floors. Others were sent to work on farms and some mentioned having to care for toddlers, preparing food in the kitchen and cleaning bathrooms and toilets. The following quotations are typical of the accounts given to the Forum:

“We had to scrub floors and polish them – up in the morning, supervised by class boys with pads right to left; washroom then to chapel and then breakfast.”

“We had a regime of polishing floors and, when older, helping in the kitchen. I also had daily duties on a different floor where elderly men were cared for. I had to empty the spittoons and the chamber pots. I also had to wash and shave the body of an old man who had died. I found this very distressing.”

“My chores included floor cleaning in the chapel, dining rooms, study halls, kitchen and lavatories. The buckets of hot soapy water were very heavy and I always had sore knees. After washing I had to polish the floors; I also had to clean the toilets and if any excrement was found by the nun inspecting our work, the whole team had to start all over again.”

“Work was constant from admission: washing, polishing floors – corridor a hundred yards long – dormitories and refectory. I had to look after babies and toddlers, prepare food and cook in the kitchen, do gardening, clean the school room, bathroom and toilets.”

### **Knowledge of Abuse**

- 38 Male applicants said that other residents and staff – care, ancillary and teaching staff – witnessed much of the abuse that was a common feature of their experience in their establishments. They also said that staff saw them crying and distressed and would have been able to see bruises on their arms and legs but rarely were they asked what was upsetting them or about what had caused their bruises. Those who absconded and were bought back to their establishments by the police often questioned why they were never asked about what was making them abscond.

### **Disclosing Abuse at the Time**

- 39 Two of the male applicants who had been resident in voluntary establishments said that they had reported their abuse to adults. Others who had not reported commented that other children in the homes witnessed the abuse but were powerless to do anything about it. A number of them added that reporting abuse most often provoked one of three responses: disbelief, punishment or dismissal. The applicants insisted that there was little incentive to report their abuse; as one said “you soon learned there was no point in telling” and others reflected that they thought what they were experiencing was normal, “just part of life”.
- 40 In one instance there was a positive outcome from reporting to an adult who was not a member of staff, in that the applicant who reported the abuse was moved to foster care. In another case the applicant told the Forum:
- “I tried to tell my mother on her yearly visits but I did not want to tell her full details and knew she could do nothing as she had to earn a living.”
- In describing his disclosure of his abuse to his family in later life, one man said:
- “I saw no point in telling anyone in the home as I thought I would not be believed and could suffer further physical punishment.”

### Methods of Coping with Abuse

- 41 The Forum asked the male applicants about how they had coped with or responded to the experiences they had described. Five responses to the alleged abuse were mentioned more often than any other and they were:
- not knowing what to do
  - accepting the abuse as normal
  - living in fear
  - enuresis
  - withdrawing into themselves.

The table below indicates the number of times these and other responses were mentioned by applicants in meetings with the Forum.

Responses to Abuse	Voluntary
<b>Male</b>	
<b>Didn't know what to do</b>	12
<b>Self harm</b>	-
<b>Accept as normal</b>	14
<b>Fear</b>	8
<b>Enuresis</b>	5
<b>Withdrawal</b>	5
<b>Attack abuser</b>	2
<b>Run away</b>	1
<b>Retaliation</b>	-
<b>Alcohol abuse</b>	-
<b>Prescribed medication</b>	-
<b>Other</b>	1

**Note:** Some applicants mentioned one or more responses; others mentioned none.

- 42 The selection of quotations that follows gives an insight into the thoughts and actions of some of the applicants in coping with their abuse.

“My mother visited me and gave me new clothes which I put on my bed but someone cut them up with a razor blade. I didn't report this as I had been threatened that if I did complain I would be sent to a training

school for bad boys with the terrible threat of the...(the religious order in charge)”.

“I considered the class boys as victims themselves as they would be punished if they didn’t do as they were told. So I simply accepted abuse as normal. When I left the home I was very aggressive and this was a disadvantage as I was always getting into fights. In the army I often lost the opportunity to advance in rank as a result.”

“Emotional, physical and peer sexual abuse were so commonplace that I did not appreciate that it was wrong in every way.”

“I lost respect for authority and became fiercely independent in spirit.”

“Later in life I just put it out of my mind and joked my way through life; if I dwell on it now it puts me back.”

### **Strategies of Alleged Abusers**

43 Three quarters of the applicants commented on factors that affected their response to their abuse and referred to the strategies used by alleged abusers. Most of their comments can be grouped into five broad categories, namely:

- the experience of being dominated by the authority of an older person, usually a manager or care worker
- violence on the part of the alleged abuser
- general fear – not knowing what might happen if they resisted or spoke out
- being told ‘not to tell’
- bullying.

44 The quotations that follow give an insight into the circumstances and factors that inhibited the applicants’ resisting and reporting their abusers.

“There was nowhere else to go – I didn’t know any other world; everything we did we had to either ask or were told to do. There was no free will – we just obeyed.”

“I was not known by my first name or surname but instead by my number which was...I remember seeing boys being beaten and I too was beaten so I always had to be hyper vigilant.”

“I didn’t know for a long time that my brothers were in the home (the same establishment) and my sisters were in another home close by. Relationships with my brothers and sisters were denied to me.”

“Older boys often were in charge without supervision and we couldn’t disobey them.”

“An older boy made me perform oral sex on him to avoid being given a cold bath and a beating for bed-wetting. This boy had the job to get the bed-wetters up at night to prevent wet beds.”

“When I was thirteen or fourteen, I was told my mother had come to see me. I had never heard of my mother. The nun told me to say ‘It’s nice here, I love it here, it’s a great place to be’ and to give her a big hug. I didn’t report my abuse as I was threatened that if I did I would be sent to...a place for bad boys. I cried every night for two years because I was so unhappy in...”

“I was constantly threatened with ‘if you don’t behave, you will be sent to live with your mother.’ I never got an explanation of why this deterrent was used but I knew that it was frightening. I was labelled a ‘retard’ and denigrated and physically reprimanded as I was a bed wetter.”

“There was a culture of punishment in...and I lived in the shadow of that. The punishment was administered by older boys and by nuns.”

“I was not referred to by name; I didn’t know about or celebrate birthdays; the use of each others’ names was forbidden. Before we went on a walk we were warned not to smile, nod, wave or talk. I never saw a toy. I always had to look down and never to speak before being asked a question. There was no mammy’s knee. My childhood was gone – I never had a childhood.”

## **Females: Voluntary Provision**

- 45 Twenty of the female applicants, who were resident in voluntary establishments from 1922 to 1955, referred to having experienced abuse. Some referred to more than one form of abuse and by more than one perpetrator. The combination of abuse types in different placements mentioned by applicants is shown below. It is important to emphasise that the table does not indicate the number or frequency of individual incidents of abuse but, rather, the total number of times particular types of abuse were mentioned by the twenty female applicants in their meetings with the Forum.

Abuse types	Applicants	Establishments
Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect	2	2
Physical, emotional and neglect	12	5
Physical, sexual, and emotional	-	-
Physical, sexual and neglect	-	-
Physical and neglect	-	-
Physical and emotional	1	1
Physical and sexual	-	-
Emotional and neglect	1	1
Emotional and sexual	-	-
Emotional, sexual and neglect	1	1
Emotional	1	1
Sexual	-	-
Physical	1	1
Neglect	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>*</b>

**\*Note:** 6 different establishments in total

### Physical Abuse

46 Sixteen of the female applicants who had been cared for in voluntary establishments made 21 reports of physical abuse. They spoke of treatment that they considered to be physically abusive in six different establishments. There were:

- Twelve reports of physical abuse in one establishment
- Six reports of physical abuse in another establishment
- Three reports of physical abuse, one in each of three establishments.

### Descriptions of Physical Abuse

47 Most commonly the applicants referred to being beaten with a strap and a cane, usually on the hands and legs and, in some of the more severe beatings they described, all over their bodies and especially where bruises would not be seen. They said that these punishments were given for even minor misbehaviours, and mentioned “talking back” to a member of the religious care staff, doing something the wrong way or simply being

mischievous as some of the triggers for physical punishments. One told the Forum that she experienced beatings “over and over again because nothing I ever did was good enough.” Another applicant was very emotional and found it hard to talk about the beatings she had received. She said she has felt ashamed all her life of being beaten as a child, so much so that she continues to have great difficulty in referring openly to this part of her childhood experience. Yet another woman described being placed in a room with her younger sister and then being wakened during the night by a nun who was a member of the care staff. She and her sister were told to get out of their beds by the nun who then poured cold water onto their sheets and told them to get back into bed. She reported that the nun returned later and beat them for wetting the bed. Another woman told the Forum:

“You would be hit if you talked back or didn’t do something right. You got hit all over the body where you couldn’t see it.”

### Physical Abuse by more than one Person

48 A number of the applicants alleged physical abuse by more than one person. In summary, the Forum heard:

- Five reports of abuse by one person
- Five reports of abuse by two persons, either separately or concurrently
- Two reports of abuse by three persons, either separately or concurrently.

The alleged abusers, with two exceptions, were female; their roles are set out in the following table.

<b>Roles of Alleged Abusers</b>	<b>Male</b>	<b>Female</b>
<b>Officer in charge/authority figure</b>	1	5
<b>Care staff</b>	-	7
<b>Teacher/instructor</b>	-	3
<b>Former resident</b>	-	-
<b>Other resident</b>	-	1
<b>Visitor</b>	1	-
<b>Ancillary worker</b>	-	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>17</b>

Of the nineteen alleged abusers, fifteen were members of a religious order and one was a parish priest.

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 49 Three of the female applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments reported sexual abuse. These applicants had been in two separate establishments. One of them told the Forum about a female member of staff digitally penetrating her after she was given a cold bath (being bathed in cold water was described as routine). She made no other allegations of sexual abuse.
- 50 Another applicant spoke about being fondled inappropriately by a male teacher in her establishment and also reported witnessing similar abuse of another child in the same establishment. She alleged that a teacher “felt up the girls’ legs in class.” She pushed him away when he tried to do this to her. She said she saw another male member of staff fondling the breasts of a girl as she played the piano.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 51 Eighteen female applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments reported emotionally abusive experiences. There were:
- Eleven reports of emotional abuse in respect of one establishment
  - Two reports of emotional abuse in respect of two establishments
  - Three reports of emotional abuse, one each in respect of four establishments.

These female applicants referred to emotional abuse types that were similar in range and intensity to those of the men.

### **Personal Emotional Abuse**

- 52 The applicants recalled living in fear of physical abuse and of experiencing verbal abuse including constant personal denigration; one spoke of being called by a number rather than her name. One talked emotionally about being told she was a demon, of being “worthless and evil” and of being publically humiliated. Another applicant said:

“I was repeatedly told that I would not amount to anything and that I would end up in the gutter”. Comments from others included:

“I was blamed for things I didn’t do such as stealing, and a notice saying ‘Thief’ was pinned to my back. On another occasion my pony tail was cut off as a punishment. These and other events humiliated and affected me negatively.”



“I was made to sit at a table away from the other children as I was Protestant – I was made to feel inferior and different.”

“I experienced public humiliation: I was made to stand in the corner in school and wear a hat with ‘dunce’ or ‘thief’ on it. I stole apples at every opportunity to try and feed my sisters and friends. I was shown no affection by anyone there.”

“I suffered from chronic enuresis. At school (on-site) I was not allowed to go to the toilet except at designated times. On one occasion I wet the floor and had to go through a number of classrooms to get a mop and bucket. Everyone knew what I had done.”

“The children who wet the bed were not allowed to get into their beds until after the non bed-wetters. I recall one time when I was made to stand in a cold, dark corridor for so long that I fell asleep upright.”

“As children we were not allowed to leave the table until we had finished everything on our plates. On one occasion, I had nothing but a large piece of fat left and couldn’t eat it. I was made to sit until it was dark trying to eat the food when a woman from the kitchen that I remember as being kind, told me to get to bed.”

### **Family Denigration and/or Links Discouraged**

- 53 A number of the women expressed regret that they had been separated from their siblings, including some who had sisters in the same establishment and some who had brothers in an adjacent establishment. They said that there was no encouragement of sibling relationships and several said they were deliberately kept apart from their siblings even though they kept asking about them and making it clear that they wanted to see them. One woman, for example, said that she and two younger sisters were placed in the same establishment. When admitted, she was seven years old and her sisters were five and three years old respectively. She said that they were split up and not allowed to see each other at any time.

Other applicants reported:

“I never knew my sister who was in the same institution – we went in together but I was only two years old and so lost my memory of her. When we met to receive a visit from our father we were left sitting in the parlour together but not introduced. I had no concept of what ‘sister’ meant.”

“I discovered in later life that my only brother was working near the establishment and I was not even told he existed.”

“I was not permitted to have a relationship with my sisters who were also resident in the home.”

“I regret that I was not given the opportunity to get to know my sister. We were kept apart.”

### **Exposure to Fearful Situations**

- 54 An applicant described graphically an occasion when a child died in her establishment. She said that the girls were made to walk round the dead child’s bed and, when they asked what had happened to her, a member of staff told them that “she was possessed by the devil.”
- 55 Repeatedly applicants spoke of the distress they experienced when witnessing other children being admonished and beaten by care staff. They indicated that they lived in fear of the same treatment. One applicant reported witnessing peers being subjected to physical abuse. She recounted that three girls ran away and when they returned all the children were summoned to the refectory and were made to watch as three nuns cut their hair short. She was very upset when she recalled the girls crying as they watched this humiliating event.

### **Deprivation of Affection**

- 56 A recurring theme in the accounts given to the Forum was the lack of affection and warmth in the care received. The comments of one woman reflect the sentiments of many: “I have no positive memories of being nurtured”. Other comments included:

“No one showed me any affection. The best time I had was in hospital with sepsis from a splinter in my foot. The staff there were lovely.”

“No kindness was shown to me; I believe I was singled out for particularly harsh treatment as I was born outside marriage.”

### **Neglect**

- 57 Seventeen female applicants complained of neglect:
- Sixteen applicants reported one instance of neglect
  - One applicant reported two instances of neglect.
- 58 The number of complaints in respect of the six voluntary establishments was as follows:
- One establishment was the subject of twelve complaints of neglect
  - Five establishments were each the subject of one report of neglect.

## Diet

- 59 Fourteen of the women who had been placed in voluntary children's homes made reference to aspects of their care that they considered to be neglectful. Ten applicants said that their food was not only poor in quality but was also inadequate in quantity. Typical comments made to the Forum included:

“I was hungry all the time.”

“I would pinch food all the time, including slops from the bins.”

“Bread and dripping with one cup of tea for breakfast, fatty meat for dinner and we were made to eat any food we vomited.”

“I used to climb out at night to rob apples as I was so hungry.”

“I was always hungry. There was never enough food and what was provided lacked nutrition and was horrid – lumpy, salty, cold porridge.”

“We were given one sausage on Christmas Day and an egg at Easter.”

“I ate from the slop bucket. I ate turnip skins and I stole apples as often as I could.”

“I was hungry all the time when I was younger. Meals were served in a refectory at long tables. The food was placed in the middle of a table and there was a free-for-all. As I was sitting at the end of the table and I was smaller, I never got enough to eat and I would go later to the bins and scavenge for leftovers and peelings.”

## Excessive Work Demands

- 60 Six of the women referred to inappropriate and excessive work demands as factors in their neglect. One said that “We worked from 7.00am to 8.00am every morning, polishing floors etc”; she added that the worst job was manually unblocking toilets with bare hands. Another told the Forum that

“We were like slaves doing their work for them, scrubbing and polishing floors until you could see your face in the shine.”

A third applicant reported that work was constant from admission:

“every Friday night five pairs of girls were on their knees scrubbing corridors and the chapel. I never saw a nun do physical work.”

This applicant had special duties looking after an older girl who appears to have had learning difficulties; she said she was completely responsible for her. She added that she was also in charge of the top bathroom which had about eight sinks, as well as toilets and baths. She had to ensure it

was clean every day from getting-up time. She was about eight or nine years old at the time. When she was older, she also worked in the kitchen, the laundry and the adjacent residential home for older people.

### **Inadequate Medical Care**

- 61 Some of the women spoke about the inadequacy of their medical care. One commented on her care when she became seriously ill and received medical attention for some time. Her aunt came to visit her and a row ensued with the care staff because she was so shocked by the condition of her niece who was emaciated and barely able to walk. Another recounted having an outbreak of boils on her neck, underarms and knees. These were not treated and she recalled that when she was unable to bend both knees to pray, a nun pushed her down and said “we pray to God on both knees.” She added:

“I was in great pain and my sister who had witnessed this ran over to help me.”

### **Lack of Opportunities for Play**

- 62 Several of the women complained about the lack of play opportunities, toys and books. One applicant’s account was as follows:

“No toys were provided and those in the garden were not adequate for the numbers of residents. Toys were produced for inspections and for a TV company filming in the garden but they were then removed immediately afterwards – I was astounded that the visitors didn’t notice the children’s reaction to seeing the toys or that they were new.”

### **Knowledge of Abuse**

- 63 The applicants’ accounts of their physical and emotional abuse and neglect make it clear that there must have been many witnesses to what they experienced. Not only were other residents present in most instances but so too were other members of the care staff and ancillary staff. However, few of the applicants made reference to this. One applicant asked “Why did no one do anything to stop what was going on?”

### **Disclosing at the Time**

- 64 One of the 24 female applicants who had been in designated voluntary establishments said that she had reported her abuse just after it had occurred and that, at least initially, her action had results. She said:

“I showed the priest, who was supportive of the children, the welts on my legs caused by a nun. He told the nun to get him the cane. She did and he admonished her and said he never wanted to see marks like that on legs again. After he left, the nun used her knuckles on my head and then, after a while, reverted to using the cane.”

None of the others had reported their abuse and told the Forum that the threat of physical punishment silenced most children, coupled with the ongoing verbal admonishment from angry adults.

### Methods of Coping with Abuse

65 The Forum asked the female applicants how they had coped with the experiences they had described. Five responses to the alleged abuse were mentioned more often than any others and they were:

- not knowing what to do
- accepting the abuse as normal
- fear
- enuresis
- withdrawing into themselves.

The table below indicates the number of times these and other responses were mentioned in meetings with the Forum.

Responses to Abuse	Voluntary
<b>Females</b>	
<b>Didn't know what to do</b>	5
<b>Self harm</b>	-
<b>Accept as normal</b>	7
<b>Fear</b>	3
<b>Enuresis</b>	2
<b>Withdrawal</b>	6
<b>Attack abuser</b>	2
<b>Run away</b>	2
<b>Retaliation</b>	1
<b>Alcohol abuse</b>	-
<b>Prescribed medication</b>	-
<b>Other</b>	-

**Note:** Some applicants mentioned one or more methods of coping; others mentioned none.

66 The selection of quotations that follows gives an insight into the thoughts and actions of some of the applicants in regard to coping with the abuse.

“I didn’t accept the abuse; I constantly rebelled against it – I would not go to Confession. I continued to assert myself and tried to help others.”

“I answered back, something nuns didn’t like.”

“I ran away twice but I was found by police and brought back. They (the staff) put me in a dark cupboard for a few hours with no food. When the police came to see me the next day I told them I was hungry but they didn’t take any notice and I was punished again.”

“At times I felt that this was my lot. I had no choice but to accept the treatment.”

“I put it to the back of my mind; I could have committed suicide, instead I dealt with it by forgetting it.”

“I had no family and been brought up in an institution. I had no resources to rely on.”

“I wouldn’t dare complain to the doctor as the nun who was present would later on give you a hiding for telling the doctor something and not telling the staff first.”

“I was continuously frightened. If you looked the wrong way you were told ‘sit down, behave, I don’t want to hear from you, you should know your place.’”

“I lived in an environment that evoked fear; it was dark and suffocating.”

“The police took us back every time; they never asked us why we were running away.”

“When I was wrongly accused of stealing, I resolved not to help the nuns again.”

### **Strategies used by Alleged Abusers**

67 Almost all of the female applicants who had been placed as children in voluntary establishments prior to 1956 commented on factors that inhibited them in speaking out about their and others’ abuse. Most of their comments can be grouped into five broad categories, namely:

- the influence of the authority of an older person, usually a manager or care worker
- violence on the part of the alleged abuser

- general fear – not knowing what might happen if they resisted or spoke out
- being told “not to tell”
- bullying.

68 The comments that follow give an insight into the distress felt by the applicants when they were children and help to explain why they were so reluctant to report abuse.

“We were beaten regularly. One incident I remember as follows: someone scraped a hole in the wall in the WC, we were all made to line up as a nun walked up and down the line. She stopped at whoever she decided was the guilty party. The girl was lifted off her feet by her hair, beaten badly by stick and thrown into an under-stairs cubbyhole with a small window. When this happened to anyone, the nun made noises outside to scare you, and hours after the other children were in bed you were dragged upstairs to the dormitory.”

“Decisions were taken about me and nothing was explained – care staff gave no sense of appreciating the use of explanation to alleviate fears or to be inclusive.”

“I was threatened with being sent to...by one of the nuns. I knew of it as a place for mad people and another girl had gone there. The threat made me very frightened.”

“I was not chosen for outings or activities like choir. My hair was washed in public, in the back yard, overlooked by boys who taunted us. I suffered from nightly enuresis, and we were called ‘wet the beds’. Once you wet the bed at night you had to remain in your wet sheets, and next morning you had to wash the sheets in cold water. Later buzzers were introduced, but other children were wakened by the buzzer going off and I, with others, was verbally abused by the other children.”

“I was made to line up with my underwear inside out; I was hit on the face if my underwear was marked. I was told publicly I was backward.”

### **Abuse in State Provision**

69 This section refers to the abuse reported to the Forum by those applicants who were resident in state provision between 1922 and 1955. Six male applicants and one female applicant were in that category.

## **Males: State Provision**

- 70 Of the six males in state establishments in this Period three did not have any abuse to report. In one applicant's case the abuse he suffered took place in an establishment during Period 2. Another was in a state establishment only briefly where, he said, he was cared for appropriately before being placed in a voluntary establishment where he alleges he was abused. A third, although in a state establishment in Period 1, spoke of abuse he experienced in a foster family setting to which he was sent from the state establishment. That abuse is outside the terms of reference of the Inquiry.
- 71 The combinations of abuse experienced by the other three men in three separate establishments were as follows:
- One man reported experiencing physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect
  - One man reported physical abuse
  - One man reported sexual abuse.

### **Physical Abuse**

- 72 None of the six men who had been in state establishments reported any physical abuse by care staff. The two who alleged physical abuse said that this came from other residents. One recalled an incident in which he had been hit on the head with a bottle when he refused the older resident's request to go to his 'den'. The applicant said that he knew he would be abused if he complied. He was taken to a doctor for attention to his injury.

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 73 Two of the six male applicants who had been placed in state establishments spoke about sexual abuse. One of the two, who had lived in a state workhouse with his mother and brother, reported that he was anally raped by an older resident and that he was the focus of genital exposure by a group of older residents who tried to involve him in sexual activities.
- 74 The other applicant recalled that he was sexually abused, "interfered with and raped" by several men who worked in his establishment. He said that this happened frequently: "it was going on all the time". One of the men would sexually interfere with him in the boiler room. He would threaten that if he would not comply he would put him in the boiler.



### Emotional Abuse

- 75 Two of the six men who had been cared for in state establishments made references to emotional abuse but did not detail the nature of the experiences that affected them in that way.

### Neglect

- 76 None of the six male applicants who had been in state children’s homes alleged neglect.

### Alleged Abusers

- 77 The alleged abusers referred to by male applicants were either other residents or staff who worked in management and care. The following table summarises this information:

Roles of Alleged Abusers	Males
<b>Authority figure/officer in charge</b>	2
<b>Care staff</b>	2
<b>Ancillary</b>	-
<b>Teacher</b>	-
<b>Visiting adult</b>	-
<b>Other resident</b>	2

### Disclosing abuse at the Time

- 78 The two applicants who alleged sexual abuse in state establishments told the Forum that they had reported the abuse but to no effect. One said that:

“I feel my action was dismissed; the staff member I told said ‘away you go’. It seems that sexual abuse was part of the culture of the institution.”

The other told the Forum that:

“(after a sexual assault) I was cleaned up by another resident whose assigned duties included supervising toilets. This man reported it to the officer in charge who gave me to understand I needed to be careful about going into toilets if the supervisor was not there. I felt he was saying I was to blame.”

