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HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE INQUIRY
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being heard before:

SIR ANTHONY HART (Chairman)

MR DAVID LANE

MS GERALDINE DOHERTY

held at

Banbridge Court House

Banbridge

on Thursday, 11th February 2016

commencing at 10.00 am

(Day 186)

MS CHRISTINE SMITH, QC and MR JOSEPH AIKEN appeared as
Counsel to the Inquiry.

1 Thursday, 11th February 2016

2 (10.00 am)

3 (Proceedings delayed)

4 (10.45 am)

5 WITNESS SR235 (called)

6 CHAIRMAN: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Can I, as
7 always, remind everyone if you have a mobile phone,
8 please ensure it is turned off or placed on
9 "Silent"/"Vibrate", and also that no photography is
10 permitted either here in the Inquiry chamber or anywhere
11 on the premises.

12 Yes, Ms Smith?

13 MS SMITH: Good morning, Chairman, Panel Members, ladies and
14 gentlemen. Our first witness today is SR235. She is
15 "SR235". Sister wishes to take a religious oath and she
16 also wishes to maintain her anonymity, Chairman.

17 WITNESS SR235 (sworn)

18 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Sister. Please sit down.

19 Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

20 MS SMITH: Now, Sister, you have given a total of six
21 statements to the Inquiry. I am just going to tell the
22 Panel Members where they are and what they are about.

23 The first was on 31st December 19... -- sorry --
24 2015. That's at SJM210 to 270. That was a response
25 statement to one of our people who came to speak to the

1 Inquiry about their time in Middletown.

2 There were two statements given on 22nd January
3 19... -- 2016, SJM924 to 988 and SJM22001 to 22201.

4 Another statement of 2nd February 2016, which is at
5 SJM22920 to 22995.

6 Then a statement of 5th February '16 at 22920 to
7 22995.

8 Again all five of those were in response to
9 statements that the Inquiry had given you and you were
10 replying on behalf of the congregation.

11 Then there's a sixth statement of 5th February 2016,
12 which is at SJM29131 to 29256, which was in response to
13 papers that we specifically served on you about things
14 that were said about you. Is that correct?

15 A. That's correct.

16 Q. Sister, I am not going to go through, as you know, any
17 of those statements in any detail, but I just wanted to
18 reassure you that the Panel Members have seen all of
19 them and the exhibits that were attached to them --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- in respect of the individuals who you speak about in
22 those statements.

23 A. Thank you.

24 Q. Now from those statements, Sister, I have ascertained
25 that you were in St. Joseph's between and ,

1 first of all.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. You were then again there in to .

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. You went for a third time between and and

6 finally you were there from to .

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Is that right?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. I know, Sister, that you were here when I was opening
11 this module of the Inquiry, when I said something about
12 the history of the congregation --

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. -- and about St. Joseph's. You confirmed to me that
15 what I had said was essentially accurate.

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. I also asked you about the ethos of St. Joseph's that
18 was set out in the policy document.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. As I understood what you said to me earlier, that was
21 a document that was -- it was formally put together in
22 later years, but the ethos was something under which the
23 congregation had always operated, St. Joseph's.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. Is that right?

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Now, Sister, you yourself qualified as a teacher, not as
3 a social worker. Isn't that so?

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. From speaking to yourself and to SR234, who will speak
6 to the Inquiry shortly, it would appear that there were
7 more teachers than social workers engaged in the care of
8 the children in St. Joseph's from the congregation side.
9 Would that be right?

10 A. Yes, yes. SR240 would have had a social work
11 qualification.

12 Q. And, as I understand it, there were courses that the
13 Sisters went on --

14 A. Yes.

15 Q. -- and received training --

16 A. Yes.

17 Q. -- in aspects of care, if I can put it like that.

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. You had different duties obviously over the time frame
20 that you worked there, and I think you said at SJM210 --
21 and I don't know that we need to call these up, but just
22 to say where it is -- that when you first went in the
23 late 1950s, you taught sewing to a group of older girls.

24 A. That's correct.

25 Q. You were explaining to me that they came to the workroom

1 after school. There was essentially a project that you
2 engaged in --

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. -- with them --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- from about September until Christmas --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- where material was provided and a pattern book
9 provided and they chose what they wanted to make and
10 made their own outfits. Is that right?

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. You thought that the girls were very interested in that.

13 A. Yes. They were very pleased to be able to choose
14 the colour, material and design that they wished to make
15 for themselves.

16 Q. And it was a creative experience for them.

17 A. Very much so.

18 Q. Later you came back in and by -- I am going to come
19 back to talk about the '50s in a while, but in you
20 came back and you worked, first of all, in House 2.

21 A. That's correct.

22 Q. You then worked between House 2 and House 4, wherever
23 you were needed.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. And ultimately you were a member of the senior team --

1 A. That's correct.

2 Q. -- in the institution. When we were discussing earlier,
3 I was saying there were major changes took place between
4 the 1950s and the 1980s.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. The dormitories had gone. The house units had been set
7 up, and you also describe in your statement that there
8 was a change from using lay staff and volunteers to
9 qualified people.

10 A. That's correct.

11 Q. That was something that evolved over time --

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. -- when you were there. You made the point that people,
14 although they weren't necessarily qualified when they
15 started, gained qualifications and went on training
16 courses.

17 A. That's correct.

18 Q. I was asking you what happened when staff were released
19 to go on training courses? Who covered?

20 A. Yes. There would have been new staff recruited that
21 would take up appointments as younger members of staff
22 teams, house teams.

23 Q. You yourself --

24 A. I would have been one of them in .

25 Q. You came in to help cover for someone who had gone to

1 receive training.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. I'm going to ask you a little bit about some of general
4 duties then that you had working in the houses. You
5 were explaining to me that for the first nine or ten
6 months you were assigned to House 2 and then you floated
7 for two or three months before you then became a member
8 of the senior team. Is that right?

9 A. That's correct.

10 Q. Please interrupt or correct me if I've got this wrong
11 from our discussions, but you were rostered, first of
12 all, in House 2 or House 4. There were morning duties
13 and there were evening duties. There was a split rota
14 for staff. You basically followed the routine of the
15 house that you were assigned to.

16 A. That's correct.

17 Q. You were working alongside the girls. If you were on
18 sleeping duty, yours first duty of the day might have
19 been to get the girls up. You didn't find that
20 a particular difficulty.

21 A. No, no. The girls had adapted themselves to the rota or
22 the routine of the house, and so they -- unless there
23 was some particular problem for one individual,
24 generally speaking it flowed along.

25 Q. Whoever was coming in in the morning who hadn't slept in

1 was the person who was responsible for getting breakfast
2 ready for the girls and that kind of thing.

3 A. Yes, yes.

4 Q. I was asking generally: was it ever part of your duty or
5 was there any sort of structure to the routine in the
6 day where girls had the opportunity to speak to you or
7 to another member of staff?

8 A. Generally speaking, that would not happen in the early
9 morning time in the unit. It could happen as a girl was
10 going to school maybe, that you would be walking down to
11 school with them and they may begin to indicate that
12 they wanted to talk to you, and you might just get
13 permission for them to be absent from school for
14 a little while and go upstairs in the school block to
15 what we called the lounge and sit down and maybe have
16 a discussion with the child or listen to what a child
17 wanted to say.

18 Then in the evening time after dinner many of the
19 girls would go swimming or go to games, badminton or
20 something like that, and there would be maybe one or two
21 girls in the house, and that would be a time when
22 somebody might go into the office and sit with a child
23 and go over something that's problematic with them.

24 Q. You were saying to me that you could sense if a child
25 was under pressure --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- and might need to speak about something.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. You would therefore give them the opportunity --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- when you picked up on it, as it were.

7 A. Yes. Help to draw them out a bit if you saw that there
8 was something that was showing in their form, in their
9 mood.

10 Q. One other aspect of the material that we have seen was
11 the house diaries. It is quite clear that staff seemed
12 to be quite often and frank about their views about
13 girls and their moods and so forth --

14 A. Uh-huh.

15 Q. -- in the diaries that we were looking at. I asked if
16 you came on duty, did you look at the diary at any point
17 in the day?

18 A. Yes. You were encouraged to come in about
19 fifteen minutes early, about 3.45 -- the school ended at
20 4 o'clock -- so that you had ten or fifteen minutes just
21 to look back on what had happened the previous evening,
22 previous night or in the morning.

23 Q. You were also explaining to me that the girls had --
24 there were team leaders in each house. Isn't that
25 right?

