

HIA REF: _____

NAME (In full): Dominic Burke

DATE: 4th June 2015

THE INQUIRY INTO HISTORICAL INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE 1922 TO 1995

WITNESS STATEMENT OF DOMINIC BURKE

I, Dominic Burke will say as follows: -

1. I have previously filed statements to the Inquiry in Module 1 as follows:
 - a. Witness Statement dated 12th December 2013 at SND 11659
 - b. Witness Statement dated 3rd April 2014 at SND 16576
 - c. Witness Statement dated 23rd May 2014 at SND 19145

2. As previously outlined, I commenced employment with the Western Health and Social Services Board (WHSSB) in July 1975. I initially held a post as a generic Senior Social Worker / Team Leader in Strabane.

3. I was then appointed from 1 January 1980 to the post of Principal Social Worker for Field Work Services.

4. In or around 1st January 1985, I was appointed Assistant Director of Social Services (Training and Staff Development) in the

WHSSB. During this period the WHSSB provided resources to support staff in securing their professional qualifications. Within this initiative priority was given to staff working in residential care. Staff were facilitated in their professional development through secondments, courses and a significant investment in in-service training. From October 1986 the Open University Course "Caring for Children and Young People" was offered, and taken up by staff from both Fort James and Harberton House Children's Homes. I was supported in my role as ADSS (Training) by a Principal Social Worker (PSW), and a number of Assistant Principal Social Workers (APSWs). Each of the APSWs supervised 10 staff through their CSS qualification. The staff supported through this course would have been drawn from the Units of Management, including those working in child residential care. The opportunity and support to achieve professional qualifications were also offered to staff working in the voluntary sector with the Sisters of Nazareth. I have been advised and confirm that the Inspection and Monitoring Reports for both Homes record these opportunities having been taken up by these residential care staff. I attach memo of 4 April 1991 from TL 4, APSW, Foyle Community Unit to Mr Haverty, Chief Social Work Adviser, regarding the training initiatives offered to staff in a residential child care setting. (Exhibit 1)

5. While the WHSSB fully supported staff in the residential care sector in achieving their qualification, this commitment was not without consequences. Once qualified, individuals were also qualified to apply for other posts for example within fieldwork. Fieldwork was particularly attractive for some because of more

attractive pay and no requirement to undertake shift work. This was recognised in the Social Services Inspectorate Report of June 1987, see FJH 6726 which is recorded at paragraph 3.

“A perennial problem faced by management is the retention of trained social workers on the home’s staff who are frequently recruited to fieldwork posts where salaries and conditions of service are advantageous.”

6. Following the appointment of **SND 502** to the post of Acting Director of Social Services in or around December 1988, I assumed the additional responsibility of Acting Assistant Director Social Services Family and Child Care. It was in this capacity that I became aware of incidents of peer child abuse that had occurred in Harberton House and the remainder of this statement is intended to deal with what I knew, when and what steps were taken by WHSSB in relation to same. I was subsequently appointed as Director of Social Care in January 1991.
7. I recall being first notified of the issue in March 1990. The Unit of Management (LLS) General Manager advised Mr Frawley and ^{SND 502} **SND 502** of the peer abuse. I think it is important to note that when I learnt of this issue it stands out to me as being the first awareness I had of peer abuse.
8. On 8th May 1990 **SND 502** , Acting Director of Social Services, notified the Department (Mr O’Brien, Social Services Inspector) of the issues and difficulties being experienced within the home. (Exhibit 2)

9. A presentation regarding Child Care was made to the Community Care Committee of WHSSB on the 1st June 1990 detailing developments within the programme of care regarding the complexity and difficulties in managing the child care programme. The presentation was introduced by **SND 502** and supported by Mr Gabriel Carey and ^{TL 4} **TL 4 TL 4** from the Londonderry/Limavady and Strabane Unit of Management. (Exhibit 3) C45/90)
10. This presentation is also referenced in the Western Health and Social Services Board minutes of the 28th June 1990 (Exhibit 4.)
11. Following the disclosure of peer abuse and discussion within the Board and Unit of Management a Review Team was established to examine the implications for the Family and Child Care Services. (see Community Care Committee Minutes 3rd August 1990 (Exhibit 5)
12. The Review Team included: -
 - Mr R Bunting – Assistant Director Social Services (Family and Child Care), Eastern Health and Social Services Board
 - Mr J Armstrong – Senior Social Services Manager, Western Health and Social Services Board
 - **HH 37** , Principal Social Worker (Training and Staff Development), Western Health and Social Services Board