### How compliance was achieved: Strategies used by Alleged Abusers

- 79 The abusers in one establishment were in positions of authority and threatened one applicant with dire consequences if he told anyone what

they were doing to him. In the other case, the applicant was intimidated by older residents, in effect adults around twenty years of age.

### **Methods of Coping**

- 80 The Forum asked the applicants about how they had coped with or responded to the experiences they had recounted. Three ways of responding to the alleged abuse were mentioned and they were:
- not knowing what to do and so doing nothing
  - accepting the abuse as normal
  - being frightened.

### **Females: State Provision**

- 81 One female applicant came to the Forum to recount her childhood experiences in state care. She had one complaint and that focused on physical abuse and bullying by other residents.

### **Male: Juvenile Justice Provision**

- 82 This section refers to the abuse reported to the Forum by the two applicants, both males, who had been in juvenile justice establishments between 1922 and 1955. The applicants had been in the same establishment but at different times. They spoke of the following types of abuse.

#### **Physical Abuse**

- 83 One of the applicants complained of physical abuse that was extreme and ongoing, saying that he was beaten with a leather strap by religious staff and bullied and beaten by other, older, residents. The other applicant complained of being strapped and beaten by staff who were also members of a religious order.

#### **Other Abuse**

- 84 Neither of the applicants reported sexual abuse; one referred to emotional abuse without giving examples.

#### **Knowledge of the Abuse at the Time**

- 85 Neither of the applicants referred to having reported their abuse but they told the Forum that the abuse happened in the presence of other staff and residents.

## Closing Comment

- 86 The applicants who had been in children’s residential establishments between 1922 and 1955 said that their anger about the abuse they had experienced had not diminished over the years. Their sense of injustice at not being believed and their frustration from being ignored and dismissed when they reported abuse has increased over time. They acknowledged that some staff had been good to them but others had treated them cruelly and exploited them and they wanted this to be “on the record”.

## Period 2: 1956-1975

### Introduction

- 87 This section of the chapter sets out the abuse that 125 male and 85 female applicants allege occurred when they were placed in the care of 35 establishments in Northern Ireland from 1956 to 1975. The section is divided into three: abuse alleged in voluntary establishments, abuse alleged in state establishments and abuse alleged to have occurred in juvenile justice establishments. Each part of this section describes the experiences of the male and female applicants separately.

### Voluntary Establishments

- 88 The first part of this section covers the experiences of 75 male applicants who spoke of abuse in nine voluntary establishments. Two applicants did not report any abuse in their placements in voluntary establishments. The second part of this section covers the experiences of 74 females who spoke of abuse in twenty establishments in the voluntary sector.
- 89 Some applicants alleged experiencing one type of abuse from more than one alleged perpetrator. For example, they may have alleged physical abuse by two or three perpetrators and may also have reported emotional abuse by one of those staff members or by another staff member.

### Males: Voluntary Provision

- 90 The 75 male applicants spoke of abuse in nine establishments. Most of the abuse that was reported to the Forum was alleged to have occurred in three establishments, two of which were the focus of complaints of abuse from 28 applicants. The third establishment, was the focus of complaints

from 23 applicants. The table that follows sets out the combinations of types of abuse alleged by the 75 male applicants.

<b>Abuse types</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Establishments</b>
<b>Physical, emotional, neglect and sexual</b>	28	4
<b>Physical, emotional and neglect</b>	16	6
<b>Physical, emotional and sexual</b>	12	4
<b>Physical, sexual and neglect</b>	1	2
<b>Physical and neglect</b>	1	1
<b>Physical and emotional</b>	4	3
<b>Physical and sexual</b>	4	3
<b>Emotional and sexual</b>	2	1
<b>Emotional, neglect and sexual</b>	2	2
<b>Emotional only</b>	-	-
<b>Sexual only</b>	3	1
<b>Physical only</b>	2	2
<b>Neglect only</b>	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>29*</b>

\* **Note:** Nine establishments were reported by different applicants for different types of abuse.

Twenty-eight applicants reported experiencing all four types of abuse. Sixteen applicants reported experiencing physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect.

### **Physical Abuse**

- 91 Sixty-eight applicants made, in total, 149 complaints of physical abuse in respect of nine individual voluntary establishments. These 68 applicants had a total of 88 placements. The following table sets out the extent of reports of physical abuse per establishment.

Individual Placements	Establishments	Reports
28	1	67
28	1	38
23	1	29
3	1	3
2	1	3
1	1	3
1	1	2
1	1	3
1	1	1
<b>Total - 88</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>149</b>

### Descriptions of Physical Abuse

- 92 Male applicants who had had placements in voluntary establishments alleged being physically reprimanded by some members of staff who, as a standard control mechanism, would punch, slap and kick them. Some applicants described the physical abuse they were subjected to as persistent and routine. Applicants alleged that staff used the following items to physically reprimand them: leather straps, a blackthorn stick, canes, keys, brooms, bats, a kettle flex, a wooden towel rail, tennis rackets, a chair leg, a golf club and a hurling stick.
- 93 There were accounts that physical abuse could be given for a minor misdemeanour or, at times, applicants commented: “We just happened to be in the way of the member of staff.” Some of the applicants said that, from time to time, some of the staff appeared to lose control and the punishment was disproportionate to the misdemeanour. One applicant alleged getting beaten by a member of staff and receiving “man-sized punches.” Some applicants said certain members of staff instructed them to sleep with blankets over their heads or lie with their arms folded across their chests. If they failed to comply, they would be beaten by either older boys or some of the staff. One applicant referred to one particular member of staff who lifted the boys off the ground by the cheeks or the ears and, on occasion, threw them against a wall.
- 94 Some applicants who spoke about constant physical abuse in their placements described experiences that included being beaten, waiting for a beating or watching another resident being beaten. One applicant recounted that “fear was put into you from day one.” Another applicant stated, “I have lost count of how many times I was hit.” Another applicant

described a particular incident when he was repeatedly beaten by a member of staff who “showed no mercy.”

95 Some applicants recounted that some of the nuns had favourites amongst the children, who then were known as the “pets or dainties.” One of the applicants said that, through having this status, he received extra portions of food and was selected to go on outings. A few applicants commented that these children received preferential treatment because their mothers were paying for their keep in the establishments.

96 Some of the applicants felt they were singled out for harsher treatment than their peers and this was puzzling and particularly upsetting for them at the time. In hindsight, they correlate this with their personal circumstances, such as the mother being a single parent, having parents who were unmarried, their families not contributing financially to the cost of care in the home or, coming from a different religious background. There were also accounts in which specific staff were said to pick on certain children. One applicant recounted that he desperately wanted to pass the 11-plus only to learn that he had failed. A staff member announced this in front of everyone in his group in the establishment:

“We have a stupid person among us who thought he was clever.”

This applicant said that the memory of this still remains painful for him and he fails to understand how someone could behave in such an inappropriate way towards children.

97 Applicants who had a history of enuresis alleged being publicly humiliated and physically harmed because of their condition. One applicant recounted that as a bed wetter, he was awakened during the night to go to the bathroom by staff hitting him. One applicant alleged a member of staff repeatedly hit him but he refused to cry. He said the physical abuse became more persistent and extreme and when he did eventually cry, the beatings ceased. This applicant commented, “I was beaten until I broke.” One applicant recounted being beaten with a rod of wire “like a TV aerial” which was used to “prod the boys...like hitting cattle.”

98 Applicants made the following comments when recounting their experiences of abuse in voluntary establishments:

“If you fought back you never won.”

“A staff member was determined to break me.”

“I was being beaten left, right and centre.”

“I have lost count how many times I got hit.”

“You got so used to it, it didn’t affect you anymore.”

### Physical Abuse by more than one Person

99 Many applicants reported to the Forum that they were physically abused by more than one person. The following is a summary of the information they provided:

- One applicant alleged physical abuse by seven people.
- Three applicants alleged physical abuse by six people.
- Three applicants alleged physical abuse by five people.
- Five applicants alleged physical abuse by four people.
- Ten applicants alleged physical abuse by three people.
- Twenty-five applicants alleged physical abuse by two people.
- The remaining 21 applicants alleged physical abuse by one person.

**Note:** The allegations of abuse may have involved two or more people concurrently.

### Role of Alleged Abusers

100 The table that follows shows the position within the institution of the alleged abusers as understood by the applicants. Some applicants could not provide any information on the name or position of their alleged abuser. Other residents were sometimes noted as bullies by applicants, but not usually identified by name and therefore are not included in the table below. It was not possible to ascertain how many residents were alleged to be physically abusive.

Role of alleged abuser	Males	Females	Member of Religious Order/Clergy
<b>Officer in charge/ authority figure</b>	51	29	60
<b>Teacher/instructor</b>	18	4	11
<b>Care staff</b>	45	23	47
<b>Ancillary staff</b>	8	3	2
<b>Other (role not clear)</b>	3	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>120</b>

### **Physical Abuse by Older Boys**

- 101 Eight of the applicants recounted being subjected to physical abuse by older residents who had been given charge of them. The applicants described staff authorising the older boys to keep control and order. The result was that the younger children were left unsupervised and the older residents displayed aggressive behaviour towards them. Applicants recounted the fear they felt as the older boys would beat, slap and kick them and they were afraid to tell of the abuse for fear of being beaten. Some applicants said that they reported the abuse to staff but they were not believed, or that their reports were dismissed and they were not offered any support.

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 102 Fifty-two male applicants made, in total, 104 reports of sexual abuse in five individual establishments in the voluntary sector. Twenty-eight of them referred to sexual abuse only once but it was clear that for some of them the abuse had been ongoing. The other 24 referred to two or more instances of sexual abuse, with one applicant reporting ten instances in what had been a prolonged experience of sexual abuse.
- 103 Forty-nine applicants reported sexual abuse in combination with other types of abuse, while three applicants reported sexual abuse only.
- One establishment was the subject of sexual abuse reports by 31 applicants.
  - One establishment was the subject of sexual abuse reports by sixteen applicants.
  - One establishment was the subject of a sexual abuse reports by nine applicants.
  - One establishment was the subject of sexual abuse reports by four applicants.
  - One establishment was the subject of sexual abuse report by one applicant.

Some of the 52 applicants had more than one placement and reported sexual abuse in respect of more than one establishment.

### **The Nature and Extent of Sexual Abuse**

- 104 The complaints reported by applicants refer to allegations of sexual abuse perpetrated by residential and non-residential staff, older residents, former residents and visitors. The alleged sexual abuse was said to have



taken place in various locations including inside the establishments, in the grounds of the establishments, and in various holiday homes during the summer holiday period. The full range of types and numbers of reports of sexual abuse are set out in the following table.

<b>Types of sexual abuse</b>	<b>Number of reports</b>
<b>Inappropriate fondling</b>	18
<b>Anal rape</b>	14
<b>Oral/genital contact</b>	11
<b>Masturbation of child</b>	9
<b>Masturbation of alleged abuser</b>	14
<b>Indecent exposure</b>	6
<b>Coercive peer abuse</b>	16
<b>Witnessing sexual abuse</b>	7
<b>Use of violence</b>	4
<b>Grooming</b>	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>

- 105 Some of the applicants referred to a culture of ongoing sexual abuse within their establishments and many found it particularly difficult to talk about the sexual abuse. Some of the applicants commented that in later life they had felt unable to talk of their experiences of abuse as they were concerned they would be stigmatised or judged negatively. Some of the applicants said they felt ashamed and this had kept them silent over many years.
- 106 An applicant who described himself as a “pet” of a particular member of staff said he received privileges from this staff member who continued to sexually abuse him. Another applicant alleged the boys would be given “the odd pound and fags” by the older residents so that they could abuse them. An applicant said that the showers were allocated on a rotational basis and boys were called to the shower but the residents who were “liked” by certain staff members would be chosen more regularly and they were watched very closely. An applicant in a large establishment said that he and other residents were “like meat in a butcher’s shop.” This applicant spoke of a member of staff masturbating him whilst he lay in his sick bed.

### Sexual Abuse by more than one Person

107 Many applicants reported to the Forum that they were sexually abused by more than one person as follows:

- One applicant reported that he was abused by ten different alleged perpetrators
- Two applicants reported they were each abused by six different alleged perpetrators
- Three applicants reported they were each abused by four different alleged perpetrators
- Three applicants reported they were each abused by three different alleged perpetrators
- Fourteen applicants reported they were each abused by two different alleged perpetrators.

The other 29 applicants reported that they had been abused by one alleged perpetrator.

### Alleged Abusers

108 Four of the alleged perpetrators were reported to be female and the rest of the alleged perpetrators were male.

Role of the Alleged Abuser	Female	Male	Member of Religious Order/Clergy
<b>Officer-in-charge/ authority figure</b>	-	21	12
<b>Care staff</b>	2	29	26
<b>Teachers/instructors</b>	-	2	-
<b>Ex residents</b>	-	6	-
<b>Other residents</b>	2	31	-
<b>Visitors</b>	-	4	2
<b>Ancillary workers</b>	-	8	-
<b>Totals</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>101</b>	<b>40</b>

### Emotional Abuse

109 This section of the report describes emotional abuse in voluntary establishments from 1956 to 1975. Emotional abuse covers a range of actions and inactions that deprived the applicants of family and sibling contact, knowledge of their own identity, affection, approval and protection from harm appropriate to their age and developmental needs.

In their descriptions of emotional abuse, applicants most often referred to practices and routines, for example, the separation of siblings and the removal of all personal belongings or the absence of individual, personal treatment. Emotional abuse as such was not often ascribed to individual staff but was generic and described as systemic in nature.

### The Nature and Extent of Emotional Abuse

110 Sixty-four male applicants reported emotional abuse in combination with other types of abuse. None of them reported emotional abuse as the only form of abuse they experienced.

- One establishment was the subject of emotional abuse reports by 24 applicants
- One establishment was the subject of emotional abuse reports by 22 applicants
- One establishment was the subject of emotional abuse reports by 21 applicants
- One establishment was the subject of emotional abuse reports by two applicants
- Four establishments were each the subject of emotional abuse reports by one individual applicant.

Some of the male applicants had been placed in more than one establishment. Nine applicants made allegations of experiencing emotional abuse in more than one establishment.

111 The range of emotional abuse described in the eight establishments is set out in the table below.

Type of emotional abuse	Number of reports
<b>Shown no affection</b>	9
<b>Public humiliation</b>	14
<b>Personal denigration</b>	13
<b>Removal of personal belongings</b>	14
<b>Family denigration</b>	20
<b>Family contact discouraged</b>	18
<b>Sibling links discouraged</b>	12
<b>Inappropriate exposure to fearful situations</b>	30
<b>Other</b>	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>137</b>

### Personal Emotional Abuse

- 112 Applicants who recounted emotional abuse spoke of living in fear, being ridiculed and belittled by staff and older residents and having to remain vigilant at certain times or at all times. Some applicants described a childhood characterised by fear and loneliness with the absence of emotional warmth and encouragement. One applicant said “no one cared for you...you were totally alone.” Applicants spoke of feeling depersonalised with little or no recognition that they, as children, were individuals with feelings. There were descriptions of applicants being given a number and referred to by such, and not addressed by their given name.
- 113 Applicants provided accounts of being publicly humiliated, citing examples of those who were bed-wetters being ridiculed in the presence of their fellow residents. Some applicants recounted that they were so frightened of wetting the bed that they were afraid to fall asleep in case this would happen and they would have to face the consequences of being ridiculed and beaten in the morning.

Applicants alleged that staff in certain establishments inspected their underwear. One applicant recalled that when he was around twelve years of age, the boys had to stand in line and had to hold out their underpants for inspection. If the underwear was stained, they were publically berated and at times beaten by staff. One applicant alleged that if one boy’s underwear was stained, all the boys were punished by having their pocket money docked, adding “the shame of having to do this was worse than the beatings.” One applicant recalled an instance when a boy soiled himself and a member of staff rubbed the soiled underwear in his face; the applicant commented that this was “barbaric.”

- 114 There were accounts of staff making inappropriate comments to children and derogatory name calling, such as “scar face”, “stupid”, “space boy” and “rabbit teeth.” One applicant recounted some members of staff mocking him due to his speech impediment. Another applicant was referred to as a “mongrel” as his parents were from a mixed religious background. One applicant recounted that he was commonly addressed by staff as a “rotten egg...from the backstreets of Belfast.” Several applicants alleged that they were called a “dirty bastard” and others were told they were in care because “no one wanted you.” One applicant recounted watching a staff member approach another resident and coldly tell him his mother had died and then just walk away from the boy.

- 115 Three applicants who had been in the same large establishment reported that the boys who wet the bed were made to sleep in the ‘wet house’. This was in the grounds, separate from the main house, and the boys had to run up to the main house in the morning holding their wet sheets while some of the older boys jeered at them.

### **Family Denigration and/or Links Discouraged**

- 116 Some applicants said that contact with their birth families was not promoted or supported and that this caused them great regret and sadness. One applicant who was discharged in the 1960s recounted that: “my parents were treated like dirt” when they came to visit and were received very differently to the “upper class visitors who would come to take children out”. The visitors would be taken into “nice rooms with toys in them” but his mother was made to wait in a cold corridor.
- 117 One applicant told the Forum that his grandparents, to whom he was very attached, regularly made the long journey to see him in the establishment. He described staff ridiculing and sneering at them, calling them inappropriate names and refusing to allow them to enter the premises. Immediately after his grandparents left, staff would throw the food they had brought him into the bin.
- 118 Several applicants said that they were not informed that they had siblings in the same establishment. Applicants who did know their sibling(s), recounted that their important bond should have been promoted instead of being frustrated or obstructed. One applicant recounted that his little brother was in another part of the establishment and the only time they saw one another was when he got into trouble and was brought to the part of the building where the applicant was based. He reflected that he believed his little brother “deliberately got into trouble, just so he could see him.”
- 119 One applicant spoke of an older sister travelling to see him. He referred to the lack of public transport at that time, and described her lengthy travel as a “camel’s journey.” On some occasions, she was refused entry by staff. If she was permitted to see him, it was for no more than ten to fifteen minutes. He felt that these actions were intended to punish him. One applicant alleged that he received a letter from his sister eight years after she had written it. Another applicant alleged that the letters he had written to his sisters were not posted to them.

- 120 Another applicant described the impact of his separation from his siblings when he was admitted into care. He recounted that he was initially placed with his brother, who was vulnerable and was suddenly moved to another placement without explanation as to why. They were given no opportunity to say goodbye to each other.

The following quotations are further examples of what applicants said about sibling contact:

“I didn’t know my brothers were resident in...at the same time.”

“My sisters were placed in another institution and although they attended the same Church every Sunday, I was not told they were my sisters.”

“I saw my younger sister in church and climbed over the pews to her and was later physically punished by a member of staff.”

“Some of my family were denied contact with me as they were of a different religious persuasion.”

- 121 Some applicants also felt that they were prevented by staff from enquiring about or mentioning family members. One applicant, who had spent all of his childhood in care, plucked up the courage as a teenager to ask staff “can you tell me who my mother is?” and was promptly told “You don’t need to know...we have done our best for you.” This applicant commented

“It is very hard not to know who your parents are – other boys found out and it helped them.”

- 122 Some applicants told the Forum that the threat of ending contact with family members was often used by staff. One applicant, who had formed a strong attachment to his foster carer and referred to her as his “holiday mum”, alleged that he was told constantly that he would not be allowed to go and stay with her if he was guilty of the slightest misdemeanour. He added that being with her was “the only happy time of my childhood”.

- 123 An applicant who had regular contact with his mother recalled how he always waved goodbye to her from the first floor window of the establishment. He remembered one occasion when he was going to the window to wave to her as usual, a member of staff stopped him, asked him where he was going and said, “Stop your nonsense.” He was especially upset as he knew his mother would be waiting for him to wave as usual.

### **Bullying by Older Residents**

- 124 Applicants recounted bullying by older residents as a cause of emotional abuse. There were descriptions of older boys being placed in charge of the younger children without appropriate adult supervision in place. One applicant referred to the older boys as devils, and said that the younger children went “through hell” adding, “you could hear their terror”.

### **Exposure to Fearful Situations**

- 125 Some applicants alleged that some of the staff deliberately tried to scare the residents; for example, several applicants referred to residents being thrown into an outdoor swimming pool despite staff knowing they were unable to swim. One applicant alleged that he was thrown into the deep end of this pool and older boys had to rescue him. There was reference to a boy who could not swim begging the staff member not to throw him into the pool, “Please, I’ll give you a shilling from my pocket money to stop.” This applicant commented that the member of staff could sense the fear in some of the boys and appeared to take pleasure from seeing their terror.
- 126 Several applicants referred to a staff member in one establishment who wore a white sheet over his head and looked through the windows when they were in bed. One applicant remarked that this may have been seen by him as a harmless prank but the outcome resulted in young children being frightened. One applicant spoke of a staff member regularly driving a tractor towards him and pushing him towards an electric fence, laughing as he did so.

### **General Emotional Abuse**

- 127 Some applicants said that staff threatened them with being sent to more restrictive establishments such as a psychiatric or penal establishment. Applicants recounted Christmas parties or receiving gifts from different charitable organisations but alleged that the toys were immediately removed, not to be seen again. An applicant recalled an older brother visiting from abroad bringing toys and clothes. Once his brother left, these items were removed.
- 128 Another applicant made the distinction between those who had been in care for long periods of time or all of their childhood and those who had some experience of family life. He commented that those who had been subject to long-stay care were “already programmed”, adding, “I may have

come from a crappy home but I always had that frame.” This applicant further suggested that those who had spent long periods of their formative years in care establishments were perhaps inclined to be more compliant and accepting of the harsh treatment as they had known nothing different.

129 Applicants summed their experiences up as follows:

“I never heard so many boys crying. It was all about control – no affection, no community, and no balance.”

“You could smell the fear in that place.”

“It was a big stigma of being a home boy...we were in isolation and that formed you to be different from society.”

“They didn’t treat you nice...it was like how an animal would be treated.”

“There was no love, life was just a ritual.”

“It was pure torture.”

“If one person broke the rules, everyone had to do the punishment.”

“Expressing feelings was discouraged and encouragement a rarity.”

“Fear was put into you from day one...What was done in the home stayed in the home.”

### **Neglect: The Nature and Extent of Neglect**

130 Forty-eight male applicants made 50 reports concerning the neglect of their care and welfare in seven establishments in voluntary provision. The largest number of complaints (fourteen) concerned inadequate staff/supervision, excessive work demands (nine) and inadequate diet (eight). Complaints were also made about inadequate medical attention, inadequate education, inadequate clothing and footwear, poor hygiene practices and inadequate heating and bedding.

#### **Diet**

131 The reports of poor food came from applicants who were placed in establishments in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some of the applicants said they were in receipt of a school meal and this was a main staple in their diet. One applicant recounted that “I experienced hunger many a time”, and recalled an incident when a resident who received special treatment threw his orange peel away and the boys fought to get it.

132 An applicant recounted that the staff ate well but the residents’ food was poor and they were often hungry. Applicants, whose establishments had



adjoining farms with livestock, said they saw little meat other than that which was cooked for the staff. An applicant commented that the staff had a finely laid table with a big bowl of fruit in the centre: “that was very different from what the children received.” One applicant reflected that although the food was plain and lacked variety, it was acceptable while others referred to the food being poor in quality and quantity. One applicant commented that there was no difference in the food no matter what the occasion: “no allowances for Christmas”.

### **Clothing**

- 133 Some of the applicants described the clothing they had to wear as “hand-me-down” and “ill-fitting”. One applicant, who recounted being made to wear boots that were too small, said that the first person to the locker room, where the boots were kept, got the “pickings” leaving younger children disadvantaged. This applicant said that he had to walk to the farm in boots that were too small and felt great relief when he took off his boots and his bare feet touched the earth. The lack of protective clothing for working outside was a common concern reported by applicants.

### **Heating and Bedding**

- 134 Most of the applicants did not mention the heating and bedding in their establishments. A few applicants remembered being cold and said the dormitories were freezing with some commenting that in winter there was frost on the inside of the windows. One applicant recalled the boys writing their names on the inside of the frosty dormitory windows.

