Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland, 1922-1990

Report
January 2021

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For the Inter Departmental Working Group on Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries and Historical Clerical Child Abuse

Mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries in Northern Ireland: report prepared for the inter-departmental working group

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Introduction

This introduction provides the background detail to several elements of this research project. As is the case with each element of this report, it is written in the knowledge that there will be significant public interest in its content. For this reason, every effort has been made to avoid overly academic language within the analysis.

The following introduction outlines:

- the origins of the project;
- the aims that were set for the research team by the inter-departmental working group;
- the appointment of the researchers and the timeline of research;
- issues around securing access to archival records; and
- ethical, methodological and theoretical issues around the oral history.

Project origins

In July 2013, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), urged the extension of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI) to include scrutiny of the experience of women who entered the Magdalene Laundries at the age of 18 and above. It also urged that 'adequate redress was provided to all victims of abuse who were detained in the Magdalene Laundries and similar institutions'[1]. Similar recommendations were made by the United Nations Committee against Torture (UNCAT) earlier in the same year.[2]

In October 2016, the Northern Ireland Executive agreed that an inter-departmental group should be established to review the evidence in terms of historical abuse of residents in mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries which fell outside the terms of reference of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. An initial scoping exercise was completed, which sought to ascertain basic details about the operation of the homes/laundries in Northern Ireland. On the basis of information unearthed by earlier historical researchers (particularly Dr Sean Lucey) and the general dearth of publicly available information, the scoping exercise concluded that there was little data on the number of women who were residents of these institutions. Much remained unknown about the experiences of the women in these institutions regardless of whether they were provided by the State, local authorities or voluntary sector. More systematic research was required to enable the inter-departmental group to reach a position from which it could make recommendations to the Executive on any further course of action in relation to historical mother and baby homes/Magdalene

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1 United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, Concluding observations on the seventh periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (26 July 2013) para. 24 &25

2 United Nations Committee Against Torture, Concluding observations on the fifth periodic report of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, (6-31 May 2013) para.24

laundries in Northern Ireland. Based on the limited information available, it was envisaged that it would take up to 12 months to carry out the additional research.

The Inter-departmental Group

The membership of the inter-departmental group included an independent chairperson, Norah Gibbons (Feb. 2017-Mar. 2018), Peter McBride (June 2019-May 2020) and Judith Gillespie (June 2020-) with membership drawn from the following Northern Ireland Civil Service (NICS) departments:

- Department of Health;
- The Executive Office;
- Department of Justice;
- Department of Education;
- Department for the Economy;
- Department for Communities;
- Department of Finance (Departmental Solicitor's Office).

The inter-departmental group's role was to review and evaluate the evidence analysed in this report, keeping Ministers and senior departmental officials appraised of its findings and using those conclusions to identify potential subsequent actions.

Research requirements

The scope of the study involved researching a number of identified mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries from the foundation of the Northern Ireland state through to the 1990s. The research incorporated:

- a literature review;
- an examination of archive records i.e. surviving records from the institutions and files and records from Government Departments during the relevant period of the 20th century; and
- an oral history project to include testimony of former residents and other witnesses from the institutions during the relevant period of the 20th century.

Information reported in a scoping exercise for the Department of Health in relation to the known institutions which operated as mother and baby homes/Magdalene laundries and residential facilities for single mothers during the relevant period of the 20th Century indicated that this included up to 14 institutions.[3] Specifically the research was required to explore the following with regard to each of the institutions:

- circumstances and arrangements for the entry and exit pathways of women in respect of the institutions;
- the living conditions and care arrangements experienced by residents during their period of accommodation in these institutions, including by reference to the literature on the living conditions and care experienced by mothers and children applying more generally during the relevant period;
- the mortality amongst mothers and children residing in these institutions including information on the general causes, circumstances, and rates of mortality compared to the mortality amongst such other groups of women and children during the period;
- the post-mortem practices and procedures in respect of children or mothers who died while resident in these institutions, including the reporting of deaths, and burial arrangements;
- for children who did not remain in the care of their parents, to examine exit pathways on leaving these institutions to establish patterns of referral or relevant relationships with other entities including:
    - the extent of participation of mothers in relevant decisions;
    - the procedures which were in place to obtain consent from mothers in respect of adoption;
    - whether these procedures were adequate for the purpose of ensuring such consent was full, free and informed; and
    - the practices and procedures for the placement of children.
- oral and written accounts/evidence/testimony from former residents, wider family and employees of the homes/laundries;
- information in relation to other relevant matters identified during the course of the research which may warrant further investigation in the public interest.