1 A. That's correct.

2 Q. Girls also had their own key person --

3 A. That's correct.

4 Q. -- key worker --

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. -- who was particularly responsible for them --

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. -- and who they might speak to.

9 A. Yes, yes, and children would be perfectly clear who
10 their key worker was, but they would also gravitate
11 towards the team leader, who was generally a more
12 experienced, older person.

13 Q. I was -- one of the complaints, as it were, that we have
14 heard was about the chores that children were expected
15 to do in the home. I know in St. Joseph's they were
16 called services.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. I wondered about some changes that there were in the
19 time from the 1950s to the 1980s

20 and into the '90s. Presumably the types of
21 things girls were expected to do when there were
22 dormitories were different to when there were house
23 units.

24 A. Uh-huh, yes. In the 1950s there was just one kitchen
25 where there was a staff member all through the day.

1 I am not -- don't recollect very clearly, but I suspect
2 maybe one or two girls may have helped out there, older
3 people, same with the laundry, whereas in the 1980s
4 every group had their own kitchen and took care of their
5 own needs there.

6 Q. I just wanted to ask a little bit about the different
7 house units, Sister, and how girls were assigned to the
8 houses, if I might, at this point just when we are
9 talking about the house units.

10 A. Uh-huh.

11 Q. Obviously House 1 was where every girl who came into
12 St. Joseph's went first of all --

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. -- for a period of assessment. In fact, some girls only
15 ever came to House 1 --

16 A. And were discharged again, yes.

17 Q. -- and then went on to some other -- either home or to
18 another children's home.

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 Q. But what was the difference between the houses that you
21 can recall?

22 A. Well, in House 2, where I first worked in , House 2
23 was I would call a place of very regular set-up. One of
24 the things they were noted for, they marked all their
25 cutlery, all their utensils. Other houses wouldn't have

1 been so careful. So they could always claim back their
2 stuff, because their name was on it. That followed
3 through with the girls from House 2, you know.

4 SJM4 recalled once making a visit to Derry to see
5 a child and she called to visit a girl from House 2, who
6 was now an adult. The girl had told her about a quarrel
7 she had had with a neighbour about a rubbish bin. SJM4
8 said to her, looking at the rubbish bins, "They are all
9 the same. How would you know your own?" She turned it
10 over and she showed her. She had her name painted on
11 the bottom of it. SJM4 said, "Classic House 2".

12 Q. So that was the kind of ethos that was in House 2?

13 A. Yes.

14 Q. I think you said those girls who were put in that house
15 were the girls who needed a more regimented routine.

16 A. Yes, to be helped to develop, you know, a good living
17 arrangement for themselves.

18 Q. They required, as I say, a more regimented or stricter
19 routine than some of the other girls might.

20 A. Yes. Their housekeeping was always I suppose more
21 efficient than maybe the other houses.

22 Q. House 3 you described to me as more fluid.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Girls having perhaps slightly greater degree of
25 independence as to what they could do, or how would you

1 describe it?

2 A. House 3 -- House 2 you always knew where their girls
3 were, you know, and there was always somebody. House 3
4 might move about a bit, be visiting other houses more
5 than House 2 might do it.

6 Q. And House 4 then?

7 A. House 4 had a more relaxed approach to housekeeping.

8 Q. Going back, Sister, to some of the issues that have been
9 raised with the Inquiry, one of them was the preparation
10 for puberty. I was asking you about that. I wondered
11 and presumed that it was less of a problem for
12 St. Joseph's when it was no longer an orphanage --

13 A. That's correct.

14 Q. -- when girls didn't come through from the earlier
15 years.

16 A. Yes, yes.

17 Q. That this was maybe something more of a complaint in the
18 earlier years of St. Joseph's than in later years.

19 A. Yes.

20 Q. I asked: was there any actual guidance given to staff as
21 to how they might deal with either pre-pubescent or
22 girls who had started puberty?

23 A. In school the domestic science teacher would have been
24 the person who would have done a formal approach to that
25 with the girls. In the houses individual staff would

1 have helped individual girls, you know. It would have
2 been a private discussion between them. It wouldn't
3 have been anything public as such.

4 Q. But I was wondering as a houseparent did the senior team
5 give you any guidance on, you know, how you should deal
6 with girls in that situation?

7 A. Well, in staff meetings -- if there was anything coming
8 up, it would be discussed at staff meetings, and there
9 would be directions given.

10 Q. Another issue for the Inquiry -- for people who have
11 come to speak to the Inquiry is the issue of punishment
12 and rewards. I know I asked you this, because it is
13 something that leapt out of the page, was this dress of
14 disgrace in the punishment book, but you have no idea
15 what that was.

16 A. I never heard of the dress of disgrace.

17 Q. Certainly when you came in -- when you came back in
18 , corporal punishment had come to an end in
19 St.~Joseph's.

20 A. Absolutely.

21 Q. I wondered in the 1950s,
22 , were you ever asked to witness punishments
23 being handed out?

24 A. No, I never witnessed any punishment being handed out.

25 Q. When we were talking earlier, you said you knew the

1 girls were slapped, however, in the home, because they
2 talked about it in the sewing room.

3 A. That's correct.

4 Q. You remember a particular chat about an incident where
5 two or three girls had absconded.

6 A. That's correct.

7 Q. You knew you that there had been slaps administered you
8 said at the bottom of the stairs, and again this was
9 just from something the girls were talking about in the
10 sewing room.

11 A. That's correct.

12 Q. I am going to turn to the name SR237, whom we have heard
13 about in the Inquiry.

14 A. Right.

15 Q. When you came in , she was in charge. She was
16 the manager at that stage.

17 A. That's correct, yes.

18 Q. She had taken over in . Now we have heard
19 complaints about her striking girls. I asked you: did
20 you ever witness that yourself?

21 A. No, I never witnessed SR237 striking anybody.

22 Q. At SJM -- again I don't think we need to call it up --
23 22923, paragraph 14, you accepted that SR237 could have
24 been strict with the girls.

25 A. That is true.

1 Q. I wondered in what respect was she strict? How was she
2 strict? How did that manifest itself, Sister?

3 A. She took over from SR248, and SR248 was an elderly lady
4 when I knew her in , and she was a very outgoing,
5 chatty kind of personality, whereas SR237 would have
6 been more reserved, but the school was moving from being
7 an industrial school/orphanage to a training school. So
8 there were less small children in the school and there
9 were more the teenage age in the school. So I suppose
10 there was a different approach.

11 Q. You said that SR248 was seen as a motherly figure.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. But that was not SR237's personality, if I can put it
14 that way.

15 A. Yes. She was a more reserved person.

16 Q. I asked: were the girls frightened of SR237 in a way
17 that they might not have been of SR248?

18 A. SR248 wasn't dealing with the girls as such as a group
19 when I was there. SR237 was. She had a bunch of keys
20 that hung on a short chain from her waistline and you'd
21 hear the keys when she would be coming along. So people
22 would straighten up and behave.

23 Q. The girls you said changed their behaviour if they saw
24 her coming or heard her coming in her case.

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. You recalled in paragraph 28 at SJM22006 that she had
2 a thin bamboo cane, which you thought was kept in the
3 office.

4 A. Yes. I actually never saw her with the cane, but I knew
5 it was there.

6 Q. And is that again from comments that the girls made --

7 A. Yes, yes.

8 Q. -- about her maybe using it on them?

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. You also say in one of your statements, Sister, that you
11 never heard any derogatory remarks being made or used
12 about a girl or a parent.

13 A. No.

14 Q. I wondered -- we know that times changed and practices
15 changed, and might that kind of comment have been made
16 in the 1950s rather than, say, in the 1980s?

17 A. I don't -- I don't recall it and I don't think it would
18 have been effective, because you were constantly trying
19 to create a sense of ease and happiness for the girls,
20 so that, you know, you weren't provoking them into
21 a reaction. So I wouldn't think that it would have been
22 even productive to have done that.

23 Q. One other thing I was speaking to you about earlier was:
24 did regime change affect the way the school operated?

25 I mean, we have heard about SR248 --

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. -- SR237. We know there was SR270 , who
3 worked with SR240 --

4 A. That's correct.

5 Q. -- when SR240 took over. Would it be fair to say that
6 each of them had different approaches to how the school
7 operated --

8 A. That would be true, yes.

9 Q. -- and to child care?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. It was SR240 you say who introduced the marks scheme in
12 the early 1970s.