### **Education**

- 135 Those applicants who complained about their education felt that care staff did not value their education. A major concern mentioned by applicants concerned the low level of expectation regarding their potential to achieve. Several applicants said they had no memory of sitting the 11-plus and those who did, said they were not encouraged to study and there appeared to be an acceptance that they would not do well. One applicant said that he remembered being asked on occasion if he had finished his homework, but no one ever checked to see how well it was done and he was afraid to ask the staff to help. One applicant said he overheard a conversation when a teacher asked a care worker if the children would be doing the 11-plus and she replied that they would not be as, “they are all stupid”.

- 136 Several applicants said that they worked instead of attending school. Another applicant alleged he worked in the laundry and on the farm and was not sent to school. One applicant said he enjoyed working and he always volunteered as “it was better than attending school.” One applicant said that prior to his admission into a large establishment, he had been achieving well in school but once he entered care, the standard of his work declined.
- 137 In general, applicants described their education as deficient and some said they were unable to learn because of the climate of fear in which they were living. Other applicants commented that some of the teaching staff were not interested in their educational development and gave them no encouragement to learn. Many applicants said they left school without qualifications and some said they could hardly read or write. Applicants said that the lack of literacy skills was an embarrassment to them in adulthood and many found ways of hiding this from others.

#### **Excessive Work Demands**

- 138 Some of those applicants who complained of having to work when in care said they were given cleaning duties; others said they were made to work on the farm. Applicants from two large establishments said the work on the adjoining farms involved picking potatoes and baling hay. Some applicants alleged they were hired out to neighbouring farmers and described this work as difficult as it was heavy and they were cold as they were not supplied with appropriate clothing. One applicant commented:

“It was dark when you went there and dark when you returned.”

Several applicants recounted they received small amounts of money for their labour:

“There were 86 boys in four groups who went potato picking...I think we got two shillings and sixpence every day and we spent it in the tuck shop.”

Another applicant remembered picking potatoes for two weeks and asking the farmer for a hen, which he gave to him. He was allowed to keep it and built a hut for it and in due course had an additional two dozen hens which he and another boy looked after. Although they collected many eggs the boys never got any rewards – they all went to the staff. One applicant alleged that he had to work on the farm before he went to school, regardless of the weather.

- 139 Applicants made the following comments about cleaning and farm work:
- “I was a ‘cleaner upper’, having to lay the table, work in the laundry, tend to the garden and set the fire.”
- “I was not appropriately dressed for working outside and peed on my hands to try to warm them up.”
- “I had to pick potatoes in all weathers, gather hay, polish floors and help with the laundry.”
- “I was working from around nine years of age, doing the laundry, washing and ironing.”
- “I had to polish the shoes, wash the dishes, make the beds and, in later years, tend to the animals on the farm and dig potatoes.”
- “We had to polish and clean floors every Saturday. One day I was set inside a boiler and made to clean it with a wire brush; I was not wearing protective clothing.”
- “We were kept in on Saturdays to polish the dormitory with rags on our feet. I remember being supervised and always being told to hurry up.”
- “On weekends we had to work including polishing the floors with blankets tied to our feet – it was fun but hard.”
- 140 Several applicants made no reference to having to work when in their establishments. Some others who did regarded their chores as neither excessive nor onerous. One applicant recounted having to pick potatoes and cut the grass by hand, but he had no complaints as he said he “liked to be kept busy”.

#### **Knowledge of Abuse**

- 141 Applicants reported that the staff and residents were aware of much of the abuse as it occurred publicly and was very much a part of everyday life in the establishments. Applicants said that among those who witnessed abuse were other residents, ancillary workers, care staff, teachers, instructors and those in charge. Applicants understood that their peers were too frightened to intervene and some remarked that anyone who did intervene would face severe consequences. Some applicants spoke of their guilt, both at the time and now, prompted by their failure to intervene particularly when the child being punished was a younger sibling.

### Disclosing Abuse at the Time

- 142 In most cases applicants felt unable to disclose their abuse at that time and generally did not talk about what they were experiencing. One applicant posed the question “Who could I tell?”.
- 143 A number of applicants said they did try to talk about what was happening to them but felt they were not believed. In total sixteen of the 75 male applicants disclosed some information about their abuse when it happened or shortly afterwards. The following indicates the role of the persons they told and whether or not they felt believed:
- Seven applicants told their parents/guardians and felt they were believed in five cases
  - Three applicants told a person in authority and felt they were not believed
  - Four applicants told the police when they were returned after absconding and all felt they were not believed
  - Two applicants told other residents and felt believed.

### Methods of Coping with Abuse and Strategies used by Alleged Abusers

- 144 The table that follows sets out the ways that applicants coped with their abuse while in designated establishments. Many described more than one way of coping, so the total recorded is greater than the actual number of applicants. The table also shows the strategies used by alleged abusers to achieve compliance as described by the applicants. There is no correlation between the separate parts of this table. Many applicants said that more than one method was used by some alleged abusers to ensure compliance.

Method of coping	Applicants	Strategies used by alleged abusers	Applicants
Accepted abuse as normal	53	Actual violence to child	63
Fear (personal and general)	87	Atmosphere of general fear	82
Did not know what to do	76	Authority of older person	59
Ran away/trying to run away	21	Told not to tell	10
Withdrew into self	22	Bullying	17
Enuresis	15	Bribery	9
Self harm	8	Grooming	5

145 Male applicants reported that fear of being beaten was a constant feature of their lives in their establishments. They described being in a state of hypervigilance, constantly aware of where they were and who was around them. Applicants described their inability to be spontaneous in their dealings and relationships with other residents and staff. The following comments illustrate commonly expressed views:

“I was always watching...looking over my shoulder. I still do it.”

“I have a big regret that I stood there, frightened...I did nothing.”

“I can’t trust anyone who has authority over me...not the police, not social workers. I rely on myself.”

“I was only a child...I knew nothing...I didn’t know what was happening was wrong.”

## Females: Voluntary Provision

146 In total, 70 female applicants who were resident in establishments in the voluntary sector from 1956 to 1975 and who recounted their experiences to the Forum complained of experiencing abuse during their placements. Some applicants alleged experiencing one category of abuse by more than one alleged perpetrator; for example, one may have alleged physical abuse by two or three alleged abusers and may also have reported emotional abuse by one of them or by someone else. The 70 applicants spoke of abuse in fifteen establishments. The following table sets out the combinations of types of abuse they alleged.

Abuse types	Applicants	Establishments
<b>Physical, emotional, neglect and sexual</b>	10	4
<b>Physical, emotional and neglect</b>	25	6
<b>Physical, emotional and sexual</b>	2	2
<b>Physical and neglect</b>	2	1
<b>Physical and emotional</b>	6	4
<b>Physical and sexual</b>	1	1
<b>Emotional and neglect</b>	7	6
<b>Emotional and sexual</b>	1	1
<b>Emotional, neglect and sexual</b>	1	1

Abuse types	Applicants	Establishments
<b>Emotional only</b>	8	7
<b>Sexual only</b>	1	1
<b>Physical only</b>	3	3
<b>Neglect only</b>	3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>40 (15 different establishments)</b>

### Physical Abuse

- 147 Forty-nine female applicants described being physically abused in nine separate establishments. They reported 91 instances of physical abuse. The following table sets out the extent of reports of physical abuse per establishment.

Applicants	Establishments	Reports/instances
<b>30</b>	1	65
<b>8</b>	1	16
<b>3</b>	2	4
<b>2</b>	1	3
<b>4</b>	2	2
<b>2</b>	2	1
<b>Total - 49</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>91</b>

- 148 Physical abuse was most usually reported in combination with other types of abuse with an exception of three applicants who reported physical abuse only. These three applicants were in three separate establishments.

### Descriptions of Physical Abuse

- 149 Applicants described being physically abused in a variety of ways, including being beaten, slapped across the face, and punched across the head or shoulders, being pinched repeatedly and being kicked. The Forum was told of instances where applicants had their heads knocked against walls and school desks. Being pulled by the hair across the classroom was reported by some and was said to be very painful. A few applicants also mentioned being swung by their hair.
- 150 There were frequent references to having to kneel for long periods as a punishment. Applicants said that this happened more often at night and the darkness added to the distress felt. Some described being locked in

confined spaces, usually after a beating, and this included being confined in cupboards, under the stairs and in outside sheds. There were also reports of being struck with implements including leather straps, rulers across the knuckles, metal spoons, wooden spoons, wooden hairbrushes, sticks, slippers, a piece of wood, bamboo canes and bunches of keys. Many applicants reported being beaten every day while others spoke about specific incidents where the punishment was particularly severe. They reported being physically abused by religious and lay staff as well as by other adults employed in the establishments. There were also reports of physical abuse by older residents who were put in charge of younger children. The following descriptions and direct quotations from applicants are indicative of the information given to the Forum.

- 151 An applicant said that a staff member beat her in school with a bamboo stick across the legs. She was hit frequently, almost daily. She was hit with a cane on her knuckles or the palms of her hands. She said she was struck on her face and her hair was pulled. She also described being hit on the head with a hair brush. She recalled a very harsh beating that she received when she stayed on at school, against staff wishes, to take part in a school entertainment. She said she was beaten badly. She was also beaten for wetting the bed. This attracted particularly severe punishment. Her older sister often changed sheets with her to try to pre-empt her being beaten.
- 152 Another applicant described beatings as a daily occurrence
- “...I just took it as the norm – if I had mentioned it at the time who would have believed religious people would do that?”
- Hearing other children being beaten was reported frequently and was described as particularly distressing; one applicant recalled an incident when she heard a staff member beating a child in the cubicles in the toilets:
- “she was screaming...it was just awful...you were pleased it was not you but it was horrible...”
- 153 An applicant, placed in an establishment in the 1970s when she was in her teenage years, described being beaten with a bamboo cane across the palms of her hand. She spoke of the cane snapping and the staff member commenting “there’s plenty more where that came from”. Another cane was produced there and then. This applicant also described a regime of being beaten and seeing other children being beaten and referring to the situation as one of control, guilt and fear.

- 154 Bed-wetting attracted very frequent punishments:  
“I was hit around the head and...all over my body...I had to stand up for a long time, for ever...in front of everyone. Staff beat you...I don't know the names, I can't remember.”
- 155 One applicant spoke of the daily experience of being hit for no reason:  
“It was a good day when you were not hit...I kept quiet, said nothing; I was hit whether right or wrong...the member of staff who did it was a very angry person. She got red in face when angry. The children knew her moods.”
- 156 Another applicant, who spent eleven years in one establishment, spoke of being beaten repeatedly throughout that time for bed-wetting, and for any and every misbehaviour, no matter how small, and for none. She described how her face was pushed into her wet sheets. She finally left the establishment in 1975 when she was sixteen. One applicant summed up the feelings expressed by many saying:  
“There was a total lack of love or affection; it was a very intimidating environment where you were consistently treated in a demeaning way and told that you were worthless. If you tried to have any fun the staff would come down on you straight away and suppress any fun.”
- 157 The most commonly reported circumstances that led to physical punishment were: bed-wetting, talking during the many periods of the day when silence was demanded, failure to complete tasks either in the classroom or the allocated work in the establishment, left-handedness, having fun or refusing to eat the food at meal times. Coughing and talking in church were particularly frowned on. As girls got into their teenage years any efforts they made to improve their appearance were interpreted as trying to engage boys' attention and they were punished severely. Other commonly reported reasons for being hit included the misbehaviour of younger siblings or any younger child of whom an applicant had charge and being sick (looking for notice was how staff characterised this). Running away from the establishment resulted in very harsh treatment. Soiling pants when menstruating was also dealt with severely, yet the practice in some establishments of restricting the availability of sanitary protection made it impossible to maintain cleanliness. There were times in each establishment when infestations of scabies and/or head lice were common and the treatment of having heads shaved and of having emulsion applied in a rough manner was a focus of some complaints of physical abuse.



### Physical Abuse by more than one Person

- 158 There were multiple allegations of abuse, as follows:
- One applicant alleged physical abuse by six people
  - two applicants alleged physical abuse by five people
  - three applicants alleged abuse by four people
  - six applicants alleged abuse by three people while sixteen applicants alleged abuse by two people.

The remaining 21 applicants alleged abuse by one person. In most instances reported the alleged abusers acted independently.

### Roles of Alleged Abusers

- 159 The table that follows shows the position within the institution of the alleged abusers. Please note that other residents were sometimes noted as bullies by applicants but not identified on the whole by name and are not included in the table below. It was not possible to ascertain how many residents were also physically abusive.

Role of alleged abuser	Male	Female	Member of Religious Order/ Clergy
<b>Officer in charge/ authority figure</b>	-	38	33
<b>Teacher/instructor</b>	-	14	9
<b>Care staff</b>	2	48	42
<b>Ancillary staff</b>	1	1	-
<b>Other (role not clear)</b>	1	-	-
<b>Total</b>	4	101	84

It is noteworthy that of the 105 alleged abusers, 84 were members of a religious order or a parish priest.

### Sexual Abuse

- 160 This section describes sexual abuse reported by sixteen female applicants to the Forum. The sexual assaults reported were both contact and non-contact in nature and happened both in the establishments and away from the establishments, particularly while the applicants were on holiday or with weekend families. The majority of the applicants found this aspect

of abuse very difficult to speak about; some described having tried to block out what happened for many years and feeling that they were in some way responsible for what had occurred. The secretive and isolated nature of sexual abuse coupled with the applicants' lack of knowledge regarding sexual development left many of them very bewildered and without the language to describe what had happened.

### Nature and Extent of Sexual Abuse

- 161 The sixteen applicants recounted 31 instances of sexual abuse in respect of eight separate establishments in the voluntary sector. Fifteen applicants described sexual abuse in combination with other types of abuse while one applicant complained solely of sexual abuse.

### Description of Sexual Abuse

- 162 The full range of types and numbers of reports of sexual abuse are set out in the following table.

Type of sexual abuse	Number of reports
<b>Inappropriate fondling</b>	9
<b>Vaginal rape</b>	3
<b>Attempted rape</b>	1
<b>Anal rape</b>	1
<b>Oral/genital contact</b>	3
<b>Digital penetration</b>	4
<b>Masturbation of alleged abuser</b>	3
<b>Indecent exposure</b>	5
<b>Kissing</b>	1
<b>Witnessing sexual abuse</b>	1
<b>Total</b>	31

- 163 Some descriptions and direct quotations from applicants are set out in the following paragraphs and are representative of the information given to the Forum. Ten applicants spoke to the Forum of sexual abuse suffered within the precincts of the establishments. Two applicants described sexual abuse by visiting clergy; one of the priests was said to have been there every weekend and an applicant described being made to wait until last to attend confession and being brought to a room in the church where she was fondled, made to masturbate the abuser and finally was subjected to

anal rape. The abuser was said to have groomed her initially by providing sweets but then turned to violence, telling her she would not be believed if she reported what he was doing. Another applicant spoke of being taken out in a red sports car by a priest:

“three of us always went, he had sweets, and he kissed and hugged us.”

- 164 Two instances were recounted in which applicants were working in or visiting the elderly male residents’ section of the establishment. Both applicants described being fondled while being held on a resident’s knees and one believed it was obvious to others what was happening. Neither spoke of staff being in the vicinity when this occurred.
- 165 Abuse by older residents was described by four applicants. This abuse occurred mainly in the dormitories at night when older girls would take younger girls into their bed and force them into sexual behaviour ranging from fondling to oral sexual contact and masturbation of the alleged abuser. Actual violence or threatened violence was common in these situations. One applicant, placed in a hostel for a short period of time, described being taken to an office by three male residents and having photographs taken of one of the men fondling her. This happened on more than one occasion. She was very young and appears not to have had any proper supervision while living in a mixed hostel.
- 166 One applicant, who had had placements in two establishments, described serious abuse by the officer in charge of one establishment who fondled and groped her, inserted objects into her vagina and forced her to engage in masturbation. The applicant was prepubescent at this time and suffered regular violence from the same staff member. There was a description of sexual abuse in an establishment involving former residents, by that stage adults, who were working there:
- “They were grabbing at you all the time...they had easy access to the dormitory...always, grabbing and fondling. It was a free for all...I learnt to run.”
- 167 Five instances of sexual abuse reported to the Forum occurred when the applicants were staying with ‘holiday families’ away from their establishments. Two applicants alleged they were abused by members of their holiday families and another by a member of the extended family she was taken to visit. The alleged abuser was a member of a religious order. One applicant alleged she was raped by both the father and an

uncle of her holiday family. One applicant alleged that at age seven she was raped by the son of the holiday family who was much older than she was. On return to the family home she was put in the bath and then sent back to the establishment. She described her shock at what happened and knows she never went back to that family but does not remember if anyone else was aware of what had occurred. A fourth applicant spoke of her experience of being fondled and being made to touch the genitals of a relative of the holiday family when she was taken to see him. The fifth applicant spoke of being touched and fondled by an older son in the family and also spoke of the father in the family exposing himself to her. Three of the four applicants who were sexually abused in holiday families described their emotional conflict resulting from having formed an attachment to the mothers in the families and to other younger children while not wanting the unwelcome attentions of the males.

### Sexual Abuse by More than One Person

- 168 One applicant reported that she was abused by four different alleged abusers; two applicants reported they were each abused by three abusers, while thirteen applicants each alleged abuse by one abuser. The table that follows sets out the roles of alleged abusers as recalled by applicants.

<b>Role of the Alleged Abuser</b>	<b>Females</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Member of Religious Order/ Clergy</b>
<b>Officer-in-charge/ authority figure</b>	2	-	1
<b>Care staff</b>	1	-	-
<b>Other adults</b>	-	3	-
<b>Other Residents</b>	5	2	-
<b>Visitors</b>	-	5	3
<b>Members of host families</b>	-	6	1
<b>Totals</b>	8	16	5

### Emotional Abuse

- 169 This section of the report describes emotional abuse in establishments in voluntary sector provision. Emotional abuse covers a range of actions and inactions that deprived the applicants of family and sibling contacts,

knowledge of their own identity, affection and approval and protection from harm appropriate to their age and developmental needs. In their descriptions of emotional abuse to the Forum the applicants most often referred to practices and routines, for example, the separation of siblings and the removal of all personal belongings or signs of individualisation from the children, both on admission and throughout their stay in establishments. Emotional abuse as such was not often ascribed to individual staff but was generic and systemic in nature.

### Nature and Extent of Emotional Abuse

- 170 Emotional abuse was the form of abuse mentioned most frequently by the 52 female applicants in this Period. Those applicants spoke of emotional abuse in twelve separate establishments in the voluntary sector. Forty-four applicants reported emotional abuse in combination with other types of abuse while eight applicants reported emotional abuse only. The range of emotional abuse described in the twelve establishments was as follows.

Type of emotional abuse	Number of reports
<b>Shown no affection</b>	18
<b>Public humiliation</b>	15
<b>Personal denigration</b>	19
<b>Removal of personal belongings</b>	15
<b>Family denigration</b>	15
<b>Family contact discouraged</b>	19
<b>Sibling links discouraged</b>	15
<b>Inappropriate exposure to fearful situations</b>	22
<b>Other</b>	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>147</b>

- 171 The recorded instances of emotional abuse are those of which the applicants were most keenly aware. They described the impact of that abuse on them both at the time it occurred and in their lives afterwards. The emotional abuse described to the Forum fell into three main categories: personal abuse both in private and in public; separation from and denigration of family and siblings; and inappropriate exposure to fearful situations. A small number of reported experiences were outside those broad categories and are dealt with separately.

### Personal Emotional Abuse

172 This was the focus of 67 experiences of emotional abuse described to the Forum. Applicants spoke of:

- having their personal belongings removed, including small tokens that were all they had to help them remember family or home, and
- experiencing public humiliation in front of their classmates, their group in the establishment, the church congregation or wherever they happened to be.

One applicant spoke of her experience during a two-year placement:

“I was constantly told by staff that I was unworthy...nobody wanted me...she (staff) constantly reminded me...‘your mother is no better than a tramp’...We were all called by our surnames – never by our individual names.”

This applicant spoke also of the removal of clothes and money given to her by foster families on her return from short stays with them and said she never saw the gifts again. She described her placement overall as a very cold place, where no affection was shown.

173 Another applicant spoke of the difficulty she experienced with a senior staff member whom she believed had a grudge against her from early in her placement:

“She always made remarks: ‘Aren’t you the clever girl’ but I never knew if she was being sarcastic or genuine.”

She further described her inability to do something right for this staff member:

“...if you looked her in the eye when being spoken to you were called defiant but if you failed to look her in the eye you would be reprimanded for being insolent.”

This applicant ran away after a severe beating and was returned to the establishment. She recalled that the same staff member then called her “Lady (family name). Oh we’re not allowed to hit you now.”

174 Another applicant talked about the daily denigration she experienced in relation to bed-wetting and the public humiliation involved:

“...I was told on a daily basis by staff ‘you are smelly...nobody could love you...why do you think anyone would want to sit beside you’...that was the constant refrain.”

She described the morning ritual for those who wet the bed; all had to stand in line and then had to walk from the bedroom to deposit the wet sheets in a basket; she described it as being “like a ceremony...everyone saw it.” Another applicant described the weekly routine in which underwear was inspected:

“They (two members of staff) had each girl hold up the gusset of their knickers for inspection...I never understood the purpose of this.”

- 175 The removal of personal possessions was keenly felt by many applicants and the following accounts are typical of the accounts given:

“Everything you got was taken off you at the door...I got money for Communion, it was two shillings and sixpence. I got sweets to bring back to sisters...all were taken...there was no explanation.”

Another applicant was deeply distressed by the removal of a doll her mother had given to her. She explained that her family was poor and despite that her mother had managed to get this doll for her. It was very special to her and she felt its loss doubled the loss she experienced when coming into the care system: “I can still see it and almost feel it.”

- 176 One applicant spoke of being constantly told her mother did not want her and that she and her brother should be grateful they were in the care of the establishment.

Although she could go home at the weekend for a day, one applicant explained why she chose not to go on some occasions: a senior staff member always told her to ask her parents for money. When she returned with no money she would be publicly berated:

“We can’t afford to keep you...Do you think we are a charity?”

### **Family Denigration and/or Links Discouraged**

- 177 A second area of emotional abuse keenly felt by applicants covered the separation from siblings even within the same establishment, the poor treatment of families who visited the establishments to see their children, the lack of privacy during those visits and the active discouragement and the discourtesy shown to parents who were seen as “undesirable”. In particular, applicants whose parents were members of the Traveller community reported that this was a common occurrence and that they were neither welcomed nor wanted by the establishments.

- 178 Applicants said that strict control was exercised over all family visits. Visits were never actually encouraged but when family members visited

they were supervised, even where it appeared there was no threat to the child or young person. As one applicant recalled “Aunt D visited...staff always sat in...we couldn’t be ourselves.” If there were concerns over the appropriateness of some visits by parents to see their children, this was never explained and applicants were told simply they could not see them. Some applicants saw their parents treated differently to other visitors:

“They made our mother wait out in the cold...she had travelled hours to see us...barely time to say hello...then out the gate.”

Another applicant spoke of her mother’s occasional visits,

“She got no welcome...she had to come to the back door where we fed the poor...we were made to be ashamed of her.”

- 179 One applicant from a large family spoke of her joy when her father called in but she learned later that the staff

“were angry with my father for dropping off small bags of oranges for us...when we went out for weekend we were told to ask for money.”

There appeared to be no understanding of the sense of loss and upset children felt during visits and a number of applicants spoke of visits being stopped because they displayed upset when parents left.

“Father came up...my younger sisters cried...they stopped him coming as the girls were upset when he left.”

- 180 Another applicant said that she was not told why she was being taken from her family and placed in the establishment. She had very strong links with her grandmother who would visit her but when her grandmother died the staff did not tell her and she only found out sometime later. She was very upset for a period of time but got no emotional support. When her crying was judged to be out of control

“...they instead placed me in an isolation room...we were meant not to feel...to be like them.”

- 181 The major cause of upset for many applicants was the separation from their siblings. Sibling groups were often placed in establishments, rather than being brought up separately within extended families, because parents wanted them to remain together. The structuring of most establishments into gender and age groupings ensured that did not happen and many of the applicants spoke of the distress this caused, and continues to cause, as they lost knowledge of and closeness to their sisters and brothers. One



applicant who was older than her siblings and whose mother believed they would be kept together, spoke of what happened:

“In the event we...(she and one sister, the boys were gone)...were taken to a lobby in (named establishment)...I was distraught with worry about the others.”