The Terms of Reference were as follows: -

- a. To review the background to the incidents of peer child abuse as referred to above.
 - b. To explore the lessons to be learned in order to enable us to respond more appropriately to the needs of children who have been traumatised in this way.
 - c. To examine roles and functions of staff and also to examine the part played by the children.
 - d. To identify the training implications.
 - e. To examine the implications for multi-disciplinary working.
 - f. To examine the resource implications.
13. I note that in October 1990, when reporting on her visit to Harberton House to the Community Care Committee, Mrs McGowan confirmed that her suggestion that waking cover should be provided during night hours had now been implemented. (Exhibit 6) The committee were also given an up-dated presentation on child care and advised that the Review Team hoped to be in a position to report further by the end of October 1990.
14. Mr Bunting reported on the circumstances surrounding incidents of peer child abuse in Harberton Children's Home. I was in attendance when the report was presented by Mr Bunting to the Community Care Committee on the 7th December 1990 Community Care Minutes 7th December 1990. (Exhibit 7) The minutes note:

“He (Mr Bunting) explained that the team had concentrated on a period in late 1989 and early 1990 when child care services within all of the Unit had been under very intense pressure. He stressed that the difficulties that had arisen at Harberton House could have happened anywhere due to the pressure which had built up. These pressures related to increasing success in identifying children at risk with the resultant increase in workload compounding the problem.”

15. In this respect I would comment that throughout my personal experience in fieldwork, staff always worked with the best interests of the child at the forefront. When children were identified as at risk in the community, bringing them into care was expected to protect them and offer them a better opportunity in life. The events that had occurred in residential care were a significant challenge in that respect.
16. I would also highlight that the detail of the Bunting Review, see FJH 10309, sets out the circumstances pertaining at the time, the background of the children and the manner in which the staff dealt with the complex issues. It highlights that there had been an increase in admissions resulting in staff being under additional pressure. However, it does indicate (paragraph 10.30) “that considerable efforts were made by middle and senior management staff at Unit and Headquarters to meet increased demand from January 1990. Particularly praiseworthy is the performance of the Foster Care Unit
17. At the conclusion of the presentation the committee agreed that:

- i. the issues raised in the report should be examined by the Foyle Community Unit;
 - ii. a copy of the report should be forwarded to the Department.
18. The Community Care Committee next met on 1st February 1991, see FJH 10435. On that occasion I addressed the committee to confirm that as recommended on 7th December 1990, the report had been provided to the Department. I also outlined a series of meetings that had taken place with management and staff regarding the outcomes, conclusions and recommendations of the Review Report.

They were noted as follows:

- a. Senior Managers, Foyle Community Unit with the Review Team;
- b. Mr Haverty, Mr Carey and myself with the Senior Management Group in child care;
- c. Senior Management with representatives of NIPSA.


I noted that arrangements had also been made to meet the remainder of staff in our child care facilities in the incoming week and summarised my views that these meetings had been most helpful. This was not least to assist staff in understanding that they had the support of the Committee and Board in their endeavours, but also to reassure staff that the Board were with their senior managers working to look at how the recommendations could best be implemented.