13 A. Yes. She -- yes. That was her way of monitoring how
14 people were managing.

15 Q. Although you do say that the records show that girls got
16 pocket money and had -- you know, obviously privileges
17 --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- being removed was a punishment --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- but this actual formal marks scheme --

22 A. Yes.

23 Q. -- was something SR240 introduced.

24 A. Yes.

25 Q. In your statement also, one of them, at SJM940 you say

1 about yesterday and hopefully will hear about in the
2 second week of this module --

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. -- but you made the point that they came at different
5 stages --

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. -- in their development.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Although they were the same age, each other --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- one came to St. Joseph's as a younger child than the
12 other?

13 A. Yes, and was a year and a half almost in St. Joseph's
14 before the second child came.

15 Q. So there was a difference in both their experiences of
16 St. Joseph's --

17 A. Yes, yes.

18 Q. -- and their own development.

19 A. Correct.

20 Q. One issue that we have heard about is the issue of
21 smoking, and you address that in your statements. You
22 say it wasn't a main priority to get the girls to stop
23 and the reason for that, most of the girls who came came
24 as smokers.

25 A. Correct.

1 Q. We have heard about the situation where they bought the
2 cigarettes with their own pocket money and then they
3 were rationed. That was the practice adopted to try to
4 reduce their intake of cigarettes I suppose.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. But I wonder -- I mean, we know from an inspection
7 report -- I can't quite remember which one -- that the
8 --

9 A. I think it was the late '80s.

10 Q. -- late '80s that the SSI inspectors recommended that
11 the school introduce some sort of incentive to girls to
12 stop smoking. Was that ever formally done that you
13 recall, Sister?

14 A. No. I suppose there wasn't a formal arrangement made,
15 but girls who didn't smoke always had a lot more money
16 to spend when it came to holidays or to buy clothes or
17 whatever. So that in itself was a reward I suppose for
18 not smoking.

19 Q. I think SR234 will say something more about that too.

20 A. Okay.

21 Q. You did say that in school people would have been
22 brought in to talk about the dangers of smoking --

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. -- but not actually within the house units or anything
25 like that.

1 A. No, not within the house units.

2 Q. The other thing: we heard from HIA198, who said that
3 SR240 brought a packet of cigarettes to the house when
4 the marks for the whole house were good. You talk about
5 a Friday night treat at SJM930, paragraph 13. I was
6 wondering was the cigarette -- were the cigarettes part
7 of the Friday night treat?

8 A. Yes. There would have been an extra cigarette. On
9 a Friday night the girls would have watched a film maybe
10 until 1.00 am, something like that, and they would have
11 a sleep-in on the Saturday morning. Maybe during the
12 film there might be an extra cigarette given out.

13 Q. But you made the point to me that it was given
14 regardless of whether the house had got full marks or
15 anything like that.

16 A. Absolutely, yes. It was nothing to do with marks. It
17 was a treat that everybody got on Friday night.

18 Q. Another issue is fights among girls, Sister. I asked
19 you: did staff always intervene if they saw a fight?

20 A. Certainly, yes. It would not be even advisable to allow
21 a fight to continue in any way. So staff would always
22 intervene and intervene maybe even before it would come
23 to -- if they were aware of verbals between the girls,
24 not to allow it to deteriorate.

25 Q. What about favourites, Sister? Did staff have

1 favourites?

2 A. Well, key workers would naturally have a greater
3 interest in the girl that they were assigned to work
4 with, but housemothers, the team leaders, they would
5 have every child's interests at heart, and that is
6 really how it did work, and I was never conscious of
7 children feeling left out, that nobody bothered with
8 them.

9 Q. I did ask you, although you can't particularly speak to
10 this, about the level of contact that there might have
11 been with field social workers, but you remember that --
12 your recollection is that there was good contact.

13 A. There was good contact, good phone contact and then the
14 social workers would have come -- some would have come
15 regularly to visit girls and they would certainly have
16 come for reviews and planning about the girls' future.

17 Q. I know I am going to ask SR234 about this also, but we
18 heard yesterday when we were looking at the ICU sheets
19 that certainly on one occasion SJM58 had signed the ICU
20 record.

21 A. Uh-huh.

22 Q. I wonder did the congregation rely -- she at this
23 stage -- she was never a member of staff. Isn't that
24 correct?

25 A. That's correct.

1 Q. She was a former resident, who had come back to stay in
2 St. Joseph's, as I understand it.

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. She had her own difficulties, which are clear from the
5 police material that the Inquiry has seen. She possibly
6 used Middletown as a stop-gap before moving on to
7 somewhere else, because she knew she had support there.
8 Is that a fair summary of ...?

9 A. Well, many -- many girls who had gone through Middletown
10 would have kept in contact with people that they would
11 have known that would have been helpful to them during
12 their time there, and some would have come back for
13 visits and for overnight visits.

14 As regards SJM58, I think SR234 probably knows more
15 about that than I do.

16 Q. Well, I certainly will ask her about it, but do you
17 yourself recall former residents helping out in any way?

18 A. Not -- not really, no.

19 Q. Sister, we did speak about the house -- the differences
20 in the houses earlier, but we know that there was -- you
21 know that there was an allegation against you from a
22 girl HIA376, and that is at paragraph 16 of her
23 statement at SJM064.

24 Now you address that in your own statement at SJM939
25 at paragraph 28.

1 If we can just, first of all, look at HIA376's
2 allegation, which is at SJM064. It is at paragraph 16
3 there. She says that following three days without food
4 she was taken to somewhere. You were driving the car
5 and her sister was there and some other girls were also
6 present in the car. She says:

7 "I must have misbehaved during the journey, as SR235
8 stopped the car, dragged me out by the hair and put me
9 in the boot. I remember having to stop at ..."

10 It is blanked out here, but it was at the border:

11 "... at the border and a soldier asked SR235 to open
12 the boot. The soldier asked her why I was in the boot
13 and she told him because I was talking too much and not
14 listening. The soldier just closed the boot, leaving me
15 inside. When we arrived back at Middletown, I went to
16 the dormitory ...",

17 and she was beaten by another nun that she names
18 there.

19 Now, Sister, you are alleged to have dragged HIA376
20 from the car, put her in the boot of the car because she
21 was talking too much and not listening. You told that
22 to a soldier who stopped you at the border and saw the
23 child in the boot of the car.

24 You address that at -- if we can look at 939,
25 please, paragraph 28, you say:

1 "I can say without hesitation that the incident
2 which she described did not happen. The only reason for
3 the journey to Monaghan by car would have been for a
4 shopping trip or to leave or collect a girl from the
5 bus, which would have been often. It is highly unlikely
6 to have been a shopping trip, as we normally only took
7 girls from the same house on a trip, and HIA376 has
8 stated that she and her sister, who was in House 3, were
9 in the car together. The diary entries from the
10 relevant time confirm that I did take HIA376 and her
11 sister to the bus if they were going home on leave for
12 the weekend. I did not drag HIA376 out of a car by her
13 hair and put her in the boot of my car. I find such
14 a suggestion offensive, hurtful and quite honestly
15 beyond belief. What further confirms me in my belief
16 that it did not happen is that HIA376 goes on to state
17 that a member of the British Army stopped the car, found
18 her in the boot and closed it, leaving her inside. I do
19 not believe such an incident happened or that a soldier
20 would have collaborated in such unacceptable treatment
21 of a child."

22 Now, Sister, is there anything more other than that
23 paragraph that I've read out that you want to say to the
24 Inquiry about that incident -- that allegation?

25 A. I never, never put anybody into the boot of a car and

1 I never dragged any child by her hair from a car.

2 Q. Well, Sister, aside from positive comments about
3 St. Joseph's in inspection reports that we looked at
4 earlier this week and positive comments from some of
5 those who came to the Inquiry to complain about other
6 institutions, the Inquiry has been provided by the
7 congregation with three statements from former
8 residents. I am going to name them:

9 SJM73 , who was there in the 1970s and up to
10 '81, and her statement has been added to the bundle at
11 SJM29259 to 29262;

12 SJM74 . She was there between 1962 and
13 1965. Her statement is at 29263 to 29268; and

14 SJM75 , who was there from '94 to '96.
15 Her statement is at 29269 to 29273.

16 I am not going to go through their statements, but
17 the Inquiry has read them. All of them have positive
18 memories of their time in St. Joseph's.

19 Sister, those are all the issues that I wanted to
20 raise with you in your evidence, but is there anything
21 else that you want to say about St. Joseph's or about
22 anything that is in your statements that I haven't
23 covered? Now is your opportunity to do that.

24 A. I just want to say that my experience of life in
25 St. Joseph's was demanding, but it was very worthwhile,

1 and I appreciate the kind of contact we were able to
2 develop with girls, you know, some more than others, but
3 it was a very rewarding experience.