Appointment of researchers

Following a competitive tendering process, the research contract was awarded to a combined Queen's University/Ulster University team. Dr Leanne McCormick and Professor Sean O'Connell led the project and are the primary authors of this report. They have been assisted in writing the report by Dr Olivia Dee and Dr John Privilege. Work commenced on the research in March 2018 and was scheduled to continue for twelve months. However, the researchers requested a total of four additional months to enable them to both complete the complex task of processing the material collected in the initial twelve months and to pursue further research on a number of baby homes which were not on the original list of institutions to be investigated. There was no extra cost to the public purse associated with the extra research phase. The report was submitted to the inter-

3 Sean Lucey, 'Mother and baby home controversy: implications for Northern Ireland', (Briefing paper: November 2014).

departmental working group on 5th August 2019. Following appraisal by members of the Inter-departmental group, in November 2019, the researchers were asked to provide a revised report that included an Executive Summary and factored in a number of legal clarifications on the issue of adoption that had been received following submission of the initial report. The researchers submitted a further full version of the report in February 2020 just before the onset of Covid19. Then followed a Maxwellisation process, in which multiple organisations were offered the opportunity to identify any factual inaccuracies in the areas of the report in which they featured. When these were received, in Autumn 2020, they were addressed and a further (and final) version of the report was submitted in December 2020.

Access to Archival Records

A wide range of archival records were accessed, in a variety of locations and formats. It is important to note that some of the records analysed for this report have never been accessed by historians. As this research was being carried out as part of a non-statutory inquiry, the co-operation of any organisation or individual was based on goodwill rather than any legal compulsion. Goodwill was forthcoming but it was often necessary to engage in detailed negotiations about access to records with the several of the institutions responsible for the historical records expressing very legitimate concerns about data protection and confidentiality.

This was particularly true in relation to the records relating to the Good Shepherd Convents. The Good Shepherd Sisters maintained that one of their highest priorities is the preservation of the privacy of those girls and women who passed through their mother and baby homes or the St Mary's homes in which they operated laundries. They required strong assurances of the research team's commitment to data protection and security. In the months before the Good Shepherd Sisters were asked to cooperate with the research, BBC journalists had gained access to baptismal records connected with the Marianvale mother and baby home. A Radio Four documentary was broadcast, which asked whether or not there had been forced adoptions and/or illegal cross-border adoptions from this former Good Shepherd mother and baby home.[4] The Good Shepherd Sisters denied these allegations but were concerned also that the records that were accessed contained additional personal information on large numbers of individuals (other than baptismal details) and that these might be circulated beyond the BBC journalists. This development heightened the Good Shepherd Sisters' insistence that security was maintained around access to their archives.

Communications with the Good Shepherd Sisters and their solicitor over access to the records began in March 2018 and were not completed until October 2018; the mid-way point of the designated twelve-month research period. This reduced the amount of time that could be devoted by the researchers to this extensive dataset and decisions had to be taken on sampling some of the records rather than exploring them in their entirety. A further factor which necessitated sampling was the prohibition of digital photography as a condition of access to the Good Shepherd records. Data had to be entered onto laptops, with work carried out painstakingly during regular office hours in the offices of the Good Shepherd Sisters' solicitor in Belfast. The necessity to work in this fashion impacted upon working hours. At least one researcher, sometimes two, was based in an office

4 BBC Radio 4: File on Four, The lost children of Marianvale, 27 May 2018. This is accessible at https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0b3cw3m

inputting information, on thousands of individuals, from the Good Shepherd records. This was the case from mid-October 2018 to early February 2019. Access to the records was granted on the condition that the full names of the girls, women (and babies) within them were not recorded by the research team. An exception to this restriction was agreed in those cases where names were required to facilitate further research in other archival sources. This included cases involving cross-border movements of babies and instances where women (or their babies) were recorded as deceased. No use is made in this report of the names of any baby, girl or woman who was a resident of any of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes or the St Mary's homes. The same provision of anonymity is applied to individuals recorded in the archives of all the institutions accessed during the research project.