She described being frightened by the austere surroundings and alarmed that no one would listen to her when she approached them to ask about her siblings. That fear and anxiety was to stay with her, she told the Forum, throughout her two years in the home. One applicant said:

“I did nothing but cry all of my childhood...I didn’t see much of my sister as we were separated, I just remember her screaming a lot.”

- 182 Another applicant, who was part of a large sibling group, found the absence of her older sisters very disturbing. The older girls were placed in another part of the building and she wanted to go to them for reassurance and comfort. This was not allowed by the staff. One applicant described how she saw her siblings:

“...I was only able to see the older ones through railings separating playgrounds. Sometimes I saw them when we went to church...I would shout for them to join me but they were never allowed.”

Other applicants spoke of seeing very little of their brothers and sisters who were in the same or adjacent establishments. They might see them on Saturdays if allowed to go downtown, or at school but no effort was made to get them together and gradually all contact was lost. Younger children were often described as forgetting they even had older sisters or brothers.

- 183 One applicant summed up what many said to Forum:

“...family, brothers, sisters....relationships were not encouraged at all...I ended up not knowing them...they ended up not knowing me...I was not allowed to say goodbye when I was discharged...I knew I was not welcome to return to see those left behind.”

### **Exposure to Fearful Situations**

- 184 Applicants described being locked into small spaces with no light, often with restricted ability to move and being terrified they would be left there to die or just be forgotten about. One applicant spoke of being put into a hot press/drying cupboard for sheets; she described:

“it as very dark, no place to move as there were bars across for putting sheets on.”

She said she was put in twice as part of the same punishment and described herself as “being scared to death.”

- 185 Another applicant told the Forum about the staff member who was always talking about the devil.

“She (staff member) had a thing about the devil...She had a stick for the window with a hook on it...she would open the window to let the devil out, she once told me she saw the devil dancing on my locker...it terrified me for ages.”

This applicant also described the practice whereby children had to sleep at night with their arms crossed, hands on shoulders so that, if they died during the night, they would go to heaven. They were told that if their arms were not crossed they would “burn in hell.” Many applicants placed in institutions during the 1950s and early 1960s were told to sleep in that position and were given the same explanation.

- 186 Another experience recalled by some applicants was the practice of preparing the dead for burial, referred to as “laying out the dead.” This was described in a small number of institutions where retired staff members were resident and also where there was residential provision for older people in another part of the establishment or in adjacent accommodation. One applicant remembered:

“When old people died in the annex I had to go and see them and pray for them...I was often left in the room with another child or on my own...I wondered if they might wake up...I didn’t know what death was.”

Another applicant said:

“...I was made to go and dress the dead and say a prayer...I had to lay the men out in brown shrouds and the woman in blue shrouds...I was always terrified.”

- 187 Another applicant described her punishment for some misdemeanour as follows:

“Staff locked me in the dining room with a bird that was there, it was flying widely about...there was no furniture in the room as it was being done up...I wet myself and was terrified.”

- 188 Some applicants told the Forum of the fear of being sent away to more restrictive establishments. They explained that both implicit and explicit threats were made that they would be sent to a psychiatric hospital or to a laundry. They understood they would be kept in these establishments indefinitely. The threats described were most often made in reaction to episodes of absconding. Two applicants recounted their experiences:

“I ran away, I was brought back, I ran again...one time after the usual treatment (physical punishment) she (staff member) pushed me up against the wall...‘just wait...leave again and you will be sent to (named establishment)...you won’t leave there so fast’...I knew she was not just threatening me...others had gone.”

### **Deprivation of Affection**

- 189 Lack of affection was generally described by applicants as the absence of a kind word, never being praised or encouraged, never having any distress acknowledged and being unable to talk to anyone when hurt, ill or unhappy. When children tried to get attention for any of those reasons they were said by staff to be “looking for notice.” Comments made by applicants in their meetings with the Forum included the following:

“No one took the time or effort to make you feel comfortable and at ease.”

“There was no love, no kindness at all, no love no nothing – just like a prisoner not even thought about, I don’t think they even ever called you by name...It was very unpleasant I wouldn’t put my worst enemy in it.”

“Lots of bullying and neglect, abusive shouting all the time, I was isolated from my siblings who were in the same institution. I was always crying, I was cold and hungry all the time...I listened to others crying all around me, no comfort was given.”

“I was never shown affection...I felt ignored all my childhood.”

### **General Emotional Abuse**

- 190 Many applicants spoke of an atmosphere that was cold and forbidding. One applicant who described herself as “a pet of the officer in charge” said she recognised that everyday life in her placement was ruled by the regime that was in place and that there was no understanding from anyone. Another applicant spoke of having had to keep her eyes downcast when staff passed or spoke to her. An applicant who was placed in a laundry as a thirteen year old, described being put to work and deprived of a normal education. She said:

“...I lived in a suffocating environment where normal teenage life was not available and where everyday life was deliberately excluded by them.”

- 191 Finally, an applicant spoke of the consequences of being prevented from having normal social interaction with other girls. She said that, if that had been allowed, she could have expressed feelings such as those prompted by the loss of her granny and her separation from her two younger brothers to whom she had been like a mother. She commented:

“Each girl learned to keep to herself...no friendships were allowed.”

### Neglect

- 192 Thirty-five applicants made 57 reports concerning the neglect of their care and welfare in twelve establishments designated as voluntary sector provision. The 35 applicants complained of neglect as follows:

Type of neglect	Number of Reports
Inadequate diet	7
Inadequate clothing/footwear	7
Poor hygiene practices	7
Inadequate medical attention	5
Inadequate heating/bedding	5
Inadequate education	8
Inadequate staffing	2
Excessive work demands	9
Lack of supervision in institution	4
Lack of play opportunities	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>

### Diet

- 193 There were seven reports of poor diet made to the Forum. Some applicants spoke of poor quality food while others spoke of regularly going hungry. Some examples are given below:

“There was donated food but this was not given...to us. I ate from the gutters and picked chewing gum off the ground...I was always hungry.”

“The food was poor quality, there was not enough, I was always hungry, I was forced to eat semolina and bread pudding even though this was

nauseous. Salty, lumpy porridge and bread with dripping was the main diet with scraggy meat now and then.”

“If you refused to eat food like inedible fat, gristle and burned food, they would take it away but then bring it back until you ate it. I wasn’t starved but I was hungry and would steal food if the opportunity arose.”

“The food was bad – porridge, bread...the children could smell the lovely food such as roast beef being cooked for the staff.”

The majority of the reports concerning poor diet were made by applicants who were placed in voluntary establishments from 1956 to 1969. There were few complaints about diet in relation to provision in the period 1970 to 1975.

### **Clothing/Footwear**

- 194 Seven reports of inadequate clothing and footwear were made to the Forum. The clothing provided for some applicants was described as consisting of a dress with the sleeves always rolled up and with an apron worn over it. There were some references to having smarter clothes for going out of the establishment. Clothing, including footwear, was said to have been shared and was often ill-fitting or already well worn when applicants received it. Applicants told the Forum that although school uniform was provided “it was different from the others”. The following quotations are taken from applicants’ accounts of their experiences.

“The shoes were too big, they often had holes, nails were often protruding. It was a free-for-all grabbing shoe; you were lucky if you got a reasonable pair.”

“We were given pinafores, all second hand; you were made to wear size seven wellingtons in wet weather regardless of the size of your feet...we didn’t matter.”

“Although I had been provided with clothes by an aunt and uncle, these were taken from me and I was given old fashioned clothes to wear and...used footwear.”

“...not having any socks at all...it was very cold.”

### **Education**

- 195 Primary education for most of the female applicants in voluntary establishments was provided on the premises. They received their secondary education in local schools. The eight applicants who expressed concerns about their education described the standard as poor. The complaints

ranged from being placed at the back of the class and being ignored to being called out to complete chores and so missing opportunities to learn. The following are some examples of what applicants told the Forum:

“I went to school; I was told I was stupid. I got no assistance with my work. I was very frightened at school, and I was unable to concentrate.”

“At school I was always placed at the back, I was discouraged from asking questions, I was hardly able to read or write when I left school.”

“I was called out of class to do cleaning and when I left school I was so far behind in my work I was unable to read or write to any extent. I was very rarely in class: I would get messages from (named staff member) to do jobs instead of school work – scrub floors, clean shoes...education was not for the likes of us!”

“The only thing I learned in the home...was what fear and pain were like. In school I was placed in what was known as the ‘dunces’ class.”

“Teaching in the primary school was poor and I became inattentive. When I made good progress in the pupil referral unit, my reports were disregarded and I got no encouragement.”

- 196 Finally an applicant who was discharged to the care of her mother in England, just before she was due to take her public exams, felt cheated out of her chance to better herself:

“I would have done well in exams and I really regret not being given this opportunity...It had a long term adverse affect on job opportunities... what difference would a month have made to them?”

### **Excessive Work Demands**

- 197 Nine applicants spoke of excessive work demands being made on them from early childhood until they left the care system. This was coupled with poor staffing ratios in the larger establishments, a very high standard of cleanliness being demanded and responsibility for maintaining this being placed on the residents. Applicants’ comments included:

“From the age of eleven years we were made to work...cleaning, scrubbing, polishing...in the chapel, dormitories, long corridor, bathrooms, laundry (including for staff and old people), looking after the elderly people, pumping the church organ, putting coal in the furnace – we were treated as an unpaid skivvy.”

“Every Friday night five pairs of girls on their knees scrubbed corridors and the chapel. I never saw staff do physical work. I had special duties

to look after an older girl who had learning difficulties and I became completely responsible for her.”

“(a member of staff) told me...we are delighted when you get punished, we get great work out of you.”

### Poor Hygiene Practices

198 Seven applicants highlighted the poor hygiene practices they experienced in establishments in the voluntary sector. There were two common complaints highlighted by all seven:

- The lack of privacy for bathing and the overuse of Jeyes Fluid in the baths.
- The lack of preparation for and practical assistance with the onset and management of menstruation.

An applicant, describing bath time and the lack of privacy, said:

“we were like animals in a shed lined up, one child was in the bath, one sat on the edge of the bath washing her feet, others lined up waiting their turn in the same water; the only attempt at modesty was for two girls to hold up a sheet for the girl getting out of the bath.”

Another applicant described being bathed in Jeyes Fluid resulting in irritation in her eyes and skin and said that so much Jeyes Fluid was used it left brown marks on her skin.

199 Applicants commented on the lack of preparation they received for the onset of menstruation and the inadequate provision made for them during their menstrual period. Applicants told the Forum that they had to ask for sanitary towels. Staff might not respond promptly to a girl's requests but reply that she had been given a sanitary towel in the morning. No extra baths were provided for and this lack of hygiene and basic care left many embarrassed and suffering with chaffed legs. No pain relief was allowed. One applicant reported that:

“I started menstruation at eleven...it was very heavy from the start...it was not believed, they said I was too young...(a staff member) made me stay in one room supervised by...and then I was made show my pants to prove it. I fainted and was given water. I got no medical help although I suffered very badly.”

### Other Issues Raised

- 200 A small number of applicants expressed concern over other aspects of their care including heating and bedding. Five applicants, whose care placements were in the early 1960s, spoke of being cold or having inadequate bedding:

“...my bed sagged in the middle and I couldn’t lie in it in the position the staff dictated...I was always cold, always freezing, only one sheet on the bed.”

“I wet the bed, I was beaten, I had to wash my sheets in cold water...I often lay in cold...damp sheets.”

- 201 Some applicants also recalled that they felt that they did not receive adequate medical attention when they were ill or injured:

“I suffered from depression in my later years in care and despite my initial attempts at self harm, no-one tried to investigate what might be happening, no one sent me for any help.”

“I had a bad fall. I fell outside the sewing room; my knee split open; I was never taken to hospital. I was in pain for a month. It healed itself and I’m left with a bad scar.”

- 202 Three applicants spoke to the Forum concerning the lack of opportunities for play and recreation. They told the Forum that few toys were provided and that the play equipment in the garden was insufficient for the number of children. The Forum heard from one applicant who said that toys were produced for inspections and when other visitors were present.

- 203 Four applicants spoke of the lack of staff supervision, particularly at night time and they felt that this added to their vulnerability in that it allowed older girls to remove the younger ones from their beds and sexually abuse them. Where the work chores were supervised by older girls, the situation was described as “worse than when the staff were in charge.”

### Knowledge of Abuse

- 204 Applicants were clear that physical abuse, emotional abuse and neglect were public within the establishment. They said that the staff and co-residents could not have been unaware of what was going on. Applicants acknowledged that other residents were too frightened to intervene and those who did do so were severely punished. This was most likely to happen, they said, if a younger family member was being punished in the presence of an older sister.



### **Disclosing Abuse at the Time**

- 205 Generally, applicants said they did not disclose anything about their care experiences at the time. Some applicants said they did not know the abuse was wrong, some were very frightened of the consequences because they had seen what had happened to others who had spoken out, and some applicants felt they would not be believed. In total, twenty of the 70 applicants told the Forum that they had disclosed some information about their abuse when it happened or shortly thereafter.
- 206 The following is a list of the roles of the people the applicants reported to and whether or not they felt believed:
- Six applicants told their parents/guardians and felt they were believed in four cases.
  - Five applicants told a person in authority and felt they were not believed.
  - Four applicants told the police when they were picked up after absconding; they felt they were not believed.
  - Three applicants told their welfare/social worker and felt they were not believed.
  - Two applicants told other residents and felt believed.

Some quotations illustrate the points made by the applicants:

“I finally told (a staff member) she (an older girl) was doing things to me...she (the staff member) was very angry and beat me.”

“When I told about sexual things...(to the family she had stayed with) I got the beating of my life.”

“I got hit less often after I ran away...I think they got worried.”

### **Methods of Coping with Abuse and Strategies used by Alleged Abusers**

- 207 The table below sets out the ways that applicants coped with their abuse while in the care system. Many described a number of responses, so the totals recorded are greater than the actual number of applicants. The table also shows the strategies the applicants said were used by alleged abusers to achieve compliance. There is no correlation between the separate parts of this table. Again many applicants described that more than one method was used by some alleged abusers.

Method of coping	Applicants	Strategies used by alleged abusers	Applicants
Accepted abuse as normal	26	Actual violence to child	42
Fear (personal and general)	21	Atmosphere of general fear	35
Did not know what to do	19	Authority of older person	31
Ran away/tried to run away	19	Told not to tell	5
Withdrew into self	14	Bullying	5
Enuresis	10	Bribery	4

208 For many applicants “beatings were everyday, a normal thing” and they accepted that reality. Applicants spoke also of an all-pervasive fear in many establishments that meant children kept quiet, watched out for staff reactions and tried to stay away from those they experienced as harsh. Some applicants described particular responses as follows:

“I became an every night ‘bed-wetter’ which, in turn, got me...more abuse.”

“I would push people away, I don’t trust people...I don’t trust the establishment, police or teachers.”

“I was very isolated...not being able to talk of the abuse I lived in fear... Even in secondary school, I had no friends until my fourth year.”

209 One applicant described what happened when she ran away from one establishment with her sister and stopped at a house to ask for a glass of water. The people of the house called the police, who returned them to the establishment. The policeman, as reported, remarked:

“I suppose you are going to get a hot drink and cakes when you return to the orphanage?”

The applicant commented that the remark stayed with her as it was the complete opposite – she knew she was going to get a beating, which she did.

- 210 Four applicants spoke of receiving gifts from their abusers, none of whom were staff members in their establishment.

### Abuse in State Provision

- 211 This section covers the abuse reported to the Forum in state establishments between the years 1956 and 1975. In total, twenty male applicants and ten female applicants spoke about their experiences in sixteen individual establishments in the state sector. The establishments included in this section were largely small units based in community settings. These establishments included a children’s home for both male and female children and young people, an assessment centre, a residential medical setting and two hostels. Some applicants did not disclose abuse in regard to some of the state establishments in which they were placed.
- 212 This section of the report is presented in two parts, with the first part covering the four aspects of abuse reported by male applicants and the second part covering the four aspects of abuse reported by female applicants. The table below shows the combinations of abuse types that were reported to the Forum by both male and female applicants in relation to state establishments.

Abuse types: Males and Females	Applicants	Establishments
Physical, emotional and sexual	2	2
Physical, emotional and neglect	1	1
Physical and emotional	4	4
Emotional and sexual	2	2
Emotional, neglect and sexual	2	2
Sexual only	4	2
Emotional only	1	1
Physical only	4	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>20 (*17 individual applicants)</b>	<b>16 (11 individual establishments)</b>

\*Note: Three applicants alleged abuse in two establishments each.

## Males: State Provision

213 Twenty male applicants had been placed in eight individual establishments in the state sector. Three of those applicants had two placements in different establishments in state sector care provision. Three male applicants had been placed in state establishments in the 1950s. Six male applicants were placed in establishments in the state sector in the 1960s. Five of those applicants had had placements ranging from one to six years in duration. One applicant spent less than one year in care. Eight male applicants had been placed in state establishments in the 1970s. It is notable that during this period, six of these applicants were in placements for a short period of time – one year or less. The other two applicants spent six years and three years respectively in state provision.

### Physical Abuse

214 Eight male applicants gave ten accounts of physical abuse with regard to seven separate establishments. One applicant recounted that after he had wet the bed, a male member of staff rubbed his face in the soiled sheet, stripped him naked and forced him into a cold bath. This staff member allegedly grabbed and squeezed the applicant's shoulder, repeatedly telling him he was a "dirty boy". On another occasion, this applicant alleged that the same staff member spat in his face. One applicant recounted that he was physically abused and threatened by a staff member. This applicant referred to being "grabbed by the scruff of the neck and beaten." Following this incident, the applicant said that he ran away.

215 One applicant described a staff member using a dowel rod that was over half an inch thick to beat him. This applicant recounted that he was badly marked as a result of this chastisement. He also alleged that he was slapped around the head, shoved into the dining room and "savagely beaten" across his back and legs. He reflected that "beatings were regular events every few months." This same applicant recounted another incident when he and another boy had been truanting from school and on return to the establishment, a staff member hit him and left marks on his arms, said to be "like sergeant's stripes." This applicant said that the attack only stopped because the staff member had become tired. He alleged that he could not bend his fingers the following day and his ribs ached, commenting, "Who could I tell?"

216 Another applicant recounted that one member of staff would lift him by the ears or sideburns and pinch him on the arm and the back of the neck.

He said he was instructed not to tell the welfare when they came to see him. This applicant commented that he feels he was treated more harshly than his peers as he did not witness other residents being punished in the same way. This applicant also expressed concerns about his treatment in another establishment where a member of staff hit him on the bottom with a stick and washed his mouth out with soap.

- 217 An applicant recounted that he was frequently beaten with a cane. He also alleged that a female member of staff pushed his head, face-first, into a basin full of water. He said he felt very frightened as he thought this female member of staff was going to drown him. He described her as “completely losing control.”

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 218 Nine male applicants made eleven complaints of sexual abuse by male staff and one further complaint of sexual abuse by a female co-resident. The allegations of sexual abuse relate to four separate state establishments. The male applicants spoke of sexual abuse involving inappropriate fondling, masturbation, anal rape and oral/genital contact.
- 219 One applicant made allegations of sexual abuse against two individual members of staff who worked as a house father and officer in charge in the establishment. This applicant suggested that both of these staff members operated as lone abusers, independent of one another. This applicant gave a detailed account of the sexual abuse taking place when he was approximately ten years old. During the time of the alleged sexual abuse incidents, which included masturbation and rape, one of his abusers made comments such as, “you’re nothing but a dirty wee boy, you can’t tell nobody as nobody will believe you” and “I own you.” The other member of staff who was alleged to have also sexually abused this applicant took him to his home, made him have oral/genital contact and would make comments such as “you’re a good boy, I’m your daddy.”
- 220 One applicant in another establishment, referred to the sexual abuse starting almost immediately upon his admission to this placement. He recounted being taken to a staff member’s home and waking up with this male worker on top of him after the alleged sexual assault. Another applicant, also admitted to this establishment, commented that within the first week of his placement as a thirteen-year-old, the same staff member watched him whilst he was having a bath and made comments to him such as, “you’re a big boy for your age.” The applicant alleged that shortly

afterwards he was raped by this male care worker and this continued several times a week. At times, he was made to stay the night with him in the staff bedroom and would be “sneaked out” in the morning before the housekeeper arrived.

- 221 Another applicant, who was placed in the same establishment, made allegations of anal rape by another staff member. This applicant recalled being raped on a daily basis in his bedroom. The alleged abuse took place in the morning once his co-resident and room-mate had left the premises to go to work. Another applicant in the same establishment alleged he was raped on the same day he attended his father’s funeral. The alleged abuser is then alleged to have commented to the applicant, “Did you enjoy that...you will next time” and “Who was a good boy?” Another applicant who made allegations of sexual abuse commented that he felt that the staff in this particular establishment viewed him as a “specimen,” as if they were “looking at a meal.”
- 222 One applicant who was placed in a medical setting made sexual abuse allegations about a male health professional. This applicant recounted being pinned against a wall by this staff member “not aggressively but tenderly” and he put his hands down his clothing and masturbated him. In the same establishment, another applicant alleged he was approximately seven years of age when he was sexually abused by an older female resident. This applicant said that on his first night on the ward, a girl aged around twelve or thirteen years old, climbed into his bed and made him digitally penetrate her.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 223 Ten male applicants reported thirteen incidents of emotional abuse during their placements in eleven individual state establishments. In general, the emotional abuse allegations referred to:
- Being fearful as they witnessed co-residents being beaten
  - A lack of affection shown by staff
  - Being belittled by staff, including being referred to in sectarian language
  - An absence of support for familial contact.
- 224 One applicant said that he was told that no one would believe him if he disclosed the abuse. This applicant was sent to a psychiatric hospital and then to another large establishment as he was refusing to comply with the abuse and absconding. Two applicants said they were made to

feel uncomfortable as staff had watched them while they were having a bath. One applicant remembered being constantly told “You are a waste of space.” One applicant recounted that both he and his siblings were mocked by some of the care staff and told “you might as well have no father or mother.”

- 225 Another applicant said that he was not allowed to see his mother on a one-to-one basis. On occasion, he saw her in the distance from the establishment but was not allowed to communicate with her and this was very painful for him. An applicant described his placement as “pure torture” and recalled having to stand in a corner for a minor misdemeanour “until I dropped.” One applicant said that when he misbehaved, he was made to strip and stand naked with other residents watching him.
- 226 Another applicant remembered being humiliated at dinnertime when a senior staff member tied knots in a bib he was made to wear as he was a “poor eater”. This applicant alleged that members of staff were instructed to force feed him and this took place in the presence of his co-residents.
- 227 One applicant was generally positive about the staff in his placement but added that due to the high turnover of workers, he felt unsettled as “they moved on too quickly.” This applicant commented:
- “once I got close to anyone and could have confided in them they were gone...There was no one to talk to, you were on your own.”

### **Neglect**

- 228 Two male applicants gave two accounts of neglect with regard to two separate establishments. One of the two applicants complained that there was only one bathroom, which was used by both residents and staff. This bathroom had no lock and staff frequently entered while residents were bathing.

The other male applicant complained that his educational needs were not met and, as a result, he failed to reach his full learning potential.

### **Roles of Alleged Abusers**

- 229 The allegations of sexual abuse in state establishments related to abuse by male staff, with the exception of one alleged female abuser who was an older co-resident. The male staff were employed as care staff, house fathers/wardens and a male nurse and were based in a hostel for boys and a medical setting for both boys and girls. The allegations of physical and

emotional abuse and neglect made by male applicants related to abuse by male staff, with only one exception. The alleged abusers included care staff and house fathers/wardens.

### **Strategies used by Alleged Abusers**

- 230 Compliance was said to be achieved by the authority of staff members. Several male applicants gave the following reasons for not reporting the abuse at the time it was happening:
- actual physical violence and the threat of violence
  - being told they would not be believed if they reported the abuse
  - being ashamed of reporting allegations of sexual abuse
  - being frightened they would be returned to a secure setting such as a psychiatric hospital or a penal institution.

### **Females: State Provision**

- 231 Ten female applicants who spoke to the Forum were placed in nine different state establishments. One of those applicants had two placements in different establishments in the state sector. All ten applicants spent a maximum of one year in each placement and for some applicants their placements lasted for a few months only. One placement was made in 1959, while the other ten placements were in the 1960s and 1970s. No abuse was reported in respect of six of the nine establishments in the state sector. Abuse was reported in respect of the other three establishments as follows:
- There was one report of sexual abuse
  - There was one report of physical abuse
  - There was one report of sexual and emotional abuse and of neglect.