4 Q. Well, thank you, Sister. There is nothing further that
5 I want to ask you about, but the Panel Members I am sure
6 will have some questions for you.

7 A. Thank you.

8 Questions from THE PANEL

9 CHAIRMAN: Sister, it may be that we are going deal with
10 this with SR234 shortly, but I understand that
11 St. Joseph's in the later years had the services of
12 a psychologist, who came from the Adolescent Psychology
13 Unit.

14 A. That's correct, yes. That's right.

15 Q. I think you say in the statement that the person would
16 come two to three days a week. Was that a regular
17 visiting pattern or was it when there was a particular
18 need attached to a particular girl?

19 A. No. It was a regular pattern, but SR234 dealt more with
20 the psychologist than I did.

21 Q. I see. Well, then I will perhaps ask her about that.

22 But the chores which you have described the girls as
23 doing, how did they in your opinion at least compare to
24 what you would expect a child -- this will sound I am
25 sure very sexist -- but in those days a girl to do

1 around the home?

2 A. I thought they were about the same, you know.

3 Q. Yes.

4 A. I thought they were a good experience for a child to
5 learn and to be able to manage as a mother later in
6 life.

7 Q. I may perhaps ask SR234 about the after care
8 arrangements with the Glen Road project, but in terms of
9 generally dealing with girls were there frequent
10 occasions where they would not physically but verbally
11 fight with each other in the sense that they would lose
12 their tempers and call each other names and so on? Was
13 that a common occurrence?

14 A. I wouldn't say it was common, but it did happen.

15 Q. Yes. So it was not unusual to hear that type of
16 exchange?

17 A. It was not unusual. Yes, yes, yes.

18 Q. Thank you very much.

19 MS DOHERTY: Thanks very much, Sister. That has been very
20 helpful. Can I just ask in relation to the differences
21 between the four houses, was that influenced by the
22 person that was in charge of the house as opposed to any
23 sort of policy about saying the houses would run in
24 a different way from each other?

25 A. I suppose -- well, the team leaders did change over time

1 and it would have been the house team that would have
2 kind of set the standards and the policies for their
3 unit, but it would also have been discussed and it would
4 have been looked at at staff meetings, and senior
5 management would have very definite -- if there was any
6 issues, raised them with the staff team, and the senior
7 staff were on call in turn throughout the weeks. So you
8 would be -- if there was a problem coming up in a unit,
9 you would also be called in maybe to help out in some
10 way.

11 Q. Uh-huh.

12 A. So you would be perfectly aware of what the issues were
13 or the routines were or how things were managed --

14 Q. Right.

15 A. -- in each unit.

16 Q. I noticed when we were talking about, you know, the
17 twins being separated --

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. -- there was a view that part of the reasoning behind
20 that was that each home did have a different regime and
21 a different way of working with the girls, and that it
22 might be that a home would be -- one of the houses would
23 be more suitable for a girl.

24 A. Yes. Those who worked in the assessment unit -- and
25 SR234 worked with the staff in the assessment unit in

1 a particular way -- would feel if a child needed more
2 structures to help her develop living skills.

3 Q. Uh-huh. Which house -- that House 2 would be better for
4 them?

5 A. Maybe, yes.

6 Q. Okay. In relation to the key worker system was there
7 formal sessions between a key worker and a girl?

8 A. Yes. That -- they would have been when it would be
9 coming up to a review or trying to see where the girl's
10 best interests would lie, what to gear her towards. All
11 of that would happen.

12 Q. Okay. That would be ... Did you -- between the 1950s
13 and the 1980s did you notice a change in the type of
14 girl that was coming in and the type of behaviours they
15 might be demonstrating?

16 A. I suppose they were always young people who were
17 disadvantaged. They were children without maybe good
18 living skills and all of that, and that that was there
19 in the '50s as well as the '80s, but maybe -- I cannot
20 really say if it was more so in the '80s than in the
21 '50s.

22 Q. I am just wondering if in terms of the management of the
23 behaviour of the girls there was more acting out and
24 absconding and -- if that was more of a feature in the
25 '80s than in the earlier days?

1 A. What struck me, looking back at the records of the '50s
2 and the '60s, was there seemed to be a tremendous lot of
3 outings in the '50s and the '60s. The girls seemed to
4 go out to netball matches. They went out to concerts.
5 They went out to films. A lot of that. I don't think
6 we had as much of that in the '80s as we had in the ...,
7 but then they went out in smaller groups in the '80s,
8 you know.

9 Q. Maybe they had a bit more freedom to go out to that --

10 A. Yes, yes.

11 Q. -- as a group.

12 In relation to -- because obviously adolescent girls
13 can be quite volatile when they get together. Was there
14 any training and any policy about control and restraint?
15 If there was a need to separate girls who were fighting,
16 was there any ...?

17 A. The main policy was intervene early, you know, when
18 girls were verbally being aggressive to one another.

19 Q. And if that intervention wasn't possible and it did come
20 to a physical engagement, was there any training about
21 how to safely disengage girls when they were ...?

22 A. Personally I was never involved in a physical fight
23 with -- between two girls. You would be aware of some
24 aggression, but you would seek to work on that rather
25 than --

1 Q. Let it escalate.

2 A. -- let it escalate.

3 Q. Okay. Thank you very much, Sister.

4 MR LANE: Going back to your first time at St. Joseph's,
5 there were some girls there who had been there from what
6 I might call industrial schooldays.

7 A. Yes.

8 Q. Two of our witnesses were admitted when they were really
9 very little children.

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. So they spent virtually their whole childhood at
12 St. Joseph's, but later on with the training school
13 children tended to come in I think more as teenagers.

14 A. Correct.

15 Q. Was there any sort of problem integrating those two
16 groups at all?

17 A. Well, there wasn't -- while the legislation changed and
18 the -- there wasn't any change that the children would
19 have realised had happened.

20 Q. Was the group who had been there for their whole
21 childhood a large group or only two or three of them?

22 A. There would have been a small group, yes.

23 Q. Were they all together in one house unit or anything
24 like that?

25 A. No. They were in a dormitory --

1 Q. Oh, right. Yes.

2 A. -- for their age.

3 Q. They shared the same dormitory?

4 A. They shared the same dormitory.

5 Q. So they were almost like a sort of family group who knew
6 each other as peers?

7 A. Yes, yes, yes.

8 Q. That's right. Could you just say a little bit about the
9 sort of religious observance on a daily basis that was
10 expected of the children?

11 A. Children going to school in the morning, there would be
12 an assembly.

13 Q. Uh-huh.

14 A. In the '80s that used to take place in the chapel. It
15 would be about five minutes' duration.

16 Q. Right.

17 A. It was really a chore for people. So eventually they
18 removed it down to the school hall. Very often SR240
19 would speak to the children at that time.

20 Q. Later on were there things like the Angelus and so on?

21 A. No. I don't remember the Angelus.

22 Q. No. Right. Okay. There was -- the convent was
23 alongside the girls.

24 A. It was on the same grounds.

25 Q. On the same grounds. So was there a sort of community

1 life for the Sisters there in parallel?

2 A. Oh, yes, yes, yes.

3 Q. Okay. Thank you very much.

4 A. You are welcome.

5 CHAIRMAN: Sister, could I just follow up with

6 a supplementary question? I am intrigued by the

7 differences in character between the four homes that you

8 have described. I understand the point you make about

9 House 2 having perhaps a more structured regime in order

10 to help people have a more structured approach to their

11 own lives and doing things for themselves, but you said

12 that House 4 always had a more relaxed attitude to

13 housekeeping.

14 Was that a deliberate policy, or a reflection

15 perhaps of a tradition for that particular house, or the

16 character of the houseparent or the person who was in

17 charge? Perhaps you would prefer not to comment.

18 A. I really can't comment on that. I was not continuously

19 working in St. Joseph's. That was just how it seemed to

20 me.

21 Q. I see. Thank you very much indeed for coming to speak

22 to us, SR235. We are very grateful for you taking the

23 time to come. We are aware that you have been here not

24 just today, but thank you for coming to speak.

25 A. Thank you.

1 (Witness withdrew)

2 MS SMITH: Chairman, the other witness today is SR234. She
3 is here. I don't know if we are ready to go ahead with
4 her or you wish to take a short break.

5 CHAIRMAN: Well, I am having a technical problem with my
6 screen. So if we rise just for a few minutes until that
7 is fixed.