Access was granted to the entry registers for each of the St Mary's Good Shepherd homes; the registers and case notes of Marianville and Marianvale mother and baby homes, and also to related correspondence. There were also some financial records, which were very limited in terms of their chronology and scope. This material provided insights into the finances of the St Mary's home/laundry in Derry/Londonderry in particular. The entry registers made available were more comprehensive. However, they provided limited details about entrants, their personal biographies, circumstances and time in the mother and baby home and/or St Mary's home/laundry. The data in the entry books enabled the researchers to produce a detailed analysis of the two mother and baby homes and three St Mary's homes/laundries operated in Northern Ireland by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

As is made clear in the discussion of the oral history element of this research project, the willingness of two Good Shepherd Sisters to provide testimony was greatly appreciated, especially as no one with administrative or managerial experience of any of the other mother and baby homes under investigation came forward to volunteer oral testimony. The Church of Ireland and the Presbyterian Church facilitated the dissemination of our appeals for information about mother and baby homes. However, the Salvation Army informed the researchers that it no longer had any means of sending information about the appeal for oral history informants as it had no contacts with the staff of Thorndale House.

In other respects, the Salvation Army facilitated the research in numerous ways. This was also the case with Adoption Routes (who hold the records of Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association, Kennedy House and Hopedene House) and Family Care Adoption Services (who hold the records of Mater Dei and St Joseph's Baby Home). The Salvation Army allowed the researchers to use digital photography in its archive. This enabled the team to analyse the complex data provided in these particular archives as flexibly and efficiently as possible. The research team is grateful to Steven Spencer and Kevin Pooley of the Salvation Army who photographed additional records for the project. Their efforts followed a week-long research trip undertaken by one of the researchers to the Salvation Army Heritage Centre in London during which it was recognised that the considerable scale of the records meant that not all of them could be photographed on that trip. Maggie McSorley of Family Care Adoption Services also gave up a great deal of her time to carry out additional research relating to the St Joseph's baby home, which she made available to the research team.

Records relating to Mater Dei, Thorndale, Kennedy House, and Hopedene mostly took the form of entrance registers or case notes. There were no financial records available for any of these four institutions. Mater Dei records also contained some correspondence. Thorndale records also included Board of Management minutes and reports which added to our understanding of how the institutions were managed.

Data Protection agreements were signed where required by the respective record holders for all these institutions. In the case of all the records which were collected by the researchers, data was held on secure servers or encrypted hard drives.

Public records for Northern Ireland, as well as those from some private depositors, are held in Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). The researchers secured access to records which are closed to the public. This was managed in an efficient and prompt manner and access to large numbers of records was facilitated. A range of public records were consulted including: Cabinet Records; Departmental records - Home Affairs, Commerce, Health and Social Services, Health and Local Government; hospital records; court records; prison records; reformatory and training schools; Local Authority records; and Board of Guardians records.

Private records held at PRONI, such as those relating to Belfast Midnight Mission/Malone Place, were also consulted. Researchers were not permitted to digitally photograph records which are closed to the public and information had to be recorded manually. This was time-consuming and again led to decisions having to be made on whether to create samples of a wide range of records or to focus on specific record subsets. For example, time constraints only permitted the records relating to Belfast Board of Guardians to be consulted, rather than those for workhouses across Northern Ireland. In addition, many of the record groups are extensive and file titles are not always explicit about what is held within them. Considerable time was spent working on Home Affairs records, in particular, which run to hundreds of files; many of which produced no information relevant to the project. It is, therefore, possible that further PRONI records remain unexplored that could provide details that enhance the analysis within the current report.

A major concern of the research team was the preservation of some of the records accessed. Many of the records relating to the religious and voluntary organisations are not held in appropriate conditions and this raises potential issues for further research or inquiry. Records are held in basic office filing cabinets and cardboard boxes and are at risk of deterioration. These are extremely important records, which often relate to adoption and it is crucial these are stored in an appropriate way to ensure their preservation and also to ensure that access to them will be possible in the future. It is strongly advisable that steps are taken to preserve the records of the voluntary organisations involved. Whether this is by digitisation or re-location in an appropriate archive should be a matter for discussion.