19. The WHSSB continued to keep this issue under review with an up-date provided to the Board on 28th March 1991. (Exhibit 8)
It was again revisited at the Social Care Committee on 23rd April 1991. This noted my report that during the 3-month period of January – March 1990, 58 children had been admitted to care, which by any standards was a very high number. It also noted a proposal of the Board to “hold a one-day conference for Residential Social Work in Northern Ireland seeking to highlight and learn from the many difficulties staff working in child care were facing”. (Exhibit 9)
20. Subsequently on 30th April 1991, I forwarded a proposed programme for such a regional seminar to Mr Frawley, from which it will be seen that there was an intention that contributions would be made from both the Western and Eastern Boards. See FJH 10400-10401 for the letter to Dr McCoy dated 16 January 1991 enclosing the preliminary notice for the seminar on 4 February 1992. The seminar subsequently took place on 4 February 1992. (Exhibit 10), which can also be found at FJH 92- FJH 151.
21. By this time I had also written to the Department on 27 February 1991. (Exhibit 11)
22. Mr McCoy, Chief Inspector, Social Services Inspectorate, DHSSPS subsequently wrote to me on 20 January 1992. See (Exhibit 12). I provided a detailed response by letter dated 7 April 1992 with reference to each recommendation of the Review Report and the steps taken towards implementation. (Exhibit 13)

Statement of Truth

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

Signed:

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dominic Burke". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Dated: 4th June 2015

4/19/8

CONFIDENTIAL

KC/15/8/90

From: K F McCOY, CHIEF INSPECTOR, SSI

cc: Dr Harbison
Mr Kearney
Mr McElpatrick

Date: 28 AUGUST 1990

Mr Hunter

Conrad 6

HARBERTON HOUSE

29/8/90

1. You will recall that before you went off on Annual Leave we met on 26 July 1990 to review the Western Board's response to incidents which had taken place in Harberton House between December 1989 and March 1990, and which had come to light only in March 1990.
2. We agreed that the Board would be asked to initiate an investigation into the situation and that a senior social services officer with relevant management experience of residential childrens homes should conduct the enquiry, which we felt should be of short duration.
3. I subsequently discussed the situation with SND 502 Acting Director of Social Services and followed this up on 30 July 1990 with a letter outlining the following draft terms of reference:
 - to review the background to the incidents of sexual activity between children in Harberton House during the period December 1989 to March 1990 and, in particular, why the incidents were not detected earlier;
 - to examine the roles and professional activities of individual staff, including key workers and management staff with responsibility for supervision, during the period;
 - to explore the lessons to be learned for residential care of children;
 - to examine the training and experience of the staff group in the home and review the training implications for residential care;
 - to explore the multi disciplinary nature of the care and treatment requirements of the children involved.

I suggested she might wish to amend these in discussion with her General Manager and asked her to let me have a note of the agreed terms of reference, the composition of the enquiry team and her likely timescale for completion of the exercise.
4. I have since received from SND 502 the requested information. See copy letter attached. Although the terms of reference have been modified, enquiries have revealed that her intention is to have all the matters in my suggested terms of reference investigated. Her terms of reference are more circumspect (eg no specific reference to Harberton House or to the intent to enquire into why activities occurring between children between December and March were not detected sooner). Her reasons for that are

10014


WESTERN
 HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES BOARD
**AREA BOARD HEADQUARTERS**

Please use this reference in your reply

 Our Ref: TH.dm
 Your Ref:
 Date 7 April 1992

Dr K F McCoy
 Chief Inspector
 DHSS
 Donald House
 Upper Newtownards Road
 Belfast
 BT4 3SF

Dear Dr ^{Kevin} McCoy

REPORT ON THE CIRCUMSTANCES SURROUNDING INCIDENTS OF PEER CHILD ABUSE AT HARBERTON CHILDREN'S HOME

Thank you for your letter of 20 January 1992. I indicated in my letter of 27 February 1991 of the steps taken to increase the staffing levels at Harberton House and the additional resources provided for foster care services and Nazareth House. The staffing level at Coneywarren Children's Home was also increased.

I would now wish to advise you that the Consultant Psychiatrist post for children and adolescents is currently advertised.

I would point out again as I did on the 27 February 1991 that the Board experienced difficulty in addressing all the recommendations made by the review group because of the competing demand for resources.

Since I wrote to you in February, staff both at Board Headquarters and Unit of Management have examined the report in detail again with view to taking follow up action on the recommendations made. The following is the position in relation to the recommendations.