8 (11.30 am)

9 (Short break)

10 (11.35 am)

11 WITNESS SR234 (called and sworn)

12 CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Sister. Please sit down.

13 Questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

14 MS SMITH: Sister, I know that you do have hearing
15 difficulty. So if you have any difficulty in hearing
16 what I'm asking you, please just interrupt me.

17 A. Yes. May I ask would you get my distance glasses from
18 my handbag, please? Sorry.

19 Q. That's okay. You need your reading glasses?

20 A. No. I need my distance glasses to see you. I didn't
21 realise that.

22 Q. I need my reading glasses to be able to read what I want
23 to ask you, Sister. So I think we will both have our
24 glasses on then.

25 Sister, you were in St. Joseph's, Middletown. You

1 came there in and you were actually there right
2 through .

3 A. Uh-huh.

4 Q. During all of that time you had responsibility for
5 admissions. Isn't that correct?

6 A. That's right.

7 Q. Then ultimately you were a member of a four-person
8 senior team and became Director -- Deputy Director and
9 were Deputy Director until you retired in .

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. You then helped out voluntarily .

12 A. Uh-huh.

13 Q. You have given a statement of evidence to the Inquiry in
14 response to a statement that was given by somebody who
15 spoke to the Inquiry, and your statement can be found at
16 SJM160 to 209.

17 Now I just wanted to assure you, Sister, that the
18 Inquiry Panel have read your statement and have read the
19 exhibits that you attached there, and you were actually
20 speaking about HIA198, the witness who gave evidence
21 yesterday, in that response statement.

22 Like -- sorry.

23 CHAIRMAN: May we have Sister's designation?

24 MS SMITH: Yes. Sorry. SR234, Sister, is the designation
25 that we have given to protect your identity. When we

1 were speaking earlier, you indicated that you would like
2 to maintain your anonymity. Isn't that correct?

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. Sister, you yourself were a qualified teacher, as was
5 SR235. You would also agree that most of the
6 congregation who worked in Middletown had been qualified
7 teachers, but you were telling me that that's how they
8 came initially, but a lot of them would have done some
9 extra training in childcare, for example.

10 A. Yes, yes.

11 Q. Before you actually came to Middletown you were telling
12 me that you did a course in . Is that
13 right?

14 A. Yes.

15 . It was a group that worked
16 with people with mental health problems, and it
17 involved, you know, psychology, sociology, pastoral
18 care, and it involved two three-month placements in
19 a halfway house for residents who had serious problems,
20 mental problems.

21 Q. You felt that that particular course was of assistance
22 to you in working with some of the girls that you had to
23 deal with in Middletown. Is that right?

24 A. Definitely, yes, it was a big help.

25 Q. Sister, you were there from and there must have

1 been enormous changes between then and whenever you
2 retired in , but certainly at the end of '95, which
3 is when the Inquiry is looking at Middletown until.

4 What kind of changes did you see over the years?

5 A. Well, I suppose they were incremental changes really and
6 you hardly noticed them as you were going on. I suppose
7 the psychological services began I think probably at the
8 very beginning of the '80s. Definitely I remember
9 a child who was there at the beginning of the '80s and
10 she had very serious problems, and I remember the
11 psychologist being very involved. So I think it might
12 have even started in '79. My own -- I was very
13 interested in counselling and all that always, and the
14 girls always regarded me as someone to go to, you know.

15 Q. You also made the point to me that the ratio of staff to
16 girls increased in the 1980s.

17 A. Yes, yes. Well, as I say, it was kind of incremental,
18 and particularly in the assessment unit there might have
19 been four staff on the team when I came and there would
20 have been six or seven later on.

21 Q. Can I just ask about the assessment unit, Sister? We
22 know that there were some girls who came in for
23 the initial five-week period and might have been
24 discharged to another children's home or back to their
25 family.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. Then there were those girls who were then assigned to
3 one of the houses --

4 A. Yes.

5 Q. -- who were longer term stays --

6 A. That's right.

7 Q. -- in Middletown. You have been here when SR235 was
8 giving her evidence about the different ethos in each
9 unit --

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. -- as it were, and the tone that was set in the unit.

12 A. Yes.

13 Q. Can you assist us with that, as to whether there was
14 a policy about what type of house each unit should be?

15 A. Well, my sense of it is that the staff in House 1 were
16 constantly getting to know the girls, and if -- and also
17 trying to work out whether the girl would be able to
18 cope with staying in Middletown, whether that's what she
19 -- would be best for her, and because it was an open
20 environment, I always maintained we could not ever hold
21 anybody who didn't really, really want to be there, you
22 know, and while they would be ambivalent about it and
23 they might be running away and everything, on the whole
24 they were content enough to decide for a Training School
25 Order in the end. I very often accompanied girls to the

1 court and in the beginning I often wrote the reports for
2 the courts. So I would have been at pains to try and
3 find out, "Does this girl really want to -- does she
4 need to be here and would it be good for her to be
5 here?"

6 Q. Assuming the decision is made that she needed to be
7 there and it was good for her to be there, how then did
8 you allocate her to what house then? What ...?

9 A. I have to confess that I usually relied on House 1 staff
10 to make that decision and they would be working with the
11 girl as well. You know, there was a -- there was a lot
12 of -- there was a lot of very good kind of interaction
13 verbally and otherwise went on all the time between the
14 staff and the girls.

15 Q. Well, would you agree with SR235's assessment that House
16 2 --

17 A. I would. I would, yes.

18 Q. -- had a more structured regime?

19 A. I would, yes.

20 Q. And House 3 maybe less so and House 4 maybe the least
21 structured, if that would be a fair assessment?

22 A. Well, I think what she said was they had a more relaxed
23 attitude to housekeeping, you know. That doesn't mean
24 they were relaxed about everything. Okay?

25 Q. What is your recollection of what the tone in each house

1 was?

2 A. I would agree -- I would agree generally with what SR235
3 said, and I would think that it did reflect the
4 personality of the person in charge naturally I suppose,
5 yes.

6 Q. Well, when you arrived in , there was no longer any
7 corporal punishment. The marks system was in place.
8 SR240 was in charge at that stage.

9 A. That's right, yes, yes.

10 Q. You worked very closely with her. Isn't that correct?

11 A. Yes, yes.

12 Q. Now we know from a medical that we have received that
13 she is unable to speak to the Inquiry herself.

14 A. Uh-huh.

15 Q. But having worked very closely with her, I wondered what
16 you could say your experience of her as a manager, first
17 of all, and as a person was.

18 A. Well, I thought she was a very good leader. I thought
19 she was a remarkable person. My very first general
20 staff meeting -- we had a general staff meeting at the
21 beginning of every year at the beginning of September,
22 and I remember thinking afterwards, "You know, this
23 place really is run for the children". That was my
24 sense, and I never changed in that.

25 Q. You heard yesterday it described that she had shouted at

1 HIA198 and certainly raised her voice to her. Did you
2 ever hear her raise her voice?

3 A. I did, yes, not very often, but she could raise her
4 voice, yes.

5 Q. I think you said to me that no-one was in any doubt that
6 she was the boss.

7 A. That's right, yes. At the same time I said she was very
8 careful that the authority in the house units rested
9 with the house staff and she would never intervene
10 unless she were asked to.

11 Q. You said she wouldn't undermine how they disciplined the
12 girls or anything like that.

13 A. She wouldn't undermine. Absolutely. No.

14 Q. We have heard that members of the congregation and
15 members of staff would have struck girls. Did you ever
16 witness that, Sister?

17 A. No.

18 Q. Or did you ever hear any member of staff or another
19 Sister denigrate either a girl or her parents?

20 A. No.

21 Q. You would have been involved more heavily perhaps than
22 SR235 with field social workers.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. I just wondered what your experience was of the
25 involvement of social workers in the school, Sister.

1 Did that level of involvement depend on the social
2 worker or on the girl or did it change in any way over
3 time?

4 A. Well, my sense of it is -- my memory isn't wonderful --
5 my sense of it is that social workers were always
6 involved and if -- if a social worker -- you know,
7 social workers were very often changing. You know,
8 a girl's social worker might be -- she might have
9 a social worker today and she mightn't have one next
10 week. Then we would be at pains to make sure the person
11 who moved on was replaced. We would put pressure on
12 Social Services to continue involvement, and generally
13 speaking I think involvement was good, and particularly
14 if it came to home visits or anything like that, we
15 would be always contacting the field social worker to
16 see were things okay at home, and if there was a crisis
17 at home, we would be looking for the social worker to
18 see what was going on, if we couldn't go ourselves
19 straightaway.