### **Physical Abuse**

- 232 One applicant complained of physical abuse in one establishment. This related to a series of incidents in a medical setting. She believed the physician in charge of her treatment was harsh, saying that he stitched a wound without anaesthetic after her suicide attempt. She further reported that she felt that the administration of electroconvulsive therapy was abusive. This applicant felt stigmatised by her stay in a psychiatric facility and reflected that the fear of this being discovered impacted on her adult life.



### **Sexual Abuse**

- 233 Sexual abuse was reported in respect of two establishments by two female applicants. The first applicant was aged thirteen when she was placed in a state establishment. She was generally happy there, but described the sexual abuse that developed from the unprofessional conduct of a female staff member. The following paraphrases her account. A member of staff gave her vodka and sweets and took her out in her car. On one occasion this staff member had sex in the back of her car with a man from a nearby building site. The applicant then began absconding and once went to a nearby caravan park where she met a man and his son. This man gave her money for cigarettes and asked her to meet him later; he gave her a lift to her home area and abused her. She stayed in that area and during that time the abuse continued. The abuse was described as including fondling, masturbation of the alleged abuser and vaginal intercourse. This applicant was clear that she was happy in her placement until the incidents with the member of staff. She then started absconding and she believes this led to her abuse by an older male outside the establishment. This applicant did not tell anyone about what had occurred at that time.
- 234 Another applicant spoke of her abuse by a number of older residents in a mixed gender establishment. She was thirteen years old. She had been subjected to sexual abuse by members of her extended family and was a very vulnerable young person. This applicant told the Forum that, following an assault in the establishment, she locked herself in the bathroom. The officer in charge believed what had happened but remarked “it takes two”. This applicant made a serious suicide attempt some time later and was admitted to a psychiatric hospital where she received appropriate help.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 235 An applicant spoke of emotional abuse in the establishment in which she was repeatedly sexually abused. She said that she received no understanding or emotional support from the officer in charge despite it being on record that abuse by members of her extended family had led to her admission to care.

### **Neglect**

- 236 An applicant complained that the lack of staff supervision in the state establishment in which she was placed meant that she was not protected from multiple sexual assaults by older residents. This applicant suffered from a severe skin condition and reported that the officer in charge did not always obtain the prescribed medication for her or assist her in applying it.

### Roles of Alleged Abusers

237 The female applicants who alleged abuse, referred to abuse by an officer in charge, one care staff member and a number of older residents in mixed gender establishments. Compliance was said to be achieved by the authority of staff members and by threats of violence from older residents.

### Juvenile Justice Provision

238 Juvenile justice provision accommodated young people who were less than eighteen years of age. Most of the applicants seen by the Forum were sent to these establishments under a court order for a specified period of time. Applicants described the juvenile justice establishments in which they were placed as:

- Single gender units (six centres)
- A mixed gender centre
- Two prisons that accommodated minors.

239 Thirty-four applicants, 27 males and seven females were placed in juvenile justice establishments. Of those, 27 male applicants made allegations of abuse or neglect with regard to seven individual establishments. Three of the male applicants had placements in more than one individual juvenile justice establishments. One male applicant was placed in three individual juvenile justice establishments and two male applicants were placed in two individual establishments. Six of the seven female applicants made allegations of abuse in two individual establishments.

240 The following table shows the extent of abuse reported to the Forum in respect of nine establishments by the 34 male and female applicants.

Abuse types	Applicants	Establishments
Physical, emotional, neglect and sexual	7	2
Physical, emotional and neglect	3	2
Physical, emotional and sexual	4	2
Physical and neglect	1	1
Physical and emotional	5	3
Physical and sexual	5	2
Emotional and neglect	2	2

Abuse types	Applicants	Establishments
<b>Sexual only</b>	4	4
<b>Physical only</b>	5	5
<b>Totals</b>	<b>36 (*34 individual applicants)</b>	<b>23 (9 individual establishments)</b>

**\*Note:** Some applicants complained of abuse in more than one establishment.

## Males: Physical Abuse

- 241 Twenty-six male applicants made 56 complaints of physical abuse with regard to six separate juvenile justice establishments. Applicants' concerns were focused on certain members of staff allegedly punching, slapping and kicking them. There were allegations that some staff used sticks, leather straps, keys and hurling sticks to physically reprimand residents. One applicant commented that some of the staff would use "anything to hand" and they "kicked us like a football."
- 242 One male applicant alleged that some of the staff punched and kicked him and recounted one incident when he fell to the floor as a result of the assault. The kicking continued as he lay on the ground. This applicant said that as a result of the alleged assaults by staff he was taken to hospital and, on one occasion, he was treated for broken ribs. One applicant alleged that he was hit in the eye by a resident teacher and sustained a badly bruised eye, noting, that "I never had another black eye like it in my life."
- 243 One applicant alleged that corporal punishment was approved by the governor in his establishment. He told the Forum that residents were held down and had the clothing on their lower body removed after which two members of staff stretched them over the gym equipment. The staff administering the punishment were alleged to have run from the back of the hall to strike each resident six times. He alleged that this punishment often resulted in cuts to his lower body and his being unable to sit down because of the pain. Another regular occurrence alleged in this same establishment was for the staff to flick the residents with wet towels when they were in the shower room.
- 244 Eighteen male applicants were placed in one large juvenile justice establishment. One applicant alleged that physical abuse was a regular feature in this environment and claimed that he was battered by a number

of staff including male staff, a female member of the staff group, a resident teacher and older residents. Another applicant also resident in the same establishment said he was tortured and slapped for no reason. He alleged that he was handed a live electric wire by a care worker and hit with a strap with tacks attached to it, as well as experiencing ongoing bullying by the older boys. Another applicant who referred to physical abuse as a regular feature in the same establishment said, “I had one beating after another.” One applicant recalled being made to take a cold shower and a member of staff beating him with a leather strap when he was wet and naked, alleging the strap struck his face and body.

- 245 Several applicants, who were resident in this establishment, reported an arrangement in which staff used older boys to discipline the younger residents. An applicant said that the staff had their own “gang of boys” who were put in charge. This applicant described an incident that occurred when he was still small in stature. He was standing in a line with the other boys when:

“two older boys slapped me on the face, told me to cry and then cry louder and then smacked again.”

These boys walked up and down the line doing this to the younger boys again and again. Another applicant told the Forum that bullying by the older boys was widespread and said that this helped the staff maintain order. He commented that he was “used as a punch bag” by older boys who were good boxers and this behaviour was encouraged by one particular member of staff.

- 246 An applicant said that he absconded with other boys and when they returned they were made to get up on the stage while the other residents watched. They were then instructed to remove their trousers and wearing only boxer shorts, were spread-eagled over a wooden chair and a member of staff beat them with a leather belt on the legs and buttocks. This applicant was sent to a cell for three days and recalled that, apart from porridge at the start of the day, he received only bread and water.
- 247 One applicant recalled that he was very frightened from the commencement of his placement in one establishment through to his discharge. On his first night, staff had asked two boys to show him around the establishment. He described them as being very aggressive, asking “Where are you from... Can you fight?”

- 248 Another applicant said that all the boys were terrified of a particular member of staff who would patrol the premises and for no apparent reason would slap, punch, kick and beat the boys with a leather belt. The applicant said this staff member would hit “the way you would hit a man.” He recounted a severe beating he was subjected to because he had dropped crumbs from a sausage roll. He said that certain members of staff, as they walked by the boys, “swung their arm to hit you around the head.” An applicant referred to a staff member hitting him on countless occasions on the ear and said that he now suffers from a hearing loss which he attributes to these blows.
- 249 Several applicants, placed in this establishment in the 1970s, described feuding between different gangs of residents. One of these applicants alleged that he was on the receiving end of physical beatings from other residents, staff and an assault by members of a paramilitary gang. Two applicants in another establishment spoke of a military-style culture with one stating that “everything was at the double.” The applicants referred to an organised activity by the staff group called “murder ball.” This ‘game’ had no rules and staff allegedly organised the teams in accordance with the religion of the residents and encouraged the use of extreme physical violence and sectarian language.
- 250 The following comments were made by applicants about their time in juvenile justice establishments:
- “The staff made you feel like a dog.”
  - “I was cuffed around the ear repeatedly.”
  - “It was a regular occurrence to be beaten on the bare legs.”
  - “I was made to run in circles in the yard and each time I passed a member of staff, I was hit with a hurling stick.”
  - “My hair was shaved off and I was put in solitary confinement.”

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 251 Eighteen applicants made 30 complaints about sexual abuse when they were in their juvenile justice placements. These applicants described being sexually abused by staff and older residents. Some found it difficult to speak in detail of their abusive experiences. Applicants said either they had not talked about their sexual abuse at all or given limited information to their partners or family members.

- 252 One applicant, who was unable to enter into the specifics of his alleged abuse, told the Forum that he was kept in a solitary confinement and at night time the door would open and two or three male staff members would enter, hold him down on the mattress and sexually abuse him.
- 253 An applicant recounted sexual abuse by two staff members and also by several older boys in a large establishment. One of the staff members in charge of the clothes store room was said to be well known for “always touching you up and pulling you towards him.” Another applicant spoke about collecting clean clothes for his monthly visits home. This same staff member never allowed more than one boy into the store room at any time and when measuring the boys for clothes, would touch their genitals. This applicant also said that another member of staff took him into his room located off the boys’ dormitory and attempted to rape him and made him have oral genital contact. Older residents, described as the “favourites” of staff, taunted the younger residents and made them engage in sexual activity. Fear was associated with any resistance or refusal.
- 254 An applicant described being groomed and sexually abused by a member of staff whose modus operandi was to provide him and other residents with sweets and cigarettes. The sexual abuse allegedly started with fondling in the television room and progressed, finally, to anal rape. The sexual abuse also took place in the “pigeon holes” where the clothes were kept and in a holiday home used during the summer months.
- 255 Another applicant alleged that a member of staff selected boys to sit at the back row of chairs in the television room and placed their hands under his clothing and made them masturbate him. He alleged that this was done to many boys over the years and said he had personal experience of this on a number of occasions. One applicant alleged he saw the “handsome boys sitting on (the staff member’s)...leg watching television” and said his hand was inside their shorts. Another applicant said of this establishment “It was a choice between a beating and sexual abuse.”

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 256 Seventeen male applicants made 30 complaints of emotional abuse in regard to four separate juvenile justice establishments. Several applicants said that the stigma of being in a juvenile justice establishment was difficult to cope with, and, as noted by one applicant, his establishment was known as the “orphan home for bad boys.” Another applicant described the public humiliation he felt when the residents were “marched down the street” and people referred to them as “borstal boys.”

- 257 An applicant who had been placed in a secure setting as a thirteen year old told the Forum that he was subjected to constant bullying by staff and older residents. Another, placed in the same establishment, reported that when he wet his bed he was made to take his mattress to the hall and stand there for all to see. Yet another applicant said that he was made to kneel in front of a religious statue in the middle of the dormitory and was publicly denounced by staff for bed-wetting. An applicant recounted that following his return after absconding, the sleeve was removed from his shirt, the legs of his trousers were cut off and his belt and shoe laces were removed. He was taken to the local cinema with other residents and spoke of the shame he felt as he had to hold his trousers up as he shuffled along and tried to avoid his shoes falling off.
- 258 Several applicants who had been in a large juvenile justice establishment described being threatened by staff who told them that they would be sent to a prison with older boys who would beat them. Applicants said that witnessing other residents being physically and sexually abused was very upsetting. They reported that the belittling and ridiculing of the boys was common “day in and day out.”
- 259 One applicant alleged that he lived in a constant state of fear: “I was always looking over my shoulder or listening for the sound.” This applicant alleged that this inappropriate treatment of residents was, on occasions, the result of some of the staff having “hangovers or being in a bad mood.” An applicant referred to having “no association” (denied contact with others) and described the establishment as having a “rough regime” commenting “I was only fifteen, it was a hard machine.” One applicant said that as a result of the emotional abuse, “they made you feel worthless.”

### **Neglect**

- 260 Most applicants did not comment on the general care conditions in juvenile justice establishments. However, ten applicants complained of neglect with regard to two individual establishments. Eight others each made one complaint of neglect and two individual applicants made two complaints each of neglect.
- 261 Applicants’ concerns focused on the food being inedible or the portions provided being too small, at times leaving them hungry. An applicant said that he was deprived of food for minor misdemeanours, citing the following example:

“We were often pulled out of line in the canteen for talking or if pushed by someone, and then we got no food.”

One applicant described the food as “terrible...the only time you could eat it was when the inspectors visited and we got sausages. For breakfast, we got a bap with a small knob of butter...I don’t remember lunch but the evening meal was a dollop of mashed potato with beans or peas or egg.”

- 262 Three applicants said that the education they received was substandard. One commented that, when placed in an establishment, he was more advanced than his peers, particularly in maths, but was sent to the woodwork and pottery classes instead of being provided with appropriate academic education. One applicant said “I was out of the classroom more often than I was in” and missed much of his education as he was made to act as a “lackey” for one particular member of staff. One applicant suggested that the staff “had no interest in teaching us.” One applicant said he was unable to concentrate in the classroom as he was so terrified of a particular member of staff.

### **Roles of Alleged Abusers**

- 263 The male applicants identified 22 male care staff, one female member of the care staff, prison and police officers, a teacher, a visiting clergyman, a night watchman and older residents as those who had abused them. In the main, the male applicants described an environment characterised by fear with the use of extreme physical force by staff and older boys. Most of the applicants said they either accepted the abuse as normal or they simply did not know what to do to stop it from happening. Seven of the male applicants said they had tried to run away but were returned and punished for absconding. One applicant said:

“I would hook it over the fence but didn’t get very far.”

Four of the male applicants said they had self-harmed during their placements in juvenile justice establishments.

### **Females: Juvenile Justice Provision**

- 264 Seven female applicants spoke to the Forum about their placements in two different juvenile justice establishments. All seven applicants had one placement each in one or other of these establishments. Three of the applicants had had previous care placements in the voluntary sector. Two of the placements began in the 1950s and the two applicants were in



their establishment for nine and six years respectively. Three placements commenced in the 1960s and two placements were made in the 1970s.

- 265 One applicant did not report any abuse in relation to her juvenile justice placement. The other six applicants reported abuse in respect of two establishments as set out below.

There were

- five reports of physical abuse
- five reports of emotional abuse
- four reports of neglect and
- one report of sexual abuse.

### **Physical Abuse**

- 266 Five female applicants complained of eighteen instances of physical abuse in two juvenile justice establishments. The abuse complained of included:

- being kept in solitary confinement for long periods
- being beaten by staff members and by older residents
- having hair shaved by a staff member (named) despite a scheduled participation in following days at a Feis.

Comments made by applicants included:

“I was punched, I had bruises (from an assault by an older resident). The staff turned a blind eye. I had reward marks docked so I didn’t go home. I suspect that was to stop my parents seeing the bruises.”

“I was made to carry my younger sister down the fire escape in all weathers to access the laundry where she had to sit in a cold bath for bed-wetting. The laundry could be accessed indoors. If I refused I was hit around the face and head.”

“The staff caned us on our hands for bed-wetting. We had chilblains... we were in agony.”

“A member of staff used her knuckles to beat me from my fingers, up along my hands, up over my head and face and down my back...all for bed-wetting...the more they beat me the more I wet the bed.”

“The staff beat us with wooden spoons every day after breakfast for bed wetting.”

“I was made to eat beetroot which I couldn’t. I was sick on the floor and then hit for soiling the floor.”

### Sexual Abuse

- 267 Sexual abuse was reported by one female applicant. The applicant was aged fifteen when she was placed in the establishment. She described how she and others were groomed by a visiting entertainer; he would take selected girls into a classroom and give them cigarettes for “sexual favours.” The girls were not allowed to smoke and if smoking was detected they would lose reward points. The applicant did not describe the sexual abuse in any further detail.

### Emotional Abuse

- 268 Five female applicants described emotional abuse:
- three applicants spoke of emotional abuse in respect of one establishment
  - two applicants recounted emotional abuse in respect of the second establishment.
- 269 Seventeen instances of emotional abuse were reported to the Forum including: being shown no appropriate affection, personal denigration, the removal of personal effects, experiencing public humiliation and being exposed to fearful situations. The following descriptions were given by applicants:
- “You’re nothing, I went in feeling a nobody and came out feeling worse.”
- “There was no positive affirmation. They were always shouting and screeching at you.”
- “My brothers were in care in a home nearby; I was not taken to see them. My older sister who was a lone parent came to see me and was not let in.”
- “I was terrified as I watched absconders being thrashed. Fear was a constant companion.”
- “I was not told of my granny’s funeral and not allowed to attend. I was heartbroken as she had cared for me for years...why would you do that?”
- “No members of staff showed any interest in helping or supporting me. I spent all my time crying.”
- “Staff would talk about you in the presence of other residents who would then use this as ammunition to bully you.”

## Neglect

270 Four applicants made ten complaints concerning neglect in two establishments. The neglect complained of was as follows:

- three complaints of inadequate medical attention
- two complaints concerning poor diet resulting in often going hungry
- two complaints of poor hygiene practices
- two complaints of inadequate bedding
- one complaint of inadequate staff supervision.

The following comments are indicative of the complaints of neglect made to the Forum:

“I was placed in a cell with a bedstead and mattress...this had to be removed during the day. When I arrived I was made to strip and wash in a bath...I was supervised with no privacy.”

“I was placed in an empty dormitory on my own and had to sleep on a mattress without sheets on the floor.”

“The food was very poor. I couldn’t eat the meat as I had seen maggots on it...I was just hungry.”

“Older girls were allowed to bully and abuse other residents...the staff did nothing, they turned a blind eye.”

## Roles of Alleged Abusers

271 The female applicants identified three persons in authority, two care staff members, older residents and a visiting entertainer as those whom they alleged abused them. The applicants described a culture of general fear and an acceptance of casual violence within the establishments as contributing to the abuse they described. Two applicants ran away while one applicant described severe enuresis that continued into early adulthood. Applicants recounted that they did not talk about their experiences in any detail until at least fifteen years after their discharge. They felt that they would not be believed and most wanted to forget those episodes in their lives.

## **Period 3: 1976 - 1995**

### **Introduction**

- 272 This section of the chapter covers the experiences of 103 applicants (69 males, 34 females) who were placed in 47 designated establishments during Period 3 (1976-1995). Five female applicants and eight male applicants did not disclose neglect or abuse in relation to their placement during this period. However, four of these five female applicants made allegations of abuse within an establishment covered in the previous Period 2 (1956-1975) as did all of the eight male applicants. One female applicant did not make any complaint of neglect or abuse about her time in residential care. The remaining 90 applicants (61 males, 29 females) disclosed at least one type of abuse within at least one of the establishments in which they were resident.
- 273 Most of the abuse that was reported to the Forum was alleged to have occurred in five establishments as follows:
- one establishment was the focus of complaints of abuse from fourteen applicants
  - one establishment was the focus of complaints from thirteen applicants
  - one establishment was the focus of complaints from nine applicants.
  - two establishments were each the focus of complaints from eight applicants.
- 274 There were more than four times as many male applicants as female applicants who had been in juvenile justice establishments. Both male and female applicants made a substantial number of disclosures of emotional, physical and sexual abuse.
- 275 It should be noted that, when compared with Periods 1 and 2, a significantly higher proportion of applicants in Period 3 had multiple placements in care. Some applicants recalled in detail the number and sequence of their placements, others were less sure. On the basis of the information provided to the Forum, it is evident that of the 90 applicants in this period who spoke about their abuse, at least 37 had already been in care in the previous period. Furthermore, at least 32 of the applicants had been in two or more placements in Period 3, some in two establishments of the same type and some in establishments of different types.

## Voluntary Establishments

276 This section of the report focuses on the allegations made by applicants regarding each of the four types of abuse. Comments made by the applicants and quotations drawn from their accounts of their experiences are included.

### Males: Voluntary Provision

277 Twenty-five male applicants who had been placed in nine voluntary establishments made 28 reports of abuse in these establishments. In most cases, each report related to more than one episode or instance of the abuse that was alleged. The combinations of types of abuse reported by the applicants are summarised in the following table.

Abuse types	Male	Establishments
Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect	3	2
Physical, emotional and neglect	2	2
Physical, emotional and sexual	4	2
Physical, sexual and neglect	-	-
Physical and neglect	-	-
Physical and emotional	3	2
Physical and sexual	6	1
Emotional and sexual	2	2
Emotional and neglect	1	1
Emotional, neglect and sexual	1	1
Emotional	1	1
Sexual	3	2
Physical	1	1
Neglect	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>28 reports</b>	<b>9 different establishments</b>

**Note:** One establishment was the focus of thirteen complaints. Another establishment was the focus of six complaints.

There were nineteen complaints of physical abuse, sixteen complaints of emotional abuse, nineteen complaints of sexual abuse and eight complaints of neglect.

### **Physical Abuse**

- 278 Nineteen applicants made allegations of physical abuse inflicted on them by staff and residents in the establishments in which they were placed. They described assaults involving the use of canes, sticks, a tree branch, a fishing rod tip, rope, leather straps, a walking stick, chisels and a mallet. Applicants also alleged they were forced to stand or kneel for long periods of time, forced to eat, placed in solitary confinement such as being locked in a cupboard, deprived of food or sleep and made to take showers with the water described as too hot or too cold. The allegations of physical assaults by applicants included being punched, kicked, slapped, lifted by the locks of their hair, nipped, knuckled and grabbed by the throat.
- 279 The following are examples of the physically abusive incidents they complained about.
- On the day of admission, an applicant was beaten by a staff member who punched him and nipped his upper arm because he was crying. He explained to the Forum that he was upset at the time because of being separated from his siblings.
  - A woodwork teacher working in a large establishment would punish the boys by placing them in a semicircle and if anyone was caught talking, he would twist the little finger of the boy, twist his arm back and proceed to kick him with excessive force on the back of his legs or on the buttocks. This teacher was also alleged to have thrown blackboard dusters and mallets at the boys, sometimes at random, and was said to be able to hit a “target” with remarkable accuracy.
- 280 Applicants said that assaults were frequent and injuries resulted, including bruising. Some applicants said that the staff who assaulted them became more violent when intoxicated. Others had concluded that the physical abuse was part of a control mechanism to make them more compliant for sexual abuse. One applicant described an incident in which he had jumped out of a window at night to escape and he was caught and pulled back in by a member of staff who kept hitting him on the back of his legs all the way up stairs. He told the Forum “It felt like my insides were coming out when he hit me.” Another applicant said that he was punched so hard by a member of staff that the force lifted him off his feet.

- 281 Some applicants spoke of being beaten with a leather strap, with one commenting that he was made to strip from the waist down and the belt would hit him on the buttocks and thighs. Another applicant alleged that he was subjected to relentless beatings from one particular member of staff each time he returned late to his room. He was often late because he was being sexually abused on a recurring basis by a member of staff in another part of the establishment. This applicant told the Forum that he was unable to tell anyone about the abuse and he considered that the beatings he received were more harmful than the sexual abuse.
- 282 One of the applicants said that the residents in a large establishment were force-fed and if they resisted or refused to eat the food, they were beaten. Applicants spoke of care staff lifting them off the ground by their hair. One member of staff was said to have worn large rings and an applicant reported that, during bath time, she would leave marks on the boys as she forced the ring into their shoulders when holding them down in the water. Applicants described being knuckled by a member of staff. This was explained as the hand formed into a fist with the knuckle of the middle finger protruding more than the other knuckles and a flicking type action used against the child's head.

### **Physical Abuse by Older Boys**

- 283 Several applicants made reference to physical abuse by other residents with one commenting that frequently older boys would come into the younger boys' room, rough them up, beat them and place blankets over their heads as if to smother them. These applicants said that staff would deliberately turn a blind eye to the bullying by the older boys and some felt there was no point in telling staff as they already knew what was going on and did nothing to prevent this or protect the younger boys.

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 284 Nineteen applicants recounted sexual abuse, which involved grooming, indecent assaults consisting of inappropriate fondling, masturbation by the abuser, masturbation of the abuser by the child, oral genital contact, and anal rape. Allegations were also made of coercive peer abuse and witnessing the sexual abuse of other residents. A summary of the types of sexual abuse reported is given in the table below.