The oral history research

Oral history interviews were a key element of the research because there is no existing alternative source which provides evidence from the perspective of the women who were residents in mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries in Northern Ireland (or from their children or other relatives). Nor is there existing testimony dealing with daily life in these institutions from the perspective of those who worked in them or whose employment brought them there. As has been observed by researchers in the Republic of Ireland, collecting oral history on this subject is vital because of the restrictions placed on the archival records relating to the Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes, which in effect has made them and the women who were placed within

them, invisible.[5] The project recruited one member of specialist staff to assist Professor O'Connell with the oral history element of the research. The post was held initially by Dr Ida Milne. Following her departure to take up another post, Dr Olivia Dee joined the team and carried out the majority of the oral history interviews with birth mothers and their children as well as with retired social workers. Professor O'Connell carried out interviews with two male interviewees offering testimony on their mother's experiences as well as interviews with two Good Shepherd Sisters, two priests, three retired probation officers and one retired police officer.

The oral history element of the research was finalised following a careful appraisal of research design options, including research conducted in the Republic of Ireland by Dr Katherine O'Donnell at University College Dublin (UCD). She was Principal Investigator on an oral history project on Magdalene Laundries in the Republic of Ireland.[6] Professor O'Connell and Dr Milne travelled to meet with her, at UCD, to receive a full briefing on her experience of interviewing around this topic. Dr Jennifer O'Mahoney of Waterford Institute of Technology was another valued source of advice, due to her experience as the Principal Investigator on a separate oral history project which looked at Magdalene Laundries and industrial schools.[7] The UK Oral History Society and the QUOTE Hub collection of oral historians at Queen's University were the other major source of guidance on best ethical practice.[8]

On the first day of the project, Dr McCormick and Professor O'Connell met with members of Birth Mothers and Their Children for Justice NI (BMTCFJNI), who were accompanied by Patrick Corrigan (of Amnesty International), to seek their collaboration. The project hoped to secure their input on matters of research design, particularly around the issue of minimising any risk of re-traumatisation during the research process. At that point the BMTCFJNI members were unhappy about the parameters of the research project, particularly the fact that it was not a full public inquiry with statutory powers. For this reason, among others, they did not immediately offer cooperation with the research and did not engage with research planning. Some of those BMTCFJNI representatives who attended that day did later engage with the researchers, others chose not to do so, as is their right. This issue delayed the start of the interviewing process because the submission of the ethics application was put on hold for several weeks in the hope that BMTCFJNI members might alter their position and engage with the project planning. However, this was not to be the case and the ethics application was submitted in May 2018 and the first interview was recorded in early June.

The sceptical reception for the research project went beyond the BMTCFJNI members. Explaining why she came forward to offer testimony about her mother's experience of giving birth in one of Northern Ireland's Poor Law Workhouses in the 1940s, CO revealed that she had been in discussion with others who did not have faith in the research. Quoting from them, CO explained their view that 'the research commissioned by the Stormont Department of Health into Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland is a stitch-up. The academics are naïve puppets of an attempted government cover-up. A fair process and fair outcomes for victims have been made impossible by a number of

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5 Jennifer Yeager and Jonathan Culleton, 'Gendered violence and cultural forgetting: the case of the Irish Magdalene's', in Radical History Review, vol 126 (2016), p. 126; James Gallen, 'Redressing gendered mistreatment: Magdalene laundries, symphysiotomy and mother and baby homes', in L. Black and P. Dunn (eds), Law and gender in modern Ireland (Dublin, 2019) pp 263-280

6 http://jfmresearch.com/home/oralhistoryproject/

7 https://www.waterfordmemories.com/home

8 https://www.ohs.org.uk/advice/ethical-and-legal/; https://quote.qub.ac.uk/

procedural issues' This sentiment may well have emerged, in part, because at that point the process of implementing the recommendations of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry had stalled, partly due to the collapse of the Northern Ireland Executive. As she continued, CO remarked that 'I'm just saying that we shouldn't forget that there's a lot of birth mothers outside of this research process that are also seeking justice for the abuse suffered in the Magdalene asylums and other institutions just for being unmarried mothers.' CO, however, wanted to speak because 'my mum is 92 - I want her to have a voice before she dies'.[9]