20 Q. And you would have seen the relationship between
21 yourselves and the social workers as a good one?

22 A. Oh, yes, yes.

23 Q. I did ask you that if a child was in for offending,
24 would there have been less contact with social workers?

25 A. Possibly, possibly, but my memory of it is there would

1 have been a probation officer involved maybe. I do
2 remember some probation officers, yes.

3 Q. I can probably ask you this now. We have heard
4 complaint that some girls -- from girls that they were
5 put in with girls who were offenders. Who was the
6 position with regard to the girl offenders and the girls
7 who were in on the care side? In your statement you say
8 that the majority of girls who came to Middletown were
9 actually there on foot of a Place of Safety Order and
10 that ultimately might have become a Training School
11 Order, but they weren't -- the large majority were not
12 offenders.

13 A. That's true, yes. The vast majority were not offenders.
14 I mean, they weren't -- they weren't in Middletown for
15 offending.

16 Q. Yes.

17 A. I am not saying they weren't offenders.

18 Q. Yes, but they weren't there on foot of a Training School
19 Order --

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. -- for having committed offences.

22 A. That's right, yes.

23 Q. So the girls were amalgamated then. There was no
24 distinction between, for example --

25 A. Care and justice.

1 Q. Or a house unit being only for those girls who were
2 offenders or anything like that?

3 A. That's right, yes.

4 Q. But that did change whenever St. Joseph's became
5 an adolescent centre. Isn't that right? That was very
6 late in its life.

7 A. '95, wasn't it?

8 Q. I believe so. That was the only time the separation
9 then was effective in the home.

10 A. That's right, yes, and in that instance there was only
11 one girl with offences. She had to be treated on her
12 own. We had to get a special teacher to teach her
13 separate from the school.

14 Q. So the separation was more of an inconvenience to
15 St. Joseph's.

16 A. It would have been, like, and it wasn't good for the
17 girl either, like.

18 Q. Because she was separated from everyone else?

19 A. That's right.

20 Q. We have heard about the reward system and we heard that
21 was something that SR240 introduced, the marks system,
22 the formal marks system.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. We have heard about the Friday night treat, and you
25 heard me ask SR235 about the issue of smoking and any

1 incentive to stop a girl from smoking. What's your
2 memory of that, Sister?

3 A. My memory was that smoking was a fact of life for most
4 of the girls. If any of them didn't smoke -- I can
5 remember one in particular who managed to survive three
6 years. She came in not smoking and she went out not
7 smoking and I am sorry to say at the age of 33 she began
8 to smoke.

9 Q. But she was the exception to the girls --

10 A. That's right.

11 Q. -- that you dealt with in that most -- even -- we heard
12 from HIA233 --

13 A. That's right.

14 Q. -- the statement that I summarised yesterday -- she
15 started to smoke in St. Joseph's. That would have
16 happened also?

17 A. It might have, yes.

18 Q. You were telling me when we were talking about the
19 issue, that you yourself had been spoken to by
20 a therapist, who said that you were wasting your time
21 trying to get girls to stop smoking. Is that right?

22 A. Yes, but that's only more recent. I was talking about
23 the problem recently.

24 Q. That wasn't while you were working in St. Joseph's?

25 A. No, I wasn't. I didn't --

1 Q. And -- sorry.

2 A. Yes.

3 Q. I didn't mean to interrupt you. Sorry, Sister. Was
4 there ...?

5 A. No. We weren't as aware in those days either of the
6 dangers of smoking.

7 Q. Well, absconding. We have heard of girls running away
8 --

9 A. Yes.

10 Q. -- from a lot of the people who have spoken to us. How
11 much of a problem was it for St. Joseph's?

12 A. Well, absconding -- again absconding was a fact of life,
13 because it was an open environment. There were times
14 when we wouldn't have any maybe. It could be quite
15 settled for a couple of months, and then you might get
16 a few new people in and they might be into absconding
17 and start the whole ball rolling. Sometimes I think
18 absconding was just a safety valve, you know, or a bit
19 of excitement. Sometimes the girls have told me later
20 -- like women have told me later in life, "I would be
21 running home to see was my mother all right or was my
22 sister all right", if they had a home, you know.

23 Q. Well, can I move on to talk about the ICU, Sister?

24 A. The what?

25 Q. This was something -- the ICU --

1 A. Oh, yes.

2 Q. -- the Intensive Care Unit.

3 A. Yes.

4 Q. This was something that was a requirement of the
5 Northern Ireland Office. It wasn't something that
6 St. Joseph's had actually felt they needed. Is that
7 right?

8 A. At the time, yes.

9 Q. In fact, you were worried that it could be over-used and
10 maybe abused and that was why there was a reluctance to
11 set it up in the first place. Is that fair?

12 A. Yes, yes.

13 Q. That did not, in fact, turn out to be the case, though,
14 according to your statement and other statements that we
15 have seen and the inspection reports, which show how
16 much the unit was used.

17 A. Uh-huh.

18 Q. It wasn't over-used --

19 A. Uh-huh.

20 Q. -- if that would be the right way of putting it. I was
21 asking you: was it very much seen as a last resort?

22 A. Yes, it was, yes.

23 Q. What's your recollection of it being used?

24 A. Well, my memory of it being used is I remember it being
25 used for a girl who had been away for a long time on the

1 run in very undesirable company, and it took her a few
2 days -- when she came back, she agreed with her
3 housemother that she could do with some time on her own,
4 and she was there for a few days I remember. That was
5 one example. Another was extreme self-injury; you know,
6 to keep somebody safe.

7 Q. You talk about it at paragraph 18 -- maybe we could just
8 look at that -- of your statement at 165, please. You
9 say -- you describe it had three bedrooms, two for the
10 children who had been sent there and one for the member
11 of staff who was allocated to stay with the child.
12 Although there were three bedrooms, you never recall
13 ever having two children in the unit at the same time.

14 A. That's right.

15 Q. It had a living room, a kitchen, dining area and
16 bathroom and a girl was never left alone in it. A
17 member of staff always stayed with the girls. If she
18 was on duty, the key worker went with the girl to the
19 ICU, or staff who worked in their house, so that they
20 were familiar with the individual who was staying with
21 them. If the key worker was not available or staff
22 allocated to their house, then myself or another member
23 of the senior team would have stayed with the girl in
24 the unit."

25 Now we know yesterday we were looking at HIA198's

1 documents, Sister, and whenever she was first put into
2 the ICU in August of 1994, you were there. We can look
3 at the documents, but I will just give the page
4 references. They are 24659 and onwards. On 21st August
5 you have written a note where you said that she was
6 admitted at 5.00 pm and you found her still asleep at
7 1.30 am, 5.00 am and 8.30 am and you signed that. Then
8 the next person to sign the record is SJM58.

9 Now we know that SJM58 -- and SR235 I think has
10 confirmed this -- that she was a former resident, who
11 was staying in St. Joseph's at this time in 1994. You
12 told me that you were surprised to see that she had
13 signed the record.

14 A. I was, yes.

15 Q. Is that because was it most unusual for someone who was
16 not either a staff member or --

17 A. Yes, and also I had completely forgotten it. Then I am
18 still not very clear about it, but I think it must have
19 been a weekend and I must have been very stuck. I was
20 on call for the weekend and I just didn't have anybody,
21 and she was there and she was an adult and ...

22 Q. You needed somebody to be there with HIA198.

23 A. I needed somebody to be there, yes, and HIA198 was
24 probably locked in her room.

25 Q. Do you remember SJM58 being there? You were saying that

1 --

2 A. I have a vague memory of SJM58 being there, yes.

3 Q. You were telling me that the set-up was that the ICU was
4 adjacent to the hostel --

5 A. That's right.

6 Q. -- and in between the two there was a block of four
7 bed-sits --

8 A. That's right.

9 Q. -- which was for the use of staff or visitors. Is that
10 right?

11 A. That's right, yes, and the adjoining door would have
12 been kept locked. You know, the ICU would have been
13 locked away from that, but naturally you had a key. You
14 could pass in and out.