Types of Sexual Abuse	Reports*	Establishments
<b>Inappropriate fondling</b>	9	3
<b>Anal rape</b>	10	4
<b>Oral/genital contact</b>	6	1
<b>Masturbation of the child by the alleged abuser</b>	3	1
<b>Masturbation of the alleged abuser by the child</b>	2	1
<b>Indecent exposure</b>	1	1
<b>Coercive peer abuse</b>	2	1
<b>Witnessing abuse</b>	2	2
<b>Use of violence</b>	3	3
<b>Grooming</b>	2	2
<b>Other eg being photographed inappropriately</b>	8	3

**\*Note:** ‘Reports’ relates to the number of references to types of sexual abuse made by applicants during their meetings with the Forum rather than to the number of individual instances of each type of abuse which, for some applicants, allegedly occurred over several years.

285 One of the applicants recalled that on the day of his admission to an establishment, he was told by a member of staff that he had to have a medical examination. The member of staff took him to the games room and instructed him to remove his clothing. He then checked him for rashes and fondled his genitals. Following this incident, the staff member continued to behave in an inappropriate manner and would make contact with him as if to play but, the applicant concluded, this was simply a means to allow him to touch him inappropriately. This same staff member was said to watch him and the other boys when they were getting showered and “look them up and down.” Another applicant made allegations of being fondled inappropriately by a staff member on the pretext that he was applying a medical treatment. A similar situation was disclosed by an applicant who said that he had been called to the office of a senior member of staff who told him that he had to check if he had been abused and then proceeded to fondle him.



- 286 Many applicants who had been sexually abused recounted that the sexual abuse progressed over a period of time from inappropriate fondling to masturbation, oral genital contact and then, for some, to anal rape. Applicants alleged that, at times, sexual abuse was accompanied by force; for example, one applicant said the alleged perpetrator placed his hand over his mouth whilst he was indecently assaulting him.
- 287 An applicant who described being forced to masturbate a member of staff said that he and his twin brother went on to suffer extreme sexual abuse including anal rape by a number of staff throughout their placement in a voluntary establishment. He told the Forum that:
- “With the rapes, you get to a point where you turn off, lie down and just let them get on with it. Any brother who wanted to abuse us did. The others turned a blind eye and didn’t say anything.”
- 288 Several other applicants made allegations of anal rape. One applicant described being put in a single bedroom when other residents were on home leave. He said that a brother came in to pray with him but hit him on the knee, pulled all his clothes off and raped him. The brother then took the clothes away and the applicant had to go down to breakfast the next morning wrapped in a blanket. The applicant said that he thought the brother had washed his clothes, dried them and returned them to his locker. The sexual abuse disclosed by a number of male applicants who had been placed in the same establishment was described as constant and occurred without any form of grooming. One applicant commented that inappropriate behaviour was seen as a right to which the abusers were entitled.
- 289 An applicant alleged that a professional photographer, who had been brought to the establishment to take photographs, gained access to the showers when a staff member was seeing to the needs of other boys. The photographer invited those who were in the shower area to take their clothes off and pose together. The male resident became upset and told the member of staff who ordered the photographer off the premises.

### **Sexual Abuse by Older Residents**

- 290 Some applicants spoke of being raped anally by older residents. One said that when he was around five years old he shared a bedroom with his older brother and that both of them were timid and subjected to constant bullying. This applicant said he woke up to see his brother being held down and raped.

- 291 An applicant told the Forum that he was sexually abused when he was seven or eight years of age. He said that he was physically held face down by a group of older male residents and seriously sexually abused. Although he was asked at the time if he had been abused, he did not disclose the details of the incident until he was around thirteen years of age. He attributes his anger and rebellion in his teens to the abuse he suffered as a young child.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 292 Sixteen male applicants described a number of forms of emotional abuse. These included personal emotional abuse, family denigration and links discouraged, being shown no affection, bullying by older residents and exposure to fearful situations. They said this abuse undermined their self esteem and emotional wellbeing. These forms of emotional abuse are the subject of the following paragraphs.

### **Personal Emotional Abuse**

- 293 Some applicants commented that they had no privacy when using the bathroom and staff watched them. They said that staff referred to them by derogatory names such as “scum from Belfast.” Several applicants recounted that on admission to the establishment, they were immediately stripped, bathed, and their hair was shaved.
- 294 An applicant described himself as an already traumatised child when he was placed in care because of the violence in his family home. He said that when he was in the establishment, he wet the bed and, as a punishment, was beaten by staff. Following this, his bed-wetting worsened and he spoke of washing the wet sheets in the bath and drying them on the radiator as he was terrified of the consequences of staff knowing that he was still wetting the bed. Some male applicants described insensitive treatment, for example, several said they were at times made to wear girls’ clothing, were bathed with girls, and had to endure other children urinating when they were sharing the bath.

### **Family Denigration and/or Links Discouraged**

- 295 Some applicants recounted the sadness they experienced due to the limited, or lack of, contact with family members, particularly parents and siblings, when in establishments. They expressed concern that contact with their family was deliberately frustrated by some of the staff. One applicant recalled that his father was made to feel unwelcome when he visited him in the establishment and another said that his mother wrote letters to him but he never received them.

296 Applicants described the difficulties they experienced when they were separated from their siblings, even when they were placed within the same establishment. One applicant recounted that he was not allowed to keep in touch with two of his siblings with whom he was very close and referred to the pain this caused him. Another applicant explained that he was initially in the same bedroom as his brothers but they were all separated with no explanation and the impact on him was significant, leaving him feeling bereft every night. An applicant spoke of the pain of being separated from his brother and running away from the establishment specifically to see him. Some applicants who had been placed in voluntary establishments described being belittled by staff and the feeling of shame that followed.

297 Applicants who were placed in a church-run establishment said the following:

“We were told we were all sinners, not told anything. If we asked questions we were told to shut up.”

“We were bathed in very hot baths and scrubbed with a scrubbing brush...A member of staff told us ‘I am scrubbing away your sins’.”

298 An applicant spoke about a teaching assistant mocking him for scrunching up his face and squinting at the blackboard because he couldn’t see the blackboard very well. Other applicants who had great difficulty eating certain types of food spoke of the humiliation of being made to eat regurgitated food.

### **Deprivation of Affection**

299 Several male applicants spoke of living in establishments that were devoid of emotional warmth and affection. They described the settings as uncaring and, as one applicant said:

“there was never a kind word, you were either ignored or beaten.”

Other applicants spoke of witnessing their peers being admonished and several commented that seeing the humiliation of others was sometimes as traumatic as being on the receiving end of the abuse.

300 The removal of personal belongings, such as toys, was referred to by several applicants. One applicant said that on admission personal possessions were removed by staff and he remembered being told: “no toys here.” An applicant, in reflecting on his time in residential care, said “No one cared for you,” and “I had no mentor.”

### Exposure to Fearful Situations

- 301 One applicant recounted the fear he felt as he heard the belt being used on other residents and hearing them whimpering with the pain. One applicant described being constantly worried that he would be beaten again and referred to being “*terrified*” and “*hating*” the establishment because of the cruelty of two of the staff members. This applicant also said that another member of staff had a very sharp tongue and was dismissive and cruel to him. Incidents recounted by applicants included witnessing the drowning of kittens that they and other residents had befriended. An applicant told of being taken to an area of Belfast by his social worker where he felt intimidated by the locals.

### Neglect

- 302 Neglect was mentioned by eight applicants, a smaller proportion of applicants than had been the case in the two earlier Periods, with few commenting on aspects of care. A male applicant described his establishment as a “cold draughty place, with wind whistling through the corridors, and poor lighting”. He said that the blankets on the beds were army style and very rough, causing him itching. Another applicant said that the staff in his establishment expected the children to be very quiet: “we were not allowed to be spontaneous and play outside was very rarely allowed.” A few applicants recounted being made to eat porridge. If they refused, they were forced to swallow it, even if this resulted in the food being regurgitated. In another establishment, an applicant said that he had been a slow eater and, on occasions, food was removed from the table before he had finished. Several applicants commented that their childhood experiences in relation to certain food types have affected their taste for those foods in adulthood.
- 303 Some applicants expressed concerns about a lack of medical care. One commented that he was not provided with medical attention when he injured his ankle jumping from a window. Another applicant who had an ongoing serious medical issue with his kidneys said he was neglected when he was unwell and recounted one occasion when he was taken to hospital by a member of staff who told him that he was dying and then left.
- 304 Some applicants referred to the lack of supervision in their establishments. One alleged that there was no staff supervision at night, which allowed older boys to come into the rooms of younger boys where, the applicants alleged, they bullied and sexually abused them at will. An applicant spoke about frequent fights between the boys, commenting:

“you were either being beaten by other boys or you were beating someone else.”

He and others questioned the adequacy and effectiveness of the staff’s supervision and protection of the children.

### **Knowledge of Abuse and Disclosing Abuse at the Time**

- 305 Applicants told the Forum that other residents and staff witnessed much of the abuse in the establishments. In addition to their fellow residents, who witnessed and experienced similar abuse, they said that care staff, ancillary workers and teachers were also present when different instances of abuse occurred. Applicants explained that many residents were intimidated by the threat of violence and would not report what they had seen. Some said that most residents knew from personal experience the severity of the treatment given to those who complained. Several applicants reflected that there was no one to tell without fear of compromise. A number of applicants, who said they tried to report what was happening to them, felt they were not believed. The comment “What was the point of telling anybody?” expressed fully the view they shared.

### **Methods of Coping with Abuse and Strategies used by Alleged Abusers**

- 306 The male applicants described a number of ways in which they responded to their alleged abuse. They spoke of running away, sometimes repeatedly to the point where they were placed in more secure accommodation. Others, who said they were constantly frightened, accepted the abuse as inevitable. They tried to block it out and some withdrew into themselves. The means by which compliance was achieved are evident in earlier descriptions of abuse in this chapter and included the exercise of authority by the adults who were meant to be caring for them, the use of violence against them and the general atmosphere of fear that pervaded their establishments.

## **Females: Voluntary Provision**

- 307 Thirteen female applicants who had been cared for in eight voluntary establishments in Period 3 made allegations of abuse. There were eight complaints of emotional abuse, eight complaints of physical abuse, four complaints of neglect and four complaints of sexual abuse. The combinations of abuse types said to have been experienced by these applicants are summarised below.

Abuse types	Females	Establishments
Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect	1	1
Physical, emotional and neglect	-	-
Physical, emotional and sexual	1	1
Physical, sexual and neglect	-	-
Physical and neglect	1	1
Physical and emotional	2	1
Physical and sexual	1	1
Emotional and sexual	-	-
Emotional, neglect and sexual	-	-
Emotional and neglect	2	2
Emotional	2	2
Sexual	1	1
Physical	2	2
Neglect	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>13 reports</b>	<b>8 different establishments</b>

**Note:** One establishment was the focus of six complaints. Another establishment was the focus of two complaints.

### Physical Abuse

308 Eight female applicants disclosed physical abuse, including smacking, being dragged by the hair, having finger nails dug into them and being kicked. Few mentioned the use of belts or canes. Bullying was mentioned frequently.

### Descriptions of Physical Abuse

309 An applicant said that a member of staff who was “very strict but generally ok smacked me on the face and head”. Another applicant referred to being “hammered (by a particular member of staff) for anything and everything – even for moving your seat in the living room”, but commented that “these beatings stopped after a change in the law,” in the early/mid 1980s. One applicant said that a senior member of staff was very physical in manner and picked on her. This applicant said:

“I was dragged by my hair, slapped, pushed against a wall; she would dig her nails into me, kick me; she trailed me across two beds by my hair. I was pinned down on the floor by three adults sitting on top of me on her say so and locked in a room on my own for days in the dark.”

- 310 Applicants spoke of being bullied by other residents and of how difficult this was for them. One applicant who expressed her concerns about this also questioned the lack of action by staff to stop it. She recalled an incident when she had the courage to report the bullying and asked staff “Why do people keep picking on me?” But nothing changed and the bullying continued. This applicant also told of being slapped around the face and grabbed by two members of staff who told her “Don’t dare tell your mum”.
- 311 Several applicants spoke of solitary confinement as a punishment. One said that she was often locked in a room as a punishment. Another described being placed in a room on her own in an area of the establishment that was used once a week. These applicants explained that a resident could be left there for “days on end” and described being terrified when the lights were turned off.

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 312 Female applicants made few allegations of sexual abuse. The four who did, spoke of inappropriate fondling and coercive peer abuse. One applicant described being brought by a member of staff to a room and left alone with a visiting priest who would put her on his knee and put his hand up her skirt. This applicant said she has very clear memories of these incidents but does not know how many times this happened. Another applicant said that on one occasion, when she was aged approximately ten years old, a male resident took her to a secluded area beyond the orchard and tried to involve her in oral sex.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 313 Eight applicants made reference to emotional abuse they said they experienced in voluntary establishments. The following aspects of emotional abuse were evident in their accounts.

### **Personal Emotional Abuse**

- 314 Some female applicants spoke of the public humiliation and personal denigration they experienced. Some of the emotional abuse described by the female applicants was rooted in sectarian attitudes. One applicant spoke about staff pouring de-lousing liquid over her hair and being accused of bringing lice into the home. She said the liquid treatment had to remain in her hair for most of the day and she was subject to other children mocking her and a member of staff commenting, “I’ve seen the state of your home” and “Protestants are not bothered by lice.”

- 315 In referring to their admission to an establishment, some female applicants said their personal belongings had been removed, including their clothes, and they were given “hand-me-downs” to wear. These applicants questioned where their personal possessions went, as many were not seen again.

### **Family Denigration and/or Links Discouraged**

- 316 Several female applicants said that some staff would make offensive comments about their families and this denigration was very painful. One applicant said that she was referred to as a “bastard” by staff as her mother was unmarried. Another female applicant said that her father was criticised by the nuns as he was Protestant. Her mother was also criticised because she was not married and in a relationship with a Protestant. This applicant said that at her Confirmation, the nun in charge was critical of her father for his choice of her Confirmation name, commenting “What would he know? Your Confirmation is a mockery.”
- 317 Referring to the lack of contact with siblings, one female applicant said that she saw her brother, who was in foster care, on one occasion only. She said “this should not have been allowed to happen.”

### **Deprivation of Affection**

- 318 Other applicants emphasised the lack of affection they were shown whilst in their residential placements. One said that, during her time in the establishment, she was not shown any warmth or encouragement and believes that her education and social development suffered as a consequence. Another applicant said that no one took an interest in the residents and the culture of the establishment failed to nurture the children. An applicant said that during her time in an establishment:
- “the staff never asked if I was okay and this lack of action and lack of knowledge was a form of neglect.”

### **Bullying**

- 319 Some female applicants made reference to bullying by staff and other residents. There were further allegations that some staff colluded with the perpetrators as they did not challenge these inappropriate behaviours. One applicant explained that she made a complaint to staff about bullying by older residents but they failed to act and did nothing to prevent this from re-occurring. Another applicant described an incident in which a boy pulled her hair and she told staff but, she said, the staff encouraged other boys to behave in this inappropriate way also.



### **Neglect**

- 320 Four female applicants made allegations of neglect in respect of several aspects of their care. One said that when she was a child she was a bed-wetter and was often left to lie on wet sheets. Another said that there was an absence of toys and games for the children and they were under-stimulated in their developmental years. One applicant said that no time was allowed for play. Another applicant told the Forum she was made to do inappropriate and continuous work. This applicant listed the work she had to do before and after school, included feeding and dressing the younger children, changing and washing wet sheets and cleaning the floors and the toilets.

### **Inadequate Medical Care**

- 321 An applicant recalled having a severe toothache when taken with other residents for a fortnight's holiday to a seaside resort. When she informed the staff of her toothache, she was accused of telling lies. Another staff member eventually gave her a painkiller and instructed her to go to bed. The staff then went out for the day with the residents while she was left in her room with no adult support or supervision.

### **Lack of Staff Supervision**

- 322 A number of female applicants identified lack of staff supervision as a deficiency in their care in voluntary establishments. One of them, who had sustained burns to her neck and torso as an infant when in the care of a voluntary establishment, told the Forum that a staff member had left her unattended on a counter top and she had picked up a kettle and scalded herself with boiling water. Another applicant remembered the children being out of control in her establishment and described the scene as a "riot" with young children smashing the window with their bare feet and staff failing to intervene. A third applicant said that she was a persistent absconder when in care and was constantly truanting from school but staff did not appear to be interested in finding the cause of her behaviour or question where she had been.

### **Methods of Coping and Strategies used by Alleged Abusers**

- 323 Female applicants, in describing their responses to alleged abuse, spoke of feelings and behaviour similar to those of the male applicants who had been in voluntary establishments. Their comments were expressed with anger, resignation and frustration. They spoke of crying, fighting back, trying to run away, blocking the abuse out and keeping their feelings to

themselves. They too had been controlled by members of staff using their authority inappropriately, by physical violence and by threats that left them intimidated and insecure. They had no confidence in reporting what they were experiencing.

### Males: State Provision

324 Fourteen male applicants who had been placed in eight state establishments in Period 3 made fifteen reports of one or more types of alleged abuse. There were ten reports of emotional abuse, eleven reports of physical abuse, four reports of sexual abuse and three reports of neglect. The combinations of abuse types they alleged are set out in the table below.

Abuse types	Males	Establishments
Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect	-	-
Physical, emotional and neglect	2	2
Physical, emotional and sexual	2	2
Physical, sexual and neglect	-	-
Physical and neglect	-	-
Physical and emotional	5	2
Physical and sexual	-	-
Emotional and sexual	-	-
Emotional, neglect and sexual	-	-
Emotional and neglect	-	-
Emotional	1	1
Sexual	2	2
Physical	2	2
Neglect	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>15 reports</b>	<b>8 different establishments</b>

**Note:** One establishment was the focus of eight complaints.

### Physical Abuse

- 325 Inappropriate physical behaviour resulting in physical harm was mentioned by eleven applicants who spoke of being bullied and beaten by other residents and physically assaulted by members of staff. Some applicants said they were punched, kicked, had their hair pulled and were slapped. The following instances of abuse were mentioned by applicants:

“I lost a tooth as the result of a punch by a member of staff, and the dentist I was taken to see colluded with the member of staff in not reporting the assault.”

“I lost count of how many times I was beaten. Your man got tore into me.”

“I was pulled from a chair by my ears, slapped and kicked, and a member of staff stamped on my hand fracturing my fingers. I remember being spun off a carousel so fast that I landed on the ground and fractured my wrist.”

- 326 One applicant who had run away from his establishment, was taken on his return to a room, stripped naked and beaten from head to toe by a staff member using the palm of his hand. The beating resulted in red marks all over his body. Another applicant who had run away was strapped to a bed when he returned and was given an injection. Being placed in a form of solitary confinement was mentioned by male applicants, as was being forced to eat. An applicant said the residents in his establishment were forced to eat food they did not like and that members of staff would hold his head firmly whilst he made him do this.

### Sexual Abuse

- 327 Four male applicants disclosed sexual abuse by staff and other residents on a spectrum from grooming, through inappropriate fondling to anal rape. One applicant who was indecently assaulted and made to masturbate his abuser as well commented “You are at your most vulnerable when you feel unwanted.” One of the applicants who disclosed that he had been seriously sexually assaulted on a number of occasions by male and female staff explained that “There were no locks on bathrooms; staff could come in on young people.” Another applicant talked of being taken out in a car with a male care worker and being bought a Chinese meal. This man who, he said, smelt of stale drink and smoke, started to sexually abuse him during this trip. The applicant was too upset to elaborate any further.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 328 Ten applicants provided a number of examples of emotional abuse which they said undermined their self esteem and emotional well-being. One applicant referred to a specific event when he was made to go to an Orange parade despite objecting and being terrified of going. Another applicant felt humiliated by a member of staff who kept making inappropriate comments in relation to his eye calling him “lazy eye”. Another applicant was not allowed to use the bathroom and as a consequence wet the bed. Staff referred to him as a “dirty little bastard.” Another applicant spoke of a female member of staff continuously trying to “push the Bible down my throat.”
- 329 One applicant said that he was told on numerous occasions by staff members that his mother did not want him. Other applicants considered that the environment in which they were resident was not conducive to a child’s emotional wellbeing as it was one of fear, and devoid of warmth and affection.

### **Neglect**

- 330 Male applicants in state sector establishments made few allegations of neglect. Of the three who did report neglect, all spoke of establishments having a lack of play opportunities and alleged inadequate medical attention and inadequate education. One applicant said that in his establishment one of the punishments used was to keep children away from school for a period of time. He said he was punished in this way repeatedly and, as a result, he was unable to read or write when he left care.
- 331 Another applicant, who complained of constant bullying in his establishment, said that he felt vulnerable all the time as there was no one who really cared or who tried to stop the bullying. He saw this lack of engaged supervision as neglectful.

### **Females: State Provision**

- 332 Ten female applicants made twelve reports of alleged abuse in ten different state establishments. There were seven complaints of sexual abuse, ten complaints of emotional abuse, six complaints of physical abuse and two complaints of neglect. The combinations of abuse types they alleged are set out in the table below.

Abuse types	Females	Establishments
Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect	-	-
Physical, emotional and neglect	1	1
Physical, emotional and sexual	3	4
Physical, sexual and neglect	-	-
Physical and neglect	-	-
Physical and emotional	2	2
Physical and sexual	-	-
Emotional and sexual	2	2
Emotional, neglect and sexual	-	-
Emotional and neglect	-	-
Emotional	2	2
Sexual	1	1
Sexual and neglect	1	1
Physical	-	-
Neglect	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>12 reports</b>	<b>10 different establishments</b>

**Note:** Three establishments were the focus of two complaints each.

### Physical Abuse

- 333 Six female applicants spoke of being hit, including with a slipper, and being bullied and beaten by other residents. One who said she was bullied by older residents remarked that “staff did not want to know.” Another applicant described staff as very physical:

“They would grab you by the arms, or by the scruff of your neck; they were really rough, and would throw you down, or you might be dragged and then thrown into a room. I was in the same room as my brother

who had behavioural problems and who was very violent – sometimes he had to be restrained in a jacket – I did not feel protected from him.”

Whilst in that placement, this applicant said she was subjected to a physical restraint for the first time and found this to be a painful experience, emotionally and physically. She said that the restraints became more excessive in frequency and degree and alleged that a particular staff member would dig her nails into her. This applicant recounted being restrained on a staircase and her trousers being pulled down and her top pulled up, exposing the private areas of her body, which she found very upsetting. To this day she does not like to be touched.

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 334 Ten female applicants who had been placed in state establishments made allegations of rape and indecent assault perpetrated by male residents and staff. One applicant referred to an older male resident roaming through the bedrooms at night and indecently assaulting the female residents. Another applicant spoke of being taken in her night dress by a member of staff to see someone introduced to her as a “doctor” who indecently assaulted her. An applicant said she was abused by a female care worker who indecently assaulted her by fondling her breasts, kissing her, and involving her in other sexual activity.

### **Witnessing Abuse**

- 335 An applicant who recounted witnessing abuse said she saw a vulnerable resident being sexually abused by two male residents on the floor of a bedroom. On another occasion, this resident was said to be with an older man who had apparently groomed her with the offer of cigarettes. The applicant commented that the “staff did not seem to care.”

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 336 Seven female applicants spoke of experiencing emotional abuse in their establishments.

### **Personal Emotional Abuse**

- 337 A number of applicants spoke of public humiliation and personal denigration. An applicant said that the children were described by staff as “a bunch of wee bastards.” Another, who regularly wet her bed, explained that the staff became fed up changing it and refused to change the sheets or give her clean underwear. She said she was washed in a cold bath

with disinfectant, was scrubbed until her skin was “red raw” and often ended up sleeping on the floor. One applicant spoke of the humiliation experienced when made to have a bath while staff, including male staff, observed. One applicant asked staff if it would be possible for her to have a new pair of trainers. In front of everyone, staff told her she didn't have any when she came into the establishment and that she wouldn't be getting any whilst she was there.