Sensing that there was a significant number of individuals, like CO, who did want to record their testimony, the research team hoped to interview as many as sixty individuals, who would provide a broadly representative range of experiences. This was exactly the number whose testimony was recorded. One recording involved multiple interviewees: this was with three retired probation officers. On another occasion, a daughter sat in on her elderly mother's interview. In another instance, a wife sat in on her husband's interview. In the interviews with Sister 1 and Sister 2, their solicitor sat in at their request.

We have not included in the report the testimony of a number of the interviewees. Two interviewees did not sign and submit the necessary consent forms to enable us to include them in the analysis. Their audio and transcripts will, in accordance with our ethics protocols, be deleted. One birth mother withdrew from the process after reflecting on the transcript of her testimony. In addition, a retired Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) officer withdrew from the project having reviewed a copy of their interview transcript. This individual had given testimony about the RUC's relationship with the Thorndale House Industrial Home, in Belfast, and the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes/laundries, in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Newry. The withdrawal of this interviewee was a blow and reduced the ability to probe the relationship between the police/criminal justice system and these institutions. Sustained efforts were made to recruit other interviewees from among retired police officers, but to no avail.

Appeals were made for interviewees in a number of ways. The Department of Health created a website about the project which included the phone/email details for contacting the research team. There were also multiple radio (and some television appearances) by Professor O'Connell and Dr McCormick. They appeared on several local radio stations, on BBC TV and on Northern Visions TV (NVTV). The 30-minute recording of their appearance on NVTV was circulated widely on YouTube and Twitter. A number of targeted news releases were prepared for different newspapers in various localities. Facebook and Twitter were used to send details of the project to large audiences. Dr Katherine O'Donnell's extensive contacts with existing victims and survivors networks were drawn upon as were those with groups in Northern Ireland such as SAVIA (Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse). As stated earlier, members of BMTCFJNI became more invested in the research once it got under way. In part this was through the good offices of Paula Bradshaw MLA, who maintained a keen interest in the research. Securing sixty interviews represents a not insignificant outcome, particularly when the trauma involved in speaking about this sensitive subject matter is recognised. Many other individuals contacted the researchers, but ultimately decided that going ahead with an interview would be too much of an emotional ordeal.

A number of individuals contacted the researchers from Great Britain (GB) and North America, indicating that the call for information was travelling far and wide. **Table 1** (see end of Introduction)

9 Interview with CO. Conducted by Olivia Dee, 2 March 2019.

provides some details on those individuals who offered their testimony and agreed to be included in the report. A greater number of interviewees came forward to speak about mother and baby homes than was the case for Magdalene laundries. There are many possible reasons for this. The first is that there is a greater number of former mother and baby home residents (plus the babies they gave birth to) than there are former residents of the Magdalene laundries. The total number of women who passed through the doors of the mother and baby homes investigated in this report was over 10,000. Logic suggests that there were also 10,000 sons or daughters born to these women as a consequence. The number of women in the three Good Shepherd laundries was smaller, just under 3,000. In addition, by the 1970s the number of admissions to the laundries was fairly small: forty women entered the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes in Derry/Londonderry in that decade. Numbers greater than that entered the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes each year. For example, in 1979 Marianvale received 69 pregnant women. This is significant because the vast majority of our interviewees offered testimony which related to the 1970s or the 1980s. For older generations of women, discourses about respectability and the power of stigma are particularly powerful. Historians have discussed how 'respectability' shapes female testimony prohibiting the discussion of certain themes: sex and particularly illegitimate pregnancy top any list of taboo subjects.[10] It is notable that testimony on the earlier decades, the 1930s or 1940s, came from daughters or sons of birth mothers/ Magdalene women, with only one exception: a woman who related her experience of giving birth at Malone Place in the late 1940s.