15 Q. Presumably SJM58 wouldn't have had -- if she was just
16 staying there, she wouldn't have had any other duties
17 and therefore --

18 A. No.

19 Q. -- might have been in a position to help.

20 A. Yes.

21 Q. Was this a regular occurrence --

22 A. No way.

23 Q. -- that you would have asked somebody in her position to
24 help?

25 A. No way, no.

1 Q. You did say to me that there was only one other girl who
2 had been a resident who actually came back to work in --

3 A. That I remember, yes.

4 Q. That you remember as a member of staff.

5 A. Yes.

6 Q. In fact, her name features in the police material that
7 we were looking at also. Isn't that right?

8 A. That's right.

9 Q. That was SJM60 .

10 A. That's right.

11 Q. You also made the point to me that if a child asked for
12 a particular member of staff to look after her in the
13 ICU, that that was --

14 A. We would do our best to facilitate her, and if that
15 person couldn't be released at a certain time, I note
16 that we've said -- for example, HIA198 was told that
17 SJM4 could see her at such a time and she said that was
18 okay.

19 Q. So you would make arrangements certainly to try to
20 facilitate --

21 A. That's right.

22 Q. -- the requests of the child.

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. Now, Sister, I am not going to go through HIA198's ICU
25 records, but I let you have a look at them this morning

1 yourself just to remind you. It would certainly seem
2 that there was only this one occasion --

3 A. That's right.

4 Q. -- that SJM58 has signed --

5 A. That's right.

6 Q. -- the ICU record. You would be familiar with the names
7 of the other people who have signed them.

8 A. Yes.

9 Q. Can you just confirm they were all staff members?

10 A. They were all staff members.

11 Q. Sister, those are -- just one other thing about the ICU.
12 HIA198 had said there was only a mattress and a pillow
13 in the room she was in. That's not your memory at all.

14 A. No. I don't ever remember a bed being removed -- there
15 was a bed and I don't ever remember the bed being taken
16 out of that unit ever for any reason.

17 Q. Was there -- was there a table and chair in the room or
18 was it just the bed?

19 A. I can't remember that really. I think there was
20 a chair, yes. I'm not sure about a table. I'm not
21 sure.

22 Q. Well, Sister, that's all that I wanted to ask you
23 about -- generally about St. Joseph's, but is there
24 anything else that you want to say about either your
25 evidence, your statement of evidence -- I have assured

1 you that it has been read, but I was not going through
2 it in any detail -- or anything more that you want to
3 say about St. Joseph's? Now is your opportunity.

4 A. Maybe I did not do justice to SR240, but many of our
5 residents really did -- she loved the children and they
6 loved her. Many of them are still in touch with us.
7 They phone. They visit. They write. It was a good
8 place to work and I believe it was a good place for
9 children.

10 Q. Sister, thank you very much for that. As I say, I have
11 nothing more that I want to ask you, but the Panel
12 Members may have some questions for you. I can see that
13 you are finding it slightly difficult. If you need
14 a break, please just say.

15 A. I'm okay.

16 Q. Thank you, Sister.

17 Questions from THE PANEL

18 CHAIRMAN: Sister, could I just ask you in a little bit more
19 detail about the arrangements for the intensive care
20 unit and the services of a psychologist that were
21 available?

22 A. They were, yes.

23 Q. In a sense it is convenient to do that in the context of
24 HIA198's experience --

25 A. Yes.

1 Q. -- because we see that in her case there was a report
2 from a psychologist of the Adolescent Psychology and
3 Research Unit, the APRU --

4 A. That's right, yes.

5 Q. -- which we have heard of in other institutions as well.

6 A. Yes, yes.

7 Q. I think it was SR235 who said that someone would come
8 two to three days a week.

9 A. That's right, yes.

10 Q. Was that a regular weekly visit or was it only when
11 there was a perceived need for a particular girl to have
12 that service?

13 A. No. That was a regular event, and when the service
14 began, there was only one day a week. It was Damian
15 Curran was the guy at the time. As things -- maybe as
16 we developed and as the girls' problems might have been
17 more complicated, we were always asking for more
18 psychological time, and by the time -- certainly in the
19 '80s they were coming regularly two days a week.
20 Sometimes we had two different psychologists, two
21 members of that team, but always, always they came
22 regularly. I forget the days now, but I think Tuesday
23 was one of the days, but they were coming and the staff
24 would have been aware, you know, of who needed to be
25 seen by the psychologist and it was all arranged in

1 advance, you know. They were very helpful in guiding
2 the staff as well.

3 Q. Was the psychologist there all day or was it just for
4 a morning, or an afternoon, or an hour or what?

5 A. They came in the morning. They came in the morning and
6 they stayed until 4 o'clock I suppose or 5.00. I don't
7 really remember. I know they came in the morning.
8 I think they came around 9.00 or 9.30, yes, and they
9 stayed all day, yes.

10 Q. HIA198's particular case raises a more general question
11 perhaps, because it may paint the background. The
12 impression one gets from the papers is that she came to
13 St. Joseph's because she had had a very troubled history
14 and experience in other homes and it was felt by those
15 responsible for her care that really the only place she
16 could safely go, since other institutions weren't
17 appropriate, was St. Joseph's.

18 A. Uh-huh.

19 Q. One gets a feeling perhaps that the staff at
20 St. Joseph's weren't very keen that that should happen.

21 Was there any sense -- not just with her but with
22 others -- that it was seen as or being used as a place
23 of last resort for somebody with very intractable
24 behavioural problems?

25 A. Well, I don't want to sound flippant, but I used to say

1 myself, "When all else failed, try Middletown".

2 Q. Well, that in a sense answers the question. Was it
3 because there wasn't anywhere else that it seemed that
4 girls with a particularly troubled background might be
5 brought to Middletown?

6 A. Well, I thought it was because we were good at dealing
7 with girls with troubled backgrounds.

8 Q. To put the question in another way, did it ever occur to
9 you or was it ever discussed whether there was an unmet
10 need in the province for an institution that might deal
11 only with, let's say, four or five very troubled girls,
12 but there wasn't one, so they tended to come to
13 Middletown?

14 A. Well, we did often -- I mean, there were some cases
15 certainly where we would have said an adolescent
16 psychiatric unit was needed, and there was one in the
17 '80s I think, but it seemed it was very difficult to get
18 in, and then it didn't -- you know, it was only always
19 a temporary kind of intervention.

20 Q. Was that Lissue perhaps?

21 A. No, no, no. It was in Belfast. There was a guy called
22 .

23 Q. Ah, yes. The Children's Centre in College Gardens?

24 A. Yes. I think that was, yes.

25 Q. Yes. It was always very much in demand --

1 A. That's right.

2 Q. -- and over-subscribed.

3 A. That's right, yes.

4 Q. Yes.

5 A. I thought that the psychology services I suppose helped
6 us in a way to deal with some problems, and there were
7 always some problems we couldn't -- we couldn't deal.

8 There were always a few girls for whom --

9 Q. We gather from what you say that the perceived need for
10 psychological help was met by more and more sessions
11 being made available.

12 A. That's right, yes.

13 Q. I see. Thank you very much, Sister.

14 MS DOHERTY: Thanks, Sister. That has been very helpful.

15 I mean, we have heard about the sad death of one of your
16 congregation during the Troubles, but I'm just wondering
17 did the Troubles have any other impact in relation to
18 St. Joseph's?

19 A. Well, I suppose there was an atmosphere of danger at
20 times. I do remember a gun battle between the IRA on
21 one side of us and the army on the other side of us.
22 There were bullet holes in windows. We had a few very
23 narrow escapes, yes. So that was tense, and I remember
24 -- although SR240 always tried to negotiate with the
25 army commander that the soldiers wouldn't be on our

1 grounds, I do remember one new company arriving and they
2 were outside the doors of the houses, you know, with
3 their guns and all that, and I was saying, "If one of
4 the girls in a tantrum ran out the door, you know, would
5 she get killed?"

6 Q. Uh-huh.

7 A. But SR240 like immediately rang the commander and said,
8 "Please get them off the ground".

9 Q. And that was successful?

10 A. Yes.

11 Q. When you discuss girls being in tantrums and, you know,
12 adolescent girls together, was that a major aspect of
13 working with the girls, that there would be tantrums and
14 ...?

15 A. Well, I suppose sometimes it was very peaceful and calm
16 and happy and sometimes there would be more volatility
17 than other times. I mean, that's life, isn't it?

18 Q. Uh-huh. In relation to -- I mean, do you have an
19 experience about you having to separate girls or any --

20 A. No, I didn't, no.

21 Q. Okay.

22 A. I did a lot of work, you know -- I used to go with the
23 girls to courts and all that. They regarded me as
24 a kind of a listening ear I think, you know.

25 Q. Did you work as a key worker for particular girls?

1 A. No, no.

2 Q. Just as a member of senior staff?

3 A. Yes. I mean, I would do my regular turn with everybody
4 else being on call at night, being on call at the
5 weekend, you know, all that kind of thing, but my own
6 special thing was admissions and the courts and the
7 psychological services and that kind of thing.