### **Family Denigration and/or Links Discouraged**

- 338 Emotional abuse related to their families was mentioned by a number of female applicants. This included family denigration, family being forbidden or discouraged to visit, and family or sibling links being discouraged or forbidden. One applicant explained that her mother was said, by staff, to be “only looking for food” when she came to visit, but when her mother said she wouldn't come back, the staff blamed the applicant. Another applicant's mother was said to have been discouraged from visiting because of the negative comments made by the staff.
- 339 Applicants said that not seeing their families or being separated from siblings was used as a threat. One applicant said she never got to see one of her siblings and another saw her siblings only once. Another explained that two of her siblings had been brought from foster care to be with her but that she was threatened by staff that they would be taken away if she didn't behave herself. An applicant was only rarely permitted to see a sibling despite her being a resident in the same establishment.

### **Exposure to Fearful Situations**

- 340 This aspect of emotional abuse was highlighted by some applicants; one said: “All you could hear was kids screaming all the time” and went on to explain that whilst in the establishment she was not protected from her brother who was very violent and as a consequence often had to be restrained.
- 341 An applicant had asked to be taken into care and to be with her brothers and sisters in a particular establishment. However, she was taken aback by the strict regime and her first experience of restraint. She was subsequently separated from her siblings when they were sent to different homes and she was placed into foster care.

### **Deprivation of Affection**

- 342 Being shown no affection was also commented on by applicants. One applicant described her establishment as:

“A building with no feeling, a cold unfriendly and unhappy place. We were not cared for, not looked after, we were hungry, cold and sore. There was no care or kindness shown; all you could hear was kids screaming all the time.”

Staff apparently denigrated one applicant and referred to her as an “odd girl” because she didn’t smoke and had kept her religious faith. Another explained that when her social worker visited she often cried, but that the social worker’s response was not to ask what was wrong but to just tell her she should be stronger.

- 343 One applicant explained that she was often placed in isolation and that a particular staff member would bully other residents and play them off against each other. This member of staff also reportedly told lies in saying that the applicant had phoned his home and “talked dirty” to him, something she strongly denied.

### **Neglect:**

#### **Lack of Supervision**

- 344 Two female applicants spoke of a lack of supervision in their establishments in the state sector. One explained that in her establishment at night there appeared to be no night staff available or willing to stop a male resident attempting to molest them whilst they slept. Another described how the manager was often intoxicated whilst in charge of the children.

#### **Aspects of Care**

- 345 Poor hygiene, inadequate bedding, food and heating were also mentioned in relation to neglect. An applicant explained that she regularly wet her bed and that staff would refuse to change the sheets, which resulted in her having to sleep on the floor and wear unclean, wet underwear. When she eventually got a bath it would be in cold water with disinfectant. It was also disclosed that if they refused the food they were given they went without. Another applicant said that neglect resulted in the children being cold, hungry and sore.



## Males: Juvenile Justice Provision

346 Thirty-three male applicants made thirty-nine reports of alleged abuse in six different establishments. There were 25 complaints of physical abuse, twenty complaints of emotional abuse, twenty complaints of sexual abuse and eight complaints of neglect. The combinations of types of alleged abuse are set out in the following paragraph.

Abuse types	Males	Establishments
Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect	2	2
Physical, emotional and neglect	1	1
Physical, emotional and sexual	6	3
Physical, sexual and neglect	-	-
Physical and neglect	1	1
Physical and emotional	6	5
Physical and sexual	3	2
Emotional and Sexual	1	1
Emotional, neglect and sexual	1	1
Emotional and neglect	1	1
Emotional	2	2
Sexual	7	4
Physical	6	3
Neglect	2	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>39 reports</b>	<b>6 different establishments</b>

**Note:** One establishment was the focus of fourteen complaints. Two establishments were the focus of eight complaints each.

### Physical Abuse:

#### Inappropriate physical behaviour resulting in physical harm

347 Inappropriate physical behaviour by staff resulting in physical harm to residents featured frequently in the recollections of the applicants who had placements in juvenile justice establishments. Some of the physical abuse reported was said to have involved the use of a range of objects and implements, for example, leather straps, canes, sticks and bunches of keys were mentioned by several applicants. The most common form

of physical abuse referred to by applicants included punching, kicking and slapping.

- 348 An applicant who had run away with two residents from an establishment told the Forum that eventually he had returned with the other boys at 3.00am. It was very cold, yet the boys were stripped and whipped by two members of the staff. One applicant described being regularly bullied, verbally abused (called a ‘half breed’ as he was from a mixed marriage) and regularly hit, including with a stick, by a member of staff. One day he retaliated and hit this member of staff on the side of his head with a stick. The supervisor in charge investigated the matter and pointed out to the member of staff that he had been “torturing the chap from day one” so he would report the matter and give details of all aspects of the incident to the officer in charge.
- 349 Being struck with wet towels and being locked in at 8.00pm, with no visits by staff members until the following morning, was mentioned by one applicant. He referred to a violent culture in the establishment, and described an initiation regime operated by other prisoners, in which they would make the newcomers “run the gauntlet” at night time, hitting them with wet towels with knots tied in them and also getting them up from bed and putting them in a blanket and throwing them up until they hit the ceiling.
- 350 Another applicant complained about being restrained by a member of staff who pushed his arms up his back causing excruciating pain and of being beaten with a gym slipper, which really stung. He also alleged that members of staff would come on duty intoxicated and beat the boys around the head with a telephone book. He recalled that a night watchman, of whom the boys were making fun, used a rubber torch to beat them around the room.
- 351 Examples of physical assaults including punching were spoken of by 25 applicants. One applicant alleged that another staff member called in the head of the unit within the establishment (who lived nearby), to deal with him in relation to a behavioural matter. The head of unit “laid into him” with fists, boots, and gripping actions and also pulled his hair. He said this happened repeatedly and that sometimes he curled up and took it, but sometimes he retaliated.
- 352 An applicant said that he was subject, as he alleges were other boys, to a regime of being slapped by staff and in one instance being assaulted

by a PE instructor. This regime of ongoing, often severe, physical abuse affected him deeply; as he put it “the slaps were too much for young lads.” The PE instructor beat him up when he was caught smoking and kicked him in the mouth, leaving his lip bleeding.

353 One applicant described his establishment as being like a concentration camp with a very strict regime where you were “tortured” for infringing any of the rules regarding behaviour in the cell, for example, sitting on the bed during the day or leaving marks on cleaned surfaces. Assaults included slaps, punches to the head and body, being kicked and being hit in the face with a bucket. Most assaults were by staff using their hands. He told the Forum that when approached by a member of staff:

“you had to immediately stand up and give your prison number, name, Sir, twelve calendar months; if you were too slow you would be assaulted.”

354 Another applicant spoke of constant daily beatings, being bruised frequently and described a very punitive coercive regime with no merit in it; he said that hearing and seeing other young people beaten was for him even worse than his own mistreatment. He appears to have been put into solitary confinement with a bed and Bible but it was unclear how long he was kept there. On another occasion he described being held down, stripped, beaten and kicked in the stomach by a female member of staff.

355 As part of the initiation process described by one applicant, a member of staff who was known by a nickname would say “I’m animal (name), don’t fuck with me” and he proceeded to punch the boys in the head. Following this, he left the boys alone. It was common to have the other boys beat new entrants and see other boys being abused. He was also made to play a game without rules called “murder ball” in which the boys would punch and beat one another. He felt it was like a blood sport for the prison officers to watch.

356 Boys were expected to keep their cells spotless. An applicant explained that as he was locked up for so many hours per day, his cell remained spotless. One member of staff inspected the cell thoroughly but another member of staff accompanying him lifted the plastic chair and placed his finger inside the tubular legs and found a speck of dust. He punched him in the face and called him a “dirty bastard.” The member of staff who accompanied this man looked embarrassed and returned later to give the applicant a half ounce of tobacco. On another occasion, the nurse gave

him green liquid to drink which he thought to be a sedative. He was then taken by six members of staff to another part of the prison and beaten badly: his skin was gouged, he had marks everywhere and his teeth went through his lip.

- 357 An applicant told the Forum that after a disagreement with another resident, he was asked by staff to go to a room. He refused and when he was held by his arms he struggled; another member of staff was called who then punched him very hard in the small of his back (he said that it felt like being hit with a baseball bat), knocked him to the floor and knelt on him.
- 358 It was reported that a member of staff in another establishment punched an applicant in the stomach when he tried to tell him about the sexual and physical abuse he was experiencing. Some applicants spoke of forms of solitary confinement. For example, an applicant said that on at least one occasion he was locked in his dormitory. Another applicant described a cell block with three cells and a yard where boys could be kept for lengthy periods.
- 359 A punishment for running away was described by an applicant who talked of being made to have a cold shower and being beaten with a blackthorn stick by the watchman. He said that he was made to stand in cold showers and also in wet clothing as a punishment for absconding. Another applicant described a similar punishment of being put outside in the cold or given cold showers if the residents misbehaved.

### **Bullying**

- 360 Some applicants described occasions where they had been bullied or beaten by other residents and one of them explained that sometimes staff would get other residents to beat him.
- “Staff treated you like dirt; if they didn’t hit you they would get other men or boys to do it.”
- Some applicants said that in their establishments this type of behaviour was permitted as part of the system.
- 361 A regular occurrence described by one applicant was for the residents, the applicant included, to be put into a makeshift boxing ring with other boys and made to fight for one minute. He described this as very frightening.

- 362 One applicant, who referred to some of the members of staff being very violent, was also very keen to say that some other members of staff were kind.

### **Sexual Abuse**

- 363 Twenty male applicants disclosed incidents of sexual abuse, ranging from indecent assaults to anal rape, whilst resident in juvenile justice establishments.

### **Indecent Assaults including Inappropriate Fondling**

- 364 Indecent assaults including inappropriate fondling were mentioned by several applicants. One applicant explained that a member of staff came into his room and put comics on his bed and then proceeded to put his hand under the comics and “touch him up” whilst making rasping noises and saying “you’re a good boy” before leaving the room. As a result of this, the applicant explained that he used to put his wardrobe up against the door to prevent the member of staff coming in. On one occasion all the boys in his dormitory were told to put on their dressing gowns and come downstairs to watch TV; the member of staff tried to entice him out of the room but he resisted. Another applicant said that members of staff touched him on his “privates” each time he showered.
- 365 An applicant explained that a number of boys were resident in single bedrooms off a long corridor. He said that a member of staff would wake him in the morning by shaking him with his hand on his body whilst he was lying in bed. The member of staff would touch him in the area of his genitals, starting on top of the bed clothes but then progressing to moving his hand under the bedclothes and touching his penis. Several different members of staff would wake him in this way and started visiting him in the night when they would masturbate him and make him masturbate them. This, he disclosed, progressed to anal rape.
- 366 An applicant who was in bed in the dormitory, was approached by the night watchman who touched him inappropriately. Another applicant said that he had to take washing once a week to the laundry. In the laundry a member of staff would put his hands around him and he said that he could feel that he had an erection. The member of staff would also put him over the machines in the laundry and simulate sex.
- 367 On his reception into one establishment, an applicant said that he was instructed by two members of staff to strip and shower. He was very

frightened and referred to himself as being small in stature and terrified of these two members of staff. He went on to explain that he was then touched inappropriately and sexually abused by one of the members of staff.

368 Some applicants described being made to masturbate members of staff. On occasions this was accompanied by veiled threats, for example, a member of staff told one applicant that although he had been sentenced to spend between one to three years in the establishment “we could make this three or six months” which he understood to mean that if he cooperated with the sexual abuse, then leniency would be shown. This particular applicant felt unable to go into detail but did say that speaking to the Forum was the first time he had felt able to talk of the sexual abuse he had experienced. He said this included being sexually abused by a number of staff, including one occasion when he was brought to a store room and the abuse began with rubbing and progressed to his being made to masturbate the member of staff.

369 Another applicant described being asleep in the dormitory and being wakened around 2.00am by someone (who he subsequently discovered was another resident) lying under his sheets giving him oral sex. When the applicant realised what was happening, he ran into toilets where he came across a member of staff who asked him why he was there. Instead of helping him, the member of staff pushed up against him, fondling him. He was shocked, and could not believe what had happened so he got up early and reported it to a senior member of staff who told him:

“Don’t be awkward – if you make false allegations then things will get bad for you.”

### **Coercive Peer Abuse**

370 Coercive peer abuse was mentioned by an applicant who talked of being moved from a single room to an eight person dormitory, which he was told by another resident was referred to as “the cock suckers dormitory.” Whilst in this dormitory, he explained that an older resident who was a bully would make another boy go and “suck the cock” of anyone he nominated. The second night he was in the dormitory he was nominated so he threw a table through the window and ran away.

### **Anal Rape**

371 Some applicants disclosed incidents of anal rape. One of these explained that when he arrived at the establishment from a police station,

accompanied by members of staff, he was taken in by the side door of a particular section, separated from his co-detainee and taken into a bungalow next door. Once inside, he said that he was held down by two members of staff and raped by a third.

- 372 One applicant said that he was groomed by a member of staff who had told him that he was not wanted by his mother or father. He said that he felt very vulnerable when he entered the establishment but responded positively to the new environment. The member of staff was kind to him initially but started to groom him and proceeded to touch him inappropriately and moved on from that to anal rape.

### **Other Forms of Sexual Abuse**

- 373 Other forms of sexual abuse were also mentioned by applicants. One explained that none of the boys would use the showers as the members of staff would watch them in the shower. He used the shower on his first day as no one had told him about this but when they did, he no longer used them. Another spoke of members of staff masturbating in front of the boys.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 374 Twenty applicants spoke of a number of forms of emotional abuse that they considered undermined their self esteem and emotional wellbeing.

### **Personal Emotional Abuse**

- 375 The following are some examples of the abuse applicants alleged.
- One applicant said that he remembered being humiliated when his father came to visit him. Unlike all the other boys who wore their normal clothes, he was made to wear his pyjamas. He asked why this was the case and was told by a staff member “Because you have to earn it” (ie the privilege of wearing ordinary clothes).
  - Another applicant spoke of an occasion when he was stripped and made to stand naked in the staff common room for two hours – this was apparently intended to stop him running away. He didn’t believe there was any sexual element to this punishment but explained that other staff members were present during this period. He described his overall treatment as “being treated like dirt.”
  - One applicant felt humiliated on one occasion when in the dining area with a large number of boys present, he was told by a member of staff that he was “going to be a borstal failure.”

- An applicant commented that it was the norm to be referred to as “scum” and as “a borstal failure.” Another said that he was repeatedly told by a certain member of staff that his mother put him into that particular establishment and she didn’t want him. He was told by staff from his admission up to discharge that “You have no mother or father - we are your mother and father - you are number xxx”. He felt dehumanised by this behaviour.

- 376 Some applicants believed that there was a sectarian bias in the emotional abuse they experienced. One applicant described feeling intimidated by staff and older boys as he was a Catholic in an establishment staffed by members of another denomination. Another recalled being called sectarian names such as “Fenian bastard” by staff members – for example, when one of the boys cheered after it was reported that a bomb had killed a number of soldiers. Yet another applicant disclosed that he had been told that he was worthless and would spend his life in prison. This was accompanied by constant sectarian taunts from the staff members.
- 377 One applicant, whose brother had been a member of the INLA and had been shot dead, had ‘INLA’ tattooed on his fingers in memory of his brother. He explained that he didn’t fully appreciate the full significance of it or the ideology behind it because of his age. He felt that the staff picked on him and singled him out because of this and many of them would make comments in relation to or linked with the tattoo. For example, a member of staff said he would like to cut his fingers off.
- 378 Another applicant spoke of a sexual basis to the emotional abuse, explaining that a member of staff would often make derogatory remarks to him such as “I would like to make you up like a lady boy; you’re eye candy.” This he considered was very degrading, but he felt powerless to know how to manage the constant innuendoes and sexual references made about him in the presence of others.

### **Deprivation of Affection**

- 379 Being shown no affection whilst a resident in an establishment was referred to by some applicants. For example, one considered that he had been placed by the state in an environment that left him exposed to violence, bullying, recruitment into paramilitarism and general criminality. He referred to the establishment being “a war zone” in which he had to become hyper vigilant to survive. Another simply expressed the view that no warmth was shown or encouragement given to him by the staff in the establishment.



### **Exposure to Fearful Situations**

- 380 Several applicants said that they had been exposed to fearful situations. As noted earlier, some said that the staff would “pitch” the residents against one another and would condone bullying. They referred to the staff actually encouraging the bullying. Another described a regime that included verbal and physical abuse which left him fearful and deeply unhappy. Fear of being abused and unable to tell anyone what was taking place was a common concern.
- 381 An applicant described his fellow prisoners being taken out of their hut and taken to an ‘H’ Block. He said he witnessed others being beaten and heard them being brought out of their cells, screaming and pleading with the members of staff to stop. He saw another prisoner being dragged out of a cell by his feet and being beaten on the soles of his feet with a baton. The applicant had initially been placed in a cell with two political prisoners and felt very threatened as they were openly talking about bombings and shootings. He was seventeen years of age and this was his first time in a penal establishment.
- 382 Death threats were apparently common, according to one applicant. Another described living in abject fear of violence from members of staff, referring to the “emotional terror and living every day in absolute fear”. He was told by a member of staff prior to a visit when he had a black eye that, if he mentioned anything about what happened on the wing, he would be denied visits.

### **Bullying**

- 383 Another applicant highlighted a culture of bullying by other residents and a fear that he would be raped. He said the threat of anal rape was always present. One applicant said that although the establishment “was not a bad place” he was bullied a lot by older residents, both in the pool and in the showers. One response was to run away, which he did frequently, sometimes just across the fields, sometimes to his home and sometimes to the bonfire near his home.

### **Letters being Censored**

- 384 An applicant spoke of letters being censored “like being in prison” and of being threatened with being sent to other establishments if he did not do as he was told. He also talked of witnessing other boys getting punched “hundreds or thousands of times” but was terrified and too frightened to report any of the abuse.

### **Removal of Personal Belongings**

- 385 The removal of personal belongings was mentioned by an applicant who stated that his personal belongings, including his much valued stereo (bought as a present for his thirteenth birthday by his mother), were taken by staff.

### **Other Examples of Emotional Abuse**

- 386 An applicant described being sent to the sick room as he had hurt his back, but as a result had no contact with anyone for long periods of time. He felt that he was in solitary confinement with no contact, no books to read other than a Bible and nothing else to do.
- 387 Another considered his placement in the establishment as “a wakeup call, a terrible place”. He said that he became very depressed and the establishment was run like an army barracks. He apparently became as white as a ghost, with black rings around his eyes and would not talk to others. He concluded by saying that “the screws took out their frustrations on us.”

### **Neglect**

- 388 Eight applicants complained of neglect, focusing mainly on education. They alleged that their education was neglected, their learning potential ignored and their need to develop basic skills unmet.

### **Education**

- 389 One applicant felt that his education was inadequate and referred to being unable to read and write when he left the establishment. Another applicant pointed out that he was sent to the establishment because of his record of absconding from school but that, ironically, in the establishment he did not attend school. Similarly, one applicant who had been sent to an establishment for truanting pointed out that the establishment did not encourage residents to attend classes.
- 390 Another applicant felt that there was no proper education, no mental stimulation for the residents in the establishment and that the teachers were uninterested in his educational development. An applicant commented that:
- “we received a very, very, very poor education – it was like going back to primary school – I really feel my education suffered by going to (this establishment) where the emphasis was on woodwork, metal work and gardening – not on GCSEs.”

- 391 One applicant said that the teachers didn't want to teach him and that he was allowed to play 'Chucky Egg', a computer game, all day. He said there was no teaching and no learning. He also alleged that older boys gave him 'magic mushrooms' and he would be sitting in class "totally spaced out". No one ever seemed to notice and no one asked him what was wrong with him. He said he had "no art, no metalwork, no history, and no geography."

### **Inadequate Medical Attention**

- 392 Inadequate medical attention was highlighted by one applicant who had attempted to commit suicide on numerous occasions, including eating parts of a smoke detector and drinking bleach. He said that he did not receive appropriate medical treatment at the time. Another applicant explained that he had hurt his back and the pain was so intense that he was unable to stand with both feet on the ground during parade. He said that he was not given pain relief despite being in a great deal of discomfort.
- 393 One applicant described an incident when boys playing a ball game in the yard broke a window above where he was standing. The shattered glass fell on top of him and badly cut the back of his head and upper neck. He was taken to hospital where he received stitches for the injuries but still has a large scar as a result. He was told by staff that he could not make a claim because the incident happened in a designated ball-playing area. He believes that responses to accidents and injuries were lax and the attitude of staff was unsympathetic. He said that on one occasion he put his hand through a window and cut himself badly, but believes the incident was not dealt with appropriately.

### **Lack of Supervision**

- 394 The lack of supervision in some of the establishments was also commented on by applicants. One applicant referred to being bullied and felt there was no appropriate supervision to prevent this happening. Another explained that the country and town boys were separated and he received threats from the Belfast boys that he was going to be beaten up at night. He said that he always felt frightened; staff took no account of this and he felt unable to report the matter as he feared that he would lose his special privileges.

### Aftercare

- 395 One applicant who served thirteen months of a one to three year sentence said he received no preparation for life and work in the community and was simply told one day that he “was going.”

### Females: Juvenile Justice Provision

- 396 Thirteen female applicants who had been in three different juvenile justice establishments made fourteen reports of alleged abuse. There were eleven complaints of physical abuse, nine complaints of emotional abuse, seven complaints of sexual abuse and six complaints of neglect.
- 397 The combinations of types of abuse they alleged are set out in the following table.

Abuse types	Females	Establishments
Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect	2	2
Physical, emotional and neglect	3	3
Physical, emotional and sexual	2	1
Physical, sexual and neglect	-	-
Physical and neglect	-	-
Physical and emotional	1	1
Physical and sexual	2	1
Emotional and sexual	-	-
Emotional, neglect and sexual	-	-
Emotional and neglect	-	-
Emotional	1	1
Sexual	1	1
Physical	1	1
Neglect	1	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 reports</b>	<b>3 different establishments</b>

**Note:** One establishment was the focus of eight complaints. Two other establishments were the focus of three complaints each.

### Physical Abuse

- 398 Physical assaults involved punching, hitting, kicking, having hair pulled, being spat on and assaulted with objects such as a bunch of keys. Some applicants said they were physically restrained in ways they considered abusive.
- 399 An applicant described a physical assault that she endured after running away from her establishment and being found glue sniffing. She said that when she was brought back to the establishment and taken to the office with two other female residents, a male member of staff grabbed her as she tried to escape through the window and pinned her against the wall, knocking her unconscious, and she came round with blood coming from her head. She was taken to hospital for treatment. The senior member of staff present was described as being furious because she had tried to escape yet again.
- 400 Another applicant said she saw the priest who was conducting Mass one day slap one of the girls across the face because she came up to the altar wearing lipstick. Another applicant explained that a member of staff would put on white gloves and inspect their rooms for dust. If there was any dust on the white glove, she would thump and beat the girls and wreck the room.
- 401 One applicant told the Forum about a member of staff in her establishment. She was a big woman who was verbally and physically abusive, pushing, slapping, dragging, flinging people about and beating them. She said that she still has nightmares about this woman.
- 402 Being placed in some form of solitary confinement was mentioned by a number of applicants. One of these was being sent to the Day Room which was a room with “nothing in it other than a potty” – there were no other sanitary provisions. She felt that this was a punishment that was used regardless of what she had actually done and commented that “I must have spent one and a half years in that Day Room.”
- 403 One applicant talked of being restrained, as were other residents, by members of staff who held them face down on the floor and also held them by their arms and legs when they were moving them from one room to another. She said “they had no consideration for the residents’ modesty”; she explained that often she wore jogging bottoms which would come down when she was being restrained. Sometimes she would be placed in a particular room for periods of up to 72 hours on her own. In

addition, she also mentioned being kicked and spat upon by members of staff. Other applicants said that they were regularly placed in the “lock-up unit” for between 24 and 48 hours, often for running away.

- 404 One applicant stated that she was regularly bullied by other residents and that staff laughed at her if she reported it. Another explained how other girls would sit on her bed and urinate on it in order to get her into trouble. In the bathroom they would squeeze toothpaste on her head. Staff responded to this by telling her she had to learn to stand up for herself.

### **Sexual abuse**

- 405 The incidence of sexual abuse disclosed by the female applicants within the juvenile justice category was similar to that of their male counterparts. Seven applicants recalled sexual abuse.

