

PRIVATE

HIA REF: 427

Witness Name: HIA 427

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF HIA 427

I, HIA 427 will say as follows:-

Personal details

1. I was born on [REDACTED]. I have never had any direct or indirect contact with my biological parents since being placed in care.

St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road, Belfast (1944 – 1 September 1949)

2. I was sent as a baby to stay in St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road, Belfast and I stayed there for the first five years of my life. I was then moved to Nazareth Lodge in Belfast when I was five years old.

Nazareth Lodge, Belfast (1 September 1949 – 20 August 1956)

3. There were approximately forty boys in Nazareth Lodge. We stayed in dormitories and there were about twelve children in each dormitory.
4. At Nazareth Lodge I was subjected to regular physical assaults. If you did not greet a nun properly you got a slap on the face, your hair pulled or you would be lifted up by the ears.

PRIVATE

5. My memory of Nazareth Lodge is that the nuns kicked and beat us, cut and shaved our hair and used Jeyes fluid to clean us. A frequent punishment was to make you clean the floors of the home with a hand scrubber.
6. I recall going to school at that time but it was a waste of time. We could not learn as we lived in constant fear and felt nervous all the time which was not conducive to learning. I was always afraid of being given a hiding or being kicked by the nuns or teachers. I would spend my time looking at the walls in school as I was always fearful and anxious. There were also a lot of rough children at the school. I decided I was not going to let them beat me so I always got on with my life.
7. I remember feeling hungry during my time at Nazareth Lodge and not getting much food.
8. You were not allowed to leave the grounds of the Lodge. If you sneaked out the nuns would give you a serious beating.
9. There were four nuns who were particularly cruel to me, **SR 100** Sister **SR 151** **SR 34** and **SR 118** These nuns carried out most of the assaults on me. **SR 34** was in the cell in my dormitory, she would have insisted my trousers were taken down when I was being strapped for wetting the bed. After she threw the wet and dirty sheets over me I was subjected to cold baths.
10. Another very cruel nun was **SR 100** She was very rough and loved hitting me. She strapped me on the bench and hit me with her fist and on the head with her knuckles. She would hit me on the hands first and then put my hands on the bench and hit the back of my hand with her knuckles. If she missed my hands she would hit me across the legs. I was hit with a black strap, sticks or sometimes with a more flexible stick like a cane. You would be too afraid to even look at her.

PRIVATE

11. Two nuns who were extremely rough were **SR 151** and Sister **SR 118**. They beat me often and I was constantly afraid and anxious. **SR 118** was a bad nun.

12. The nuns had older boys who were considered to be their pets and they were allowed to tell you what to do and they would often hit you. They would pull you by the hair, hit you against a wall or hit you on the head. I lived in fear of them. They even scared me on one occasion to the point where I soiled myself and they made me eat it. My hands were tied and there was no-one there to help me. I will never forget that. I recall being beaten by **NL 40**, **NL 40**, **NL 41** and **NL 42**.

13. I was constantly afraid and anxious in Nazareth Lodge and would often soil myself and wet the bed regularly at night. The punishment for this was to be strapped by the nuns. They carried black leather straps around their body. The prefects often held you down whilst you were being strapped. They threw wet and dirty sheets over me and on to my face. I was also hit with sticks by the nuns who resided in cells beside the dormitories in Nazareth Lodge.

14. I remember one boy, **NL 43** and they used to threaten to send him to Muckamore Abbey. They nearly killed him.

15. There was a boy in the home called **NL 44** who was great fun and I used to play cowboys in the field with him. There was also another boy called **██████████** who appeared in the concert with me when I sang Danny Boy. I am told I am a good singer and I used to be a good dancer. I would always sing when I felt fear inside me when I was young.

16. No-one from the outside world ever came in to see the boys during my stay. I recall one occasion during my stay at Nazareth Lodge when a man called Mr **██████████** took me out for a couple of days and I thought I was in heaven. He took me to the cinema to see an Elvis movie. He and his family were very kind and they bought me presents which I could take back to the home. If they bought me sweets I would eat them before returning to the home.