8 Q. And in relation to staff members, did they receive
9 supervision? Was there supervision of their practice?
10 Was there regular sessions?

11 A. Well, they certainly did in the later years. I can't --
12 I can't say when exactly, but they certainly did in the
13 '80s, yes, and there was always guidance available, you
14 know. SR240 was really good at assessing what a child
15 needed and would go to great lengths to find something,
16 some talent.

17 Q. That would connect in?

18 A. Yes.

19 Q. Would there be -- when the girls were being moved from
20 the admissions over to the house --

21 A. Yes.

22 Q. -- would there be a formal meeting at that time?

23 A. Yes.

24 Q. You know, would staff come together formally and say --

25 A. That's right, yes. House 1 and House 2 staff, say, or

1 House 1 and House 4 staff would meet to talk about the
2 girl, and they probably would have been informally
3 chatting beforehand anyway, you know, but they would
4 have a formal handover, yes.

5 Q. Did you notice any difference in the type of presenting
6 behaviour with the girls from -- you know, from when you
7 arrived in to ...? Did it become more -- you talked
8 about girls with more complex needs.

9 A. Yes. Well, they had quite -- quite complex needs, yes.

10 Q. So from the very beginning that would have been your
11 experience, that you were dealing with girls that had
12 quite troubled ...?

13 A. That's right. Actually when I came first in 1977, there
14 were still a few girls there who were what would be
15 called I suppose political prisoners. You know, they
16 would have been under age. Like, they would have been
17 maybe 15 or 16 and they would have been in Armagh Prison
18 for things like carrying a camogue stick or maybe
19 carrying worse than that, and they would have been
20 allowed out of the prison to go to Middletown as
21 an alternative, but they were all sort of gone I would
22 say by 1978. So that was -- that was one thing that
23 changed, yes.

24 Q. We have heard about girls going home for the weekend.
25 Was that encouraged? Was there a ...?

1 A. Well, if there was -- there was a policy to try and keep
2 contact with family unless family was considered to be
3 det... -- harmful, harmful or dangerous, you know, if
4 there was suspected incest, or I suppose if alcoholism
5 was a big problem in the family or something like that,
6 you know.

7 Q. We have heard about SR235 taking the girls to the bus in
8 order for them to go home. So there would be a certain
9 degree of freedom for the girls in terms of travelling
10 by themselves?

11 A. Oh, yes, yes, yes. If they were going -- if they were
12 going, say, at regular times, like -- there would be
13 longer holiday at Christmas and Easter and that -- there
14 would be -- they would go by minibus to Belfast, but for
15 most other places, if they were able to travel on a bus,
16 they would travel on a bus, but there would be
17 an arrangement, like, that you would check out the
18 family. You would ask a social worker or somebody to
19 check out. I mean, there were girls from Derry and
20 Coleraine and Ballymena and everywhere, you know.

21 Q. Would they have the freedom to go out into the locality
22 to go to shops or ...?

23 A. Yes. Not -- not without supervision unless they were
24 very reliable. You know, they did -- they did go out
25 regularly, but the staff would always go with them, you

1 know. Staff would take one or two or three maybe.

2 Q. Okay. My last question is as a member of the senior
3 management team, do you remember the senior managers
4 having any discussions about concerns about how a staff
5 member was engaging with the girls?

6 A. Well, in all the years I would only remember maybe one
7 or two.

8 Q. Can you remember what that would be about -- what that
9 was about?

10 A. I'm trying to remember. I think there was concern one
11 time that a staff member might have been stealing towels
12 and things like that. That's one thing I remember.

13 Q. But anything --

14 A. I don't remember a concern about how staff would be
15 dealing with the children. I don't remember --

16 Q. That happening.

17 A. -- you know, and I think -- I think if that happened, it
18 probably would have been dealt with in the house, and
19 then if the housemother or team leader was concerned,
20 she probably would have spoken to SR240 on her own and
21 SR240 would have told us about it, but nothing stands
22 out in my memory.

23 Q. Your mind. Okay. Thank you very much, Sister.

24 MR LANE: You mentioned near the beginning that there were
25 incremental changes.

1 A. Yes.

2 Q. One of then you mentioned was increases in staffing.

3 A. That's right, yes.

4 Q. I am not sure whether you will be able to answer this
5 question, but was there ever any problem getting
6 sufficient funding for increases like that as far as you
7 are aware?

8 A. Well, I've seen letters that SR240 wrote from time to
9 time explaining that circumstances were changing and
10 problems were more complex and there's more self-injury,
11 and "We need more staff and we need more money", and
12 I noticed -- I was looking at staff training
13 documentation recently, and I noticed that she was
14 asking for -- she was estimating how much it would be to
15 buy in -- there was a Dr Mary Magee --

16 Q. Uh-huh.

17 A. -- who came to give training on the campus and very
18 frequently -- I mean, I myself remember going to many
19 courses, and two or three staff members being with me,
20 going out to courses run by Social Services and things
21 like that. Does that answer ...?

22 Q. Yes. So there was no real problem? You got the
23 resources you needed, in other words?

24 A. Well, she was very good with money. She was a bit of
25 a financial wizard, as I said, and very economical with

1 it. Yet nobody ever felt -- if there was anything you
2 needed or felt you wanted for a child, she would get it.

3 Q. Okay. Thank you. One other question and that is that
4 there's mention in the records of girls sometimes
5 expecting, becoming pregnant.

6 A. Yes.

7 Q. How did you -- what was the sort of approach for dealing
8 with them?

9 A. It was very matter of fact I think --

10 Q. Uh-huh.

11 A. -- pragmatic and humane.

12 Q. They stayed at St. Joe's?

13 A. In some cases they stayed at St. Joseph's, yes. In some
14 cases -- I remember one case where I pleaded in court
15 for a girl with a criminal offence to be allowed to go
16 home, because she was pregnant --

17 Q. Uh-huh.

18 A. -- and I was granted that.

19 Q. Right.

20 A. In some cases I remember the field social worker we had,
21 , I remember her being very involved with
22 girls who were pregnant, you know, to make sure that
23 their needs were catered for. If they really wanted to
24 keep their baby, she tried her best to get them the
25 support to do that, yes.

1 Q. Thank you very much.

2 Further questions from COUNSEL TO THE INQUIRY

3 MS SMITH: Sister, I know I said I had no further questions
4 for you, but I have been asked to ask you if you are
5 aware of -- apparently we heard -- not it wasn't
6 a witness that I took -- about a boy who was in Rathgael
7 who was able to obtain specialist treatment that was
8 paid for by the Northern Ireland Office.

9 Were you ever aware of that kind of facility being
10 available to girls who were presenting with particular
11 needs, that there was an option of them maybe getting
12 one-to-one treatment from a GP or something like that
13 and being paid for?

14 A. I don't remember that, but I do remember one girl in
15 particular who -- I don't know who paid for her, though.
16 She went to some facility in England. I presume the
17 Northern Ireland Office paid, because we weren't able to
18 help her. She had very extreme mental health problems.
19 I do remember one.

20 I know there is a young woman who is still in
21 a secure facility in England, who still keeps in contact
22 with Sister Canice and one of our lay staff, because she
23 -- when -- she was with us for a couple of years and
24 then after care, and then she went to England and she
25 ended up in prison I think, and then in prison they

1 realised she had mental health problems. She's -- you
2 know, she's still not better, but she still keeps that
3 link --

4 Q. With St. Joseph's.

5 A. -- and they send her what she needs and listen to her
6 phone calls and stuff.

7 Q. Thank you very much, Sister. I apologise that I had to
8 come back to you on that.

9 A. Okay.

10 Q. I presume Mr Wolfe had in mind the boy who was sent to
11 a specific institution in England --

12 MS SMITH: Yes.

13 CHAIRMAN: -- on I think two occasions --

14 MS SMITH: Yes.

15 CHAIRMAN: -- one where the place burned down?

16 MS SMITH: That's correct.

17 CHAIRMAN: Well, SR234, thank you very much indeed for
18 coming to speak to us today. We are very grateful to
19 you for what you have been able to tell us about things
20 at St. Joseph's. Thank you.

21 (Witness withdrew)

22 MS SMITH: Chairman, that concludes today's evidence and
23 indeed the week's evidence.

24 CHAIRMAN: Yes. Well, we are not sitting next week, but we
25 will resume this module on Monday week.

1 (12.20 pm)

2 (Inquiry adjourned until 10 o'clock
3 on Monday, 22nd February 2016)

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