### **Grooming**

- 406 One applicant explained that soon after her admission to the establishment she was “set aside” by a male member of staff: “He paid me more attention.” She trusted him and told him about the abuse she had experienced at home, including sexual abuse. He hugged her when she cried and always came to her aid when she asked for him. As he was a senior member of staff she said that he had a great deal of power. This grooming behaviour escalated, progressing from kissing her to full sexual intercourse on a regular basis, from the age of sixteen through to eighteen and beyond, including after she had left the establishment.
- 407 Other applicants spoke of grooming behaviour leading to indecent assaults. For example, one male member of staff apparently used every opportunity to grope the residents, including putting his hands under their tops and down their tracksuit bottoms. He would send them birthday cards and give them little treats even though the applicant stated he must have been aware that they did not like being touched.

### **Indecent Assaults including Inappropriate Fondling**

- 408 An applicant said that staff would wait outside the bathroom but look in through the glass panel above the door. She said one member of staff would pretend to tickle her but would be groping her and fondling her breasts. She said “it was horrible – there was no one to protect you.”
- 409 One applicant, after being locked in her dormitory at night, would be allowed out by a male member of staff so that she could smoke a cigarette. She

said that “he was always trying to touch me up.” When she complained to him he said:

“a silly wee girl like you and a trouble maker, who is going to believe you?”

### **Other Inappropriate Sexual Behaviour**

- 410 Another form of inappropriate sexual behaviour was alleged by an applicant who described circumstances in which she was examined by the woman in charge of the establishment and was required to take her pants down; a man, whose role to her was unknown, was present throughout. She also spoke about a situation in which she needed sanitary pads and the woman in charge checked her pants, again in the presence of the man whose role was unknown to her.

### **Emotional Abuse**

- 411 The emotional abuse disclosed by nine female applicants in the juvenile justice category focused on the related areas of public humiliation, personal denigration, family denigration and the discouragement of sibling and family links. Being shown no affection and an inappropriate exposure to fearful situations were also commented on by some applicants.

### **Personal Emotional Abuse**

- 412 An applicant described a points reward system in her establishment. Each week in front of everyone else, each girl’s reasons for having points deducted was explained in detail; she said they found this humiliating. She also mentioned a “loud” female member of staff, whom she described as a bully, who was responsible for verbal and physical abuse and of whom everyone was terrified. The member of staff frequently made derogatory remarks to the girls; for example, she would refer to the applicant and three other girls from Derry/Londonderry as the “Derry Hogs”.
- 413 Another applicant was made to strip naked and stand in line with the other girls to shower. She felt humiliated and despite asking staff if she could get in the shower in underwear or be the last in, she was sneered at and told to strip.
- 414 An applicant mentioned that when restrained or being physically moved by staff, there was no regard for the modesty of the resident if the displacement of clothing revealed personal areas.

### **Personal Denigration**

- 415 Personal denigration was reported by a number of applicants. One asked for a bra like the other girls but the member of staff she had asked commented “you need a chest before you get a bra.” Another applicant was made to feel inferior by the constant taunting by older girls and staff as she was very small and because they referred to her as not having breasts. She said that this behaviour was never challenged by any member of staff. Another applicant was constantly told “you’re dirty, no one wants you, you’re bad,” and another was mocked for her slight build. One applicant was told her family didn’t want her.
- 416 An applicant stated that she was repeatedly placed in solitary confinement, where she was frightened, hungry and lonely. She was subjected to name-calling, family denigration, disbelief, and threatening behaviour from staff. She was bullied by other residents. She was blamed for others’ misbehaviour. As she saw it, she was made a scapegoat in the establishment, just as she had been at home and in school.
- 417 Another applicant explained how they were given an allocation of five cigarettes a day, but that staff used to “wind them up” until someone swore and the staff would then cut up their allocated cigarettes in front of them.

### **Sibling and Family Links Discouraged**

- 418 Applicants described how sibling and family links were discouraged or forbidden and, in one case, how even personal friendships within the establishment were discouraged.
- 419 An applicant and her identical twin sister who were in the same establishment were not allowed to visit each other and only saw each other at school, where they were in different groups. When her sister became ill from a self-harming incident and was in hospital in intensive care, the applicant was not informed, and was not allowed to visit her in hospital or see her on her return. The applicant considered that this was a most destructive act for her to contend with as they were so close. This situation was aggravated by the fact that she was not permitted to have appropriate contact with her parents when they visited, although her twin sister was allowed to meet them.
- 420 An applicant told the Forum that she and another girl in the same establishment, who had developed a close friendship, were forbidden by staff from seeing each other and her friend self-harmed by slashing her wrists with a razor blade in response to this ban.



### Deprivation of Affection

- 421 Being shown no affection was commented on by some applicants. They explained:

“There was no affection or emotional support; it was a very harsh regime, the staff had no time for you. If you got upset there was no one to speak to. They treated us like dogs; it was like being in prison – we were in care, not young offenders. Other kids bullied you, staff would ignore it and just laugh at you if you reported it; it was a horrible place with horrible people.”

“I was constantly being told that no one wanted me and that I was a bad girl – bad not mad.”

Exposure to fearful situations was also mentioned by applicants who said that the totality of the abuse culminated in a fearful environment.

### Neglect

- 422 Six of the female applicants who had been placed in juvenile justice establishments alleged neglect.

### Education

- 423 One applicant said that no education was offered to her and she had concluded that it was not even considered as an option for her to attend school. This applicant felt let down and blamed staff in the establishment and the social workers allocated to oversee her care. Education, as she experienced it, consisted of making baskets and she alleged that no formal arrangements for general education were made for the residents. One applicant when aged eleven was placed in a classroom with sixteen and seventeen-year-old girls, and felt terrified and unable to complete the school work. She felt unable to ask for help from the teachers even though most of the other residents were much more advanced in their work.
- 424 Another applicant commented that her education in the establishment was deficient despite the fact that she had been placed there for missing school. She said that “often we were just given a PlayStation.” One applicant complained about her schooling in an establishment saying:

“School? They didn’t educate you. I was taken from a grammar school to this. They did not teach you anything – no education; no exams.”

### **Bedding**

- 425 An applicant spoke of the sleeping arrangements in the establishment and the lack of adequate bedding. She said that she was in the reception unit for six months. She talked of being:

”locked in, having no space, there were lots of kids in a small room. Staff and other kids would bully you; if one of us messed about, all were punished. The staff were very harsh – they had no time for you – they would just push you away. I felt like a prisoner; there was little fresh air, I slept in a dormitory on an old blue gym mattress with a sheet on the floor.”

### **Inadequate or Inappropriate Diet**

- 426 Some applicants spoke of having an inadequate or inappropriate diet, sometimes with no food at all. One said that the food was terrible and undercooked; for example chicken with blood still in it, but that they were still forced to eat it. One applicant described being deeply upset by the harsh, inflexible regime and the lack of provision for her basic needs. She was vegetarian and yet in the establishment she was served meat and told there were no alternatives.
- 427 One applicant said that when she was in solitary confinement she was often overlooked at lunch time. She said that as she didn't like some of the regular food she was often hungry and that no-one monitored her weight, even though she was very lightly built. Another applicant, when thirteen-years-old, took an overdose of medication that resulted in her being hospitalised for a week. When she returned to the establishment she was immediately sent to a room and not given any food. She said that she was “not given one piece of bread in three days”.

### **Inadequate Medical Attention**

- 428 Inadequate medical care was commented on by an applicant who often self harmed by cutting herself, but when she did she was not taken to hospital but was just bandaged up. Poor hygiene was mentioned by one applicant who complained that she was not given sanitary pads when she needed them.

### **Inadequate Aftercare**

- 429 One applicant told the Forum that when she left the establishment she was transferred to a hostel, but found it a terrifying place with adults who were drug abusers and were involved in other anti-social behaviour. She

was so scared that she would stay in her room. She told the Forum that:

“there was no after care. I was given a cheap box of food and sent on my way. I didn’t know how to boil an egg; no one took an interest in your needs.”

## Reporting of Abuse: All Establishments

430 Of the 103 applicants within Period 3, 34 reported their abuse to someone on at least one occasion. Some had reported abuse on more than one occasion, to more than one person or whilst in more than one establishment. The following table shows the number of applicants who reported abuse, to whom they reported the abuse and if they were believed about the abuse.

Reporting of Abuse at the time and to whom							
Reported To	Total	Voluntary		State		Juvenile Justice	
		Believed		Believed		Believed	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Parent	7	2	1	2	1	1	-
Sibling	2	2	-	-	-	-	-
Social Worker	11	3	3	1	3	1	-
Officer in Charge	3	1	-	-	-	2	-
Care Staff	9	2	1	-	3	2	1
Ancillary Staff	1	1	-	-	-	-	-
Authority Figure	5	1	1	-	1	-	2
Other Adult	1	-	1	-	-	-	-
Other Resident	3	1	-	-	-	2	-
Other Child	1	-	-	1	-	-	-
Police	3	-	1	-	-	2	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>3</b>

In summary, in relation to the 46 occasions when they had reported abuse, applicants felt that they had been believed on 27 of those occasions and not believed on nineteen. Some comments from those applicants who considered that they had not been believed are set out by establishment type below.

### **Males and Females: Voluntary Establishments**

431 One applicant said:

“Despite having told my parents and the fact it was clear that I was distressed and didn’t want to return to (the establishment), having been home for the weekend, my parents apparently did not believe me.”

Another applicant explained that when she complained to the staff about her abuse, no action was taken and she was told “not to tell jokes”. An applicant, who told his probation officer that he and his brother were being abused, was told they “were both disgusting – how can you say that?” A female applicant said that no one ever believed anything she reported and as a result she trusts no one to this day. Another applicant disclosed the abuse to her mother but she did not want to know and could not accept that such a thing would happen in a church-run establishment. An older member of staff said to an applicant who had told her about his abuse: “We’ll get these beasts. God is powerful,” but she took no action. He believes she did not report the abuse because she was frightened she would lose her job.

### **State Establishments**

432 An applicant said that he had told both his key worker and social worker but neither of them believed him.

### **Juvenile Justice Establishments**

433 A male applicant reported the abuse to a senior member of staff and was told that it did not happen and that he had nightmares. However, when he insisted that it had, he was told:

“Don’t be awkward – if you make false allegations then things will get bad for you!”

434 Another applicant said his mother told him to “shut your mouth – you’ll get us into trouble.” Other applicants felt that they had been believed but that little action if any was taken by the people to whom they reported the abuse. One applicant who spoke to a member of staff felt that he had been believed but the response was “Sorry, I can’t help you.” An applicant who disclosed his abuse to his parents was told by them that if he went to the police he would be a “tout” (informer).

- 435 Some applicants said that it was not that their complaints were disbelieved but that the people they complained to did not want to know. A male applicant who had reported his abuse to staff said their response was just to laugh at him and not do anything about it. Another applicant who reported the abuse she had experienced was told she had to learn to stand up for herself.

## Chapter 6:

	<b>Para</b>
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## Chapter 6: Life After Care

### Applicants' Current Circumstances

- 1 During their meetings with the Forum, many applicants talked about their current circumstances including relationships, children, employment and health. Over half of the applicants had at one stage been married, although at the time they met the Forum some were widowed, divorced, separated and re-married. The applicants' experiences of marriage were mixed, with some marriages ending in a short time but with others enduring for many years. For example, one applicant had been married for 48 years and another for 58 years. One-hundred-and-sixty-nine of the 262 male applicants told the Forum they were or had been married and of that number 76 had been married for ten or more years. One-hundred-and-two of the 167 female applicants told the Forum that they were or had been married, and of that number 47 had been married for ten or more years.
- 2 Applicants who were still in long-term relationships, including marriage, often described their relationship as being strong, caring, stable or very supportive. For many of the applicants whose partners accompanied them to the meeting with the Forum, the support they spoke of was evident. A male applicant said that his wife had saved him and that he would have been dead if it had not been for her support. Likewise, a female applicant explained that she and her husband were about to celebrate their fiftieth anniversary. In the past she had "put him through hell but he is the reason I am still here". Some applicants described their partners during the meeting with the Forum using phrases such as "an amazing woman", "a fantastic person." Others said "my wife has been my strength," and "I married a good man."
- 3 Applicants with long marriages explained that it had not always been easy but that their strong relationships had helped them deal with the problems and, for some, having a family had a strong, positive effect in their lives. One applicant said that whilst his wife and he had a good marriage now, he had been violent in the past but they had worked through their difficulties.
- 4 Another applicant said that his marriage had survived a difficult initial period that resulted from the absence of loving, caring relationships when he was a child in care. He said that this, coupled with his deep-seated anger at his treatment as a child, made him severe in his attitude and behaviour

towards his own children. Some applicants who spoke of having a strong relationship now said they had experienced problems in the early years of their relationships. They referred to difficulties that included problems in expressing their feelings or relating to their partners, finding it hard to trust them, being over protective of their children and abusing alcohol.

5 It was noted that some applicants had only recently disclosed their childhood abuse to their partners and others still did not feel able to tell them. One applicant said that he was very happily married but that his wife did not know about the abuse he had experienced, commenting “How would telling her help?” Those who were widowed echoed many of the previous observations made by married applicants, for example, “The only thing that has been good in my life was getting married.” Applicants who had sustained long-term co-habiting relationships spoke in a similar way regarding supportive partners who provided stability in their lives.

6 Applicants in other forms of relationship appeared to have encountered similar problems, which they believed had contributed to their current relationship status.

These included:

- an inability to trust partners, feeling unable to trust anybody, difficulty in being close to people, and problems with intimacy: “personally I found it difficult to express my affection to others; I was unable to embrace my partner or tell her that I loved her.”
- a lack of confidence
- flashbacks to sexual abuse
- concern that he or she would not be able to love anyone because of abusive experiences as a child
- deciding not to have children because of the worry that they might also end up in care

7 Applicants also spoke of relationships affected by

- verbal abuse
- sexual abuse
- physical abuse/anger management problems
- controlling behaviours
- alcohol related problems



One applicant expressed his thoughts as to why his relationships had not worked out saying he felt that he and his siblings who had been in care had been institutionalised and, from his perspective, he saw “everyone else as an alien”, and felt so different from others.

- 8 Over 75 per cent of the applicants who provided information about their current circumstances told the Forum that they had children. For them, having children was a very positive part of their lives. Applicants spoke with evident pride regarding their children’s achievements in education, employment and family life. A number of applicants felt their childhood experiences resulted in them being over-protective of their children; others found it hard to show affection towards their children and had encountered problems in establishing stable relationships with them.
- 9 One applicant expressed regret that she had felt unable to love her son as much as she feels she should have. Another said that she wanted to be the best mother she could be and had tried too hard at times. A male applicant said that he had no yardstick as to what a father should do but had learned by observing his father-in-law; he added that his children and wife all tell him they think he is a good dad. An applicant who spoke of being over protective of his children said:

“I created a bubble for them. I wanted to do everything I could to shield them from possible harm. I realise that I went too far.”

Some applicants had chosen not to disclose information regarding their abuse in institutions to their children. Comments included:

“I have not really talked to them about abuse as I don’t want to burden them with it. I have told them I will sit down with them one day to tell them about it.”

“My children do not know about my abuse as I am frightened of hurting them.”

## Employment

- 10 Information about their current employment was provided by some applicants and is summarised in the table below.

Employment	Total	Male	Female
<b>Employed</b>	75	48	27
<b>Self employed</b>	25	21	4
<b>Retired</b>	98	59	39
<b>Volunteer</b>	9	2	7
<b>Working at home</b>	10	3	7
<b>Unemployed</b>	93	67	26
<b>Disability – unable to work</b>	49	29	20
<b>Unknown</b>	63	29	34

- 11 The many applicants who were employed (whether currently or previously) worked in a wide range of occupations including the following:

- Trades – building, construction, retail
- Emergency services – police, ambulance, fire brigade
- Security
- Armed services
- Managerial, civil service, secretarial
- Catering, including hotel trade
- Nursing, medical profession, hospital and care facilities staff
- Social work, probation, counselling

A large number of applicants had worked in the home rearing their children and some looked after their grandchildren. Some applicants said they had been unable to work because of a disability, either physical or psychological or both.

- 12 Many of those applicants who were currently unemployed had been employed at some stage but had been unable subsequently to obtain employment. Many of them had been in short-term employment but explained that they felt hampered by their lack of qualifications and by being ‘unskilled’. An applicant said “I have been unemployed for many years but I would love to get a job.” One applicant attributed his inability to hold down a job to his intolerance of anyone in authority telling him what to do. He attributed this problem to his abuse in an establishment.

- 13 Some applicants worked in voluntary positions, notably helping vulnerable people, for example in a food bank, drop-in centre, shelter and as foster-carers. Others worked at home caring for relatives with health problems or special needs and some looked after grandchildren. Caring for and helping others was significant in many applicants' priorities.

## Health

- 14 Many applicants mentioned matters relating to their mental health including psychiatric admissions, suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, self-harm, and dependence on prescribed medication. Many of the applicants considered these to be outcomes linked to the abuse they had experienced as children in residential establishments. They said that their childhood experiences continued to have a negative impact on their adult lives.
- 15 Some applicants did not disclose any information relating to their health but those who did spoke of experiencing depression and other mental health difficulties that sometimes required admission to a psychiatric hospital unit or supported and supervised care in the community. Some applicants related their feelings of suicidal ideation and attempts at suicide or self-harming to their childhood trauma.
- 16 In relation to contemplating suicide one applicant said:  
“I think about it – the place never goes away – it is my children who keep me here.”
- Another said “I didn't want to die, but I didn't know how to live”. Several applicants spoke of the pain they felt about friends who had been in institutions with them and who had committed suicide.
- 17 Many applicants also highlighted the incidence of substance abuse in their lives, including alcohol, drug and solvent abuse, both within their personal experience and also in the lives of others they knew as survivors of childhood abuse. Many spoke of the successful battles they had fought to overcome their reliance on alcohol and explained that they were now 'dry' with the help of organisations such as 'Alcoholics Anonymous' but also with the additional support of their partners and families.
- 18 Some applicants explained that they had benefitted from counselling, some for several years, whilst others said that they were not interested in counselling. Others found it of limited use to them personally and two applicants made the following comments:

“I didn’t really get anything from it – it doesn’t take it away but I have learnt to live with it.”

“I did not get anything out of it. How can you understand from the outside looking in?”

Many applicants said they were taking prescribed medication for depression or anxiety.

- 19 Some applicants, in the course of their meetings with the Forum, went into great detail regarding their health and brought with them medical reports to support their accounts of the effects of the abuse experienced in residential childcare establishments.

### Effects of Experiences in Care in Later Life

- 20 Applicants were asked to comment on what effect, if any, their experiences in care had had in later life. A number of them re-iterated the matters they had spoken of when talking about their health in adult life and many mentioned other negative outcomes. An analysis of what they told the Forum indicates that more than 40 different effects were mentioned in some way by at least one applicant.
- 21 Fifteen negative effects were reported by larger numbers of applicants than others and these are set out in the following table.

Stated effects of experiences in care	Total	Male	Female
<b>Counselling needed</b>	186	115	71
<b>Dependence on medication</b>	153	92	61
<b>Inability to trust others</b>	151	94	57
<b>Suicidal ideation</b>	138	89	49
<b>Experiences in care not easily forgotten</b>	135	91	44
<b>Substance abuse</b>	128	95	33
<b>Feeling anxious or fearful</b>	115	67	48
<b>Lacking self-worth</b>	114	60	54
<b>Suicide attempted/self-harming</b>	114	72	42
<b>Having feelings related to being a victim</b>	103	58	45
<b>Experiencing flashbacks</b>	98`	70	28

Stated effects of experiences in care	Total	Male	Female
<b>Feeling angry</b>	97	68	29
<b>Feeling different from peers</b>	81	45	36
<b>Feeling isolated</b>	78	53	25
<b>Becoming a loner</b>	75	49	26

- 22 Commonly applicants mentioned more than one negative effect as is indicated in the following table.

Number of negative effects reported per person						
	1	2	3	4	5	6+
<b>Male</b>	40	37	19	28	27	106
<b>Female</b>	15	29	24	22	11	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>158</b>

## Chapter 7:

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## Chapter 7: Applicants' Responses to the Acknowledgement Forum

### Participation in the Forum

- 1 Applicants were asked after their meetings with the Forum if they would accept a call from their WSOs about a week later. The purpose of the contacts was to ask how the applicants were feeling following their meetings and, where necessary, to encourage them again to get in touch with the dedicated support service or their own doctors, counsellors or other health personnel. Almost everyone agreed to this arrangement and WSOs succeeded in contacting the majority of applicants by phone. Where that was not possible they wrote to them.
- 2 Thirty-eight per cent of male applicants and 30 per cent of female applicants told the WSOs that they felt good or better than previously as a result of having met the Forum. They were comfortable with the process and the arrangements and were very appreciative of having had the opportunity to take part.
- 3 Twenty-three per cent of male applicants, and 37 per cent of female applicants, said that they found the experience of recounting their abuse to be difficult and painful, but they had no regrets about taking part in the Forum. "It had lifted a burden" was how one male applicant described the process, a sentiment repeated by many others. The applicants in this group expressed their appreciation for having had the opportunity to speak to a listening audience and for giving their voices an opportunity to be heard.
- 4 A small number of applicants, nine men (three per cent) and six women (four per cent), told their WSOs that participation in the Forum process had proved extremely difficult and had left them drained and feeling 'down'. Most of these applicants, by their own description, were people who felt insecure much of the time and led lonely or even solitary lives; a number of them had mental health needs. Even in the context of these outcomes, they said they had needed to take part in the Forum process.
- 5 Thirty-four per cent of male applicants and 30 cent of female applicants made no direct comment on their experience of the Forum, but generally they reflected satisfaction with the process.

- 6 A small number of applicants, seventeen (seven per cent) of the males and eleven (seven per cent) of the females, did not respond to the WSOs' attempts to contact them by phone or letter and so no information is available about their responses to the Forum process.
- 7 The following comments, noted by the WSOs, are a representative sample of what applicants said about participating in the Forum:
- “She was glad she had taken part as it didn't take as much out of her as she thought.”
- “He felt all went well, like a weight had been lifted off his shoulders.”
- “She had mixed feelings after meeting the Forum - it brought back lots more memories.”
- “He was very glad that he had spoken to the Forum and felt they were very nice and understood him well.”
- “He found the whole process worthwhile and was very grateful to the inquiry for coming over to Australia.”
- “It was good to have spoken to the Forum and to have them listen to him. He said it was a little bit of closure for him.”
- “She is feeling a great sense of relief and that it all went a lot better than she had expected.”
- “He wanted to say that he had felt very much at ease from the moment he arrived in Belfast and he had been treated really well before, during and after his meeting. He wanted to thank the Forum for that.”
- “She had gone to pieces after she had left the meeting with the Forum but had found the experience less stressful than she had anticipated. She felt no pressure and was able to talk at her own pace.”
- “Meeting with the Forum was the best thing she has ever done – she said she has now left all her baggage with the Forum members - who she described as very warm and very professional people. At no time did she feel people were just doing their job, she felt everyone really cared.”
- “The Acknowledgement Forum paved the way forward for survivors to tell their stories; this was a vital and necessary component.”



- 8 Other feedback reported by the WSOs included the examples below.
- An applicant asked the WSO to pass on his heartfelt thanks to the Forum members for their sensitivity and for really listening to him. He said this would go a long way towards his healing.
  - An applicant told the WSO that on the bus after meeting the Forum he was really happy. Since then he has just been on his own and the past couple of days he can't stop thinking about it. He said it takes over and he just sits and thinks about it for hours at a time. Even so, he is really happy he met with the Forum.
  - An applicant said that she was doing well, and speaking to the Forum members was a massive relief and release. She has been a little upset and had some sleepless nights since, but she was coping well as it was her first time telling anyone. She felt that while she was a victim, she was more a survivor.
  - Another applicant told the WSO that it was such a relief to have spoken to the Forum and she felt that a huge weight has now been lifted. She thanked everyone very much for making it so easy.

## Conclusion

- 9 Many applicants, at the end of their meetings with the Forum, expressed satisfaction with the process and procedures of the Forum. Some of their recorded comments were as follows:

“This is the first time I've spoken about this to anyone.”

“You are the first people who have ever heard my whole story.”

“This is the first time I've actually been listened to.”

“I never thought I would be able to go through with this.”

“I have more I need to say, but not yet.”

“I'm glad I came.”

“Thank you for letting me come. How did I do?”