PRIVATE

[Redacted]

17. [Redacted]

18. [Redacted]

19. [Redacted]

20. [Redacted]

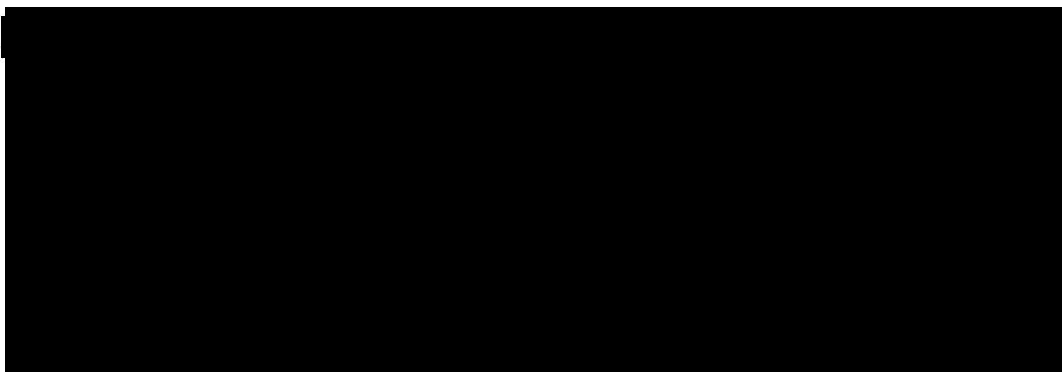
21. [Redacted]

PRIVATE

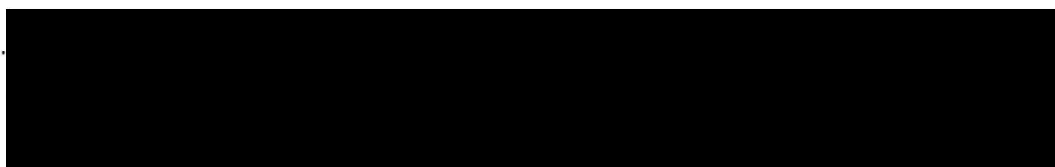
22.



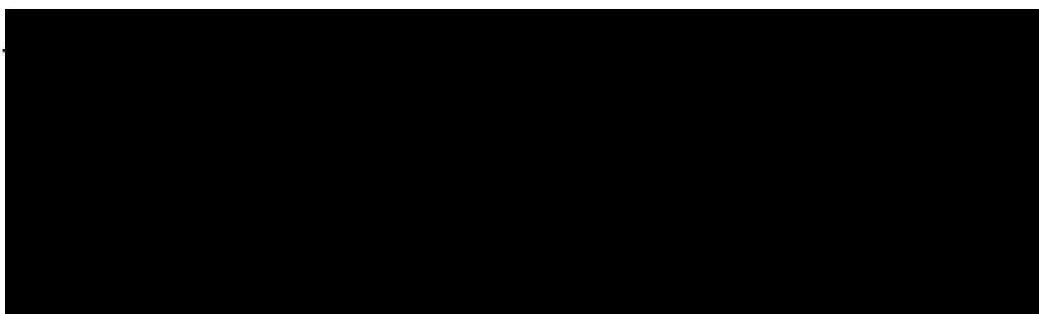
23.



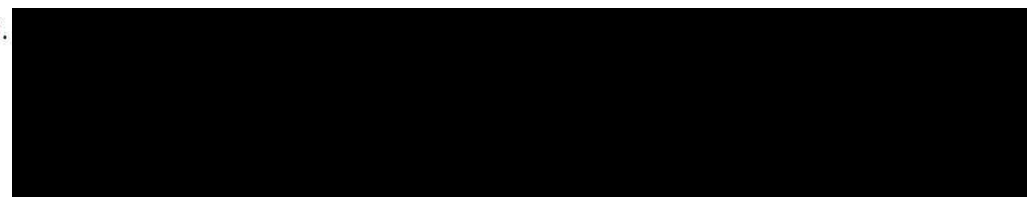
24.



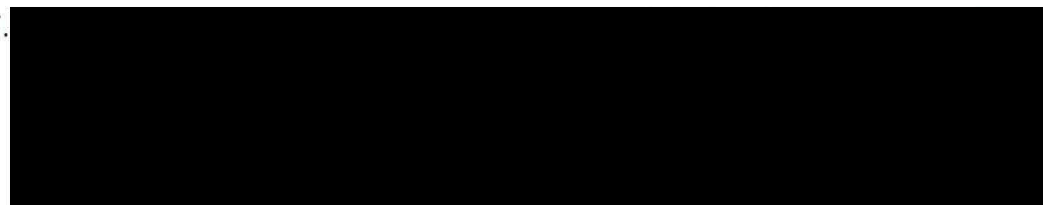
25.



26.



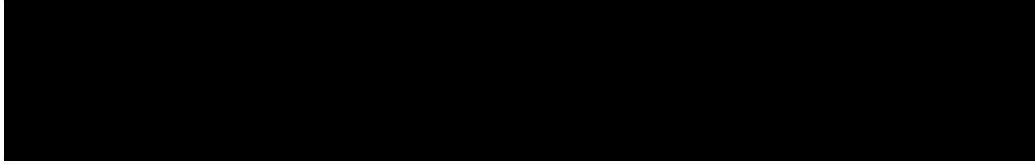
27.