A further explanation for the smaller number of testimonies related to the laundries is that the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI) gathered witness testimony from those who, as girls (aged under 18), were sent to one of the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes. A number of women responded to that invitation and it is possible that some of them feel either that they have told their story or, alternatively, that they were re-traumatised by the process. Both outcomes could explain an unwillingness to speak to a further group of historical researchers. Academic research on the experience of those who gave testimony to the HIAI supports this suggestion. Interviews and focus groups with a large number of these individuals found that 47% described the process of engagement with the inquiry as either 'traumatic' or 'abusive' This was the case even though the HIAI made efforts to create a victim-centred approach and provided counselling options for witnesses.[11]

Another issue which may explain the reluctance of some potential oral history volunteers to contact the research team relates to the state's delayed response to the recommendations made in the HIAI's report. During the suspension of the Northern Ireland Executive between January 2017 and January 2020, victims and survivors groups were disappointed, frustrated and sceptical about the level of commitment to the resolution of their grievances.[12] This was certainly a sentiment expressed by members of BMTCFJNI when they met the researchers. BMTCFJNI suggested that those considering responding to our appeals for personal testimony about mother and baby homes or Magdalene laundries were sceptical that it would produce any tangible benefits. The HIAI's recommendations, published in 2017, were acted upon in December 2019, several months after the research for this report was completed, when the Westminster parliament passed legislation to address the matter.

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10 See, for example, Judy Giles, '"Playing hard to get": working-class women, sexuality and respectability in Britain', in Women's History Review, vol 1 issue 2 (1992), pp 239-255; Kate Fisher, Birth control, sex, and marriage in Britain, 1918-60 (Oxford, 2006), p.13.

11 Patricia Lundy, '"I just want justice": the impact of historical institutional abuse child-abuse inquiries from the survivor's perspective', Eire-Ireland, vol 55, nos 1 and 2 (2020), pp 265-267.

12 Lundy discusses this issue at length.

A final issue which might explain the smaller number of testimonies in relation to laundries is that these institutions have a relatively low profile in Northern Ireland. Whereas Northern Ireland has activist groups based around mother and baby homes (BMTCFJNI) or institutional child abuse (SAVIA and Survivors North West), there are no groups that are equivalent to those in the Republic of Ireland such as Justice for Magdalenes (as was) or Magdalene Survivors Together. As a result, the public appreciation of the historical significance of Magdalene laundries on the northern side of the border is at a stage akin to where it was in the Republic in the 1990s.

There are locations where it is possible to find former residents of the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes. A small number of residential units are now home to elderly women who spent many years in the St Mary's homes and worked in their laundries. Ethical guidelines ruled out any direct contact with these individuals and, indeed, the researchers would not wish to make such a crass and potentially traumatising approach. However, it should be noted that a large number of women (58) living in residential homes under the management of the religious orders in the Republic of Ireland did speak to the McAleese Committee. That is a remarkable volunteering rate for any oral history project and is particularly noteworthy given the degree of shame and stigma that has historically been attached to the Magdalene women. In marked contrast, discreet inquiries in Northern Ireland, via a number of sources, indicated that the former laundry women who are now residents in homes in Belfast and Derry/Londonderry did not wish to be part of any oral history project. Unlike their equivalents in the Republic, these elderly women no longer live in homes run by the nuns who oversaw their lives in the laundries. Their residential homes are managed by independent organisations.

One elderly woman contacted the researchers and asked to submit a written statement in relation to her time in a Good Shepherd St Mary's home and this request was facilitated. In total, this meant that we received testimony from three former laundry women, three interviews from the relatives of such women and two interviews from witnesses providing their insights into life in the St Mary's homes/laundries. This is added to two interviews with priests who were regular visitors to the Good Shepherd convents and two Good Shepherd Sisters. An interview with three retired probation officers was requested with the aim of revealing the relationship between the probation service and the use of the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes as remand institutions. As noted above, retired police officers were also approached to seek interviewees offering insight from their perspective. However, the one former RUC officer who agreed to do so withdrew from the project subsequently.