Recommendation 11.1

The professionalisation of Family and Child Care Services which will ensure that all social work staff either working in a fieldwork residential or day care setting will be professionally qualified and be paid to similar salaries.

Ms Chambers 

This looks like a very good reply.

If you are content please advise

Colleagues in PSC and ME and prepare draft reply.

Kevin Coy

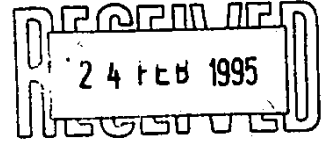
10/4

up a lot of expensive management time, it is disruptive to staff and uses up a lot of paper. He said he was convinced that there is advantage to be gained from a period of stability when Boards could concentrate on a "get up and go" strategy towards a high quality cost effective system of health care and spend less time and money on designing and redesigning the method of travel to be used to get there.

Referring to achievements over the last 6 years the Chairman stated that a very considerable amount of money had been spent by the Board on much needed capital development, £15m on major building schemes already completed and a further £8m on buildings to be completed in the next 6 months. It was not the expenditure of the money which gave him satisfaction but it was the knowledge that the new developments were making it possible for the Board to offer a much improved service to the people for whom the Board was responsible. Commenting on improvements at Altnagelvin Area Hospital he said there had been considerable increases in the range of services available, additional ward accommodation had been provided and the Board was currently having discussions with the Department regarding further expansion at that site. He reminded members of developments in the provision of services for the mentally handicapped including new buildings at Glenside, Strabane and Maybrook in Londonderry and also reminded members of the recently built Creggan Day Centre, Londonderry which was now being extensively used by families in that area. He pointed out that elderly people had not been forgotten and referred to the newly built purpose designed hospital at Enniskillen and the provision of a similar type facility at the Gransha site to be opened in the coming months. He also referred to the new Renal Dialysis Unit at the Tyrone County Hospital which eliminated the long weary journey from the West of the Province to Belfast for many patients.

The Chairman went on to state that while he had been referring to new buildings and facilities, the Board has continued to refurbish many of its existing establishments both in equipment and in the fabric. He indicated that demand for services continue to grow and the Board's population of 270,000 now accounts for approximately 36,000 acute inpatient hospital admissions, 140,000 out-patient attendances and 74,000 accident and emergency attendances each year.

He stressed that another landmark worth noting was that during this period the Board had finally convinced the Department that the system used to allocate finances made available to the Province for health care was unfair to the Western Board. The result of these negotiations led to a welcome shift of finance towards the Board from 1988 onwards.



DB.TH.mmcc

22 February 1995

Miss M Reynolds
Inspector
Social Services Inspectorate
Department of Health and Social Services
Dundonald House
BELFAST
BT4 3SF

Dear Miss Reynolds

Re: Triennial Inspections of Children's Homes 1993/94

Thank you of your letter of 4 January 1995. The recommendations in respect of your report on Harberton House Children's Home have now been considered with the Unit of Management and I would make the following response:

- 1 The Unit of Management should ensure that its Supplies Department provides choices of furniture and fabrics for Children's Homes which are of a domestic nature.

This recommendation has been addressed and it is accepted by the Supplies Department that furnishings and fabrics provided will be of a domestic nature in keeping with the ethos of the facility.

- 2 The Aims and Objectives of Harberton House should be reviewed within the Board's Overall Child Care Strategy. The implications for this Home and any reduction in the number of residential places available in Foyle Unit should be assessed.

The Aims and Objectives of Harberton House are currently under review both in terms of interim arrangements supporting the closure of Fort James and in terms of long-term planning within the strategic objectives for Residential Care.

The Draft Area Purchasing Plan indicates that the Residential Child Care Strategy is to reduce the number of Residential Child Care Places provided by the Board from 74 in 1994/95 to 56 in 1995/96 - 18 places at Coneywarren - 20 places at Harberton House.

Foyle Community Unit of Management have agreed to purchase 18 residential child care places from Nazareth House, Bishop Street, Londonderry. It may however also be necessary, on occasions, to purchase some additional places from outside the Unit's area.