28.



PRIVATE



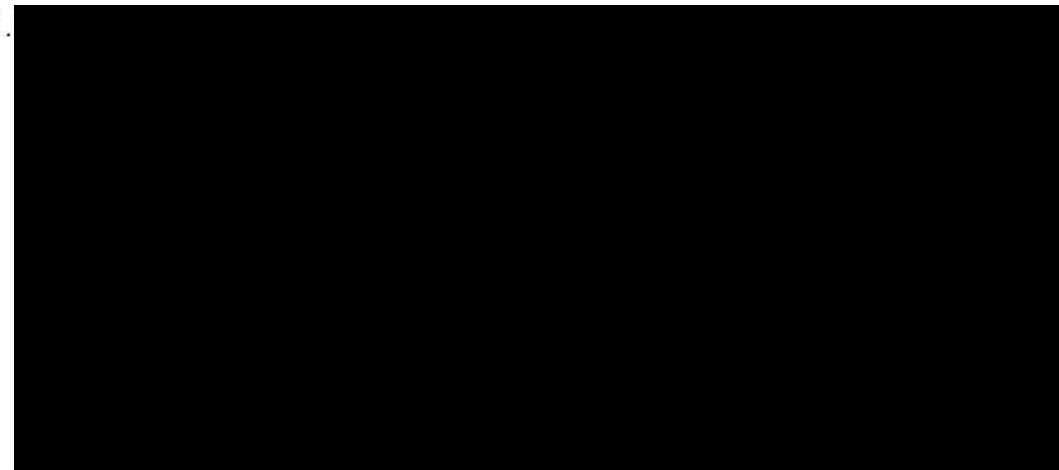
29.



30.



31.



Life after care

32. I have lived in a flat in Warrenpoint for thirty years. I recently had an operation for stomach cancer.

33. Throughout my lifetime I have suffered episodes of trauma in the form of intrusive memories, flashbacks and nightmares. Many of these have been of a distressing nature associated with incidents where I was subjected to physical assaults which in turn led to disturbed sleep patterns. I have felt anxiety combined with a low and irritable mood. I suffer from depression and anxiety. I feel that my inability to learn was due to the crippling fear I felt continually through my time in care.

PRIVATE

34. My confidence was destroyed during my time in care but I made a lot of friends and got on with my life and built my confidence back up again. You had to start all over again and rebuild your life when you left care. I had not done anything wrong to be placed in care.

35. I went back on one occasion with my friend [REDACTED] to see Rubane House. I was delighted when I heard that it has been closed down. I blame the people around us and those in the community who allowed the abuse to continue. No-one cared about me or about my life.

36. I did not appreciate the extent to which my treatment in care as a child had affected my adult life and have only really appreciated the significance of the negative impact it has had on me since attending a consultant clinical psychologist in later years.

Statement of Truth

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

Signed _____ **HIA 427**

Dated 18/2/2014

*in the presence of
Rosemary Conolly
Solicitor
Waneipac
18/2/2014*

PRIVATE

were a lot of older boys and I found that intimidating. I do not remember any love or any stimulation.

5. I remember being punished a couple of times when I was about five or six years old for something trivial by being put in a freezing cold bath by **SR 118**. I was placed in the cold water and then the cold water was poured over my head about half a dozen times. I remember one occasion I was punished in this manner along with another boy called **HIA 427** who was my age. He had special needs and was not always in control of his bowels. I was punished first. **SR 118** then ordered me out of the bath and told **HIA 427** to get undressed. I realised **HIA 427** had soiled his underpants. **SR 118** took his soiled underpants and violently and cruelly rubbed them in his face. Until my dying day I will never forget what happened or what **SR 118** was capable of. **HIA 427** and I were only about seven years old and the experience has had a profound effect on me. I visited **HIA 427** when he was dying of cancer. Sadly he passed away on [REDACTED] and I am glad to have had the opportunity to see him before he died. He was a lovely man and an old friend.
6. I also remember a night when **SR 34** made everyone in our dormitory get out of bed and kneel in the corridor for an hour. It was very cold. I do not know why we had to do this but I think it was because someone had done something wrong. **SR 34** must have realised how unfair she had been to us as she gave us all a chocolate sweet before we went to bed that night.
7. There was a lay staff member called **NL 4**. One day we were going in to the refectory for our dinner. There was a new kitchen being built and I was fascinated to see what had been built. I was looking in through the half door. I could hear **NL 4** saying to hurry up and the next minute she slapped me across the face from behind and knocked me off balance. It stung for several hours afterwards. There was no warning and it was a terrible experience. She was not suitable for that job because of her vile temper.