Oral history research protocols

The ethical protocols for the oral history project were based on best practice as identified by national bodies, such as the Oral History Society, as well as pre-existing related projects, such as University College Dublin's Justice for Magdalenes oral history project. Interviewees were supplied with a copy of the Consent Form and the Participant Information Sheet. The Participant Information Sheet provided details of the project's aims. It detailed the task the research team has been given by the Department of Health/Interdepartmental Working Group. It also explained plans to create a website based on the oral history interviews collected during the project (this will represent a new phase of the research once this report has been published). The Information Sheet explained the interviewees' rights: including their right to anonymity and to withdraw from the project. It also explained the legal issues involved and provided details of a variety of counselling organisations and the distinct services that each of them offers. These details included information of the websites, emails and telephone

details of the organisations in question. Before the interview took place, the researcher went through the Participant Information Sheet and the Consent Form with the interviewee.

All the interview transcripts have been anonymised (removing the narrator's identity and those of others mentioned) to address a number of risks. Most clearly, those who came forward did so with the clear expectation that their identity would remain unknown to everyone with the exception of the oral history researchers (O'Connell and Dee; and in the early months of the project Milne). The researchers committed to ensuring that no one outside the team would learn the identity, or other personal details, of any interviewee. All the relevant research data (audio, transcripts and interviewees' personal details) is stored on a password protected and encrypted computer hard drive and all the team members undertook the appropriate GDPR training courses offered by either Queen's or Ulster University.

In addition, the names of other individuals mentioned in transcripts are anonymised when this is appropriate. This is to further ensure interviewee confidentiality and reduce the possibility that their personal story is recognised. This measure also protects the identity and privacy of other individuals. It also offers the interviewees protection from accusations of defamation or slander from anyone named in the testimonies who might later make a counterclaim that untrue statements have been made about them in an interview. In addition, the Consent Form explained the limits that interviewees could place on the use of their testimony and the options available to them. They could, for example, request destruction of their interview audio and/or refuse to have their transcript included on the website that is a future planned outcome of this research.

The interviews took place at a location of each research participant's choice. Most interviewees chose to come to Queen's University, but others were interviewed at home or at another location where they felt comfortable. When they asked to be accompanied by a family member, or friend, that was facilitated.

Post-interview, each interviewee was offered a copy of the transcript and asked if there was anything that they wished to remove from it, or if they wanted to provide additional written commentary. On this basis, a number of transcripts were edited (removing material). A small number of interviewees did not take up the option of reviewing their transcript. Interviewees had the right to withdraw their co-operation from the project at this stage or at any practical point thereafter and as discussed above, two interviewees have done so. In addition, two others are deemed to have 'withdrawn' because they have not submitted their signed consent forms. Their audio and transcript will be destroyed, in compliance with the project's ethics protocols.

It is the intention of the researchers to create a website on which some of the transcripts will be made available for consultation by members of the public. The website may include some extracts from the audio (with the permission of the relevant interviewees). This element of the project will be independent of the Department of Health who have agreed in principle to the use of the oral testimonies for this.[13]

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13 Interviewees had the option to opt-out of this element of the project. All transcripts will be anonymised, and all identifiers removed.

Further issues related to the oral history

A key issue for the researchers was to tackle the issue of trauma. It has been argued that for those providing oral testimony to official historical investigations, the experience can be re-traumatising rather than therapeutic.[14] It was imperative, therefore, that our research design minimised the risk of doing harm. When consulting with Dr Katherine O'Donnell about her oral history interviews with former residents of Magdalene Laundries, she made it clear that their overwhelming post-interview response was one of relief that someone had finally listened to their story and was taking it seriously. This is not to downplay the very real possibility of re-traumatisation. All the researchers involved in interviewing for this project have experience of interviewing on topics where this was a potential issue. The team engaged with Dr O'Donnell on how the UCD project dealt with this matter and drew on her advice. Furthermore, Professor O'Connell had the expertise of his fellow editors of the journal Oral History and of the Queen's based QUOTE Hub collective of oral historians at the project's disposal.[15]

Researchers consulted academic literature dealing with trauma and oral history. Based on an understanding of this literature, it is contended that this research project is an example of how oral history involving traumatic subjects can contribute towards social good. In this case, by making the public aware of the personal stories of the women who in the recent past were treated unfairly as outcasts by Northern Irish society and by offering those individuals (and their family members) the opportunity to contribute to an officially sanctioned investigation of that history. In the lead up to the interviews and in the pre-interview conversations, it was important to indicate to potential interviewees that the research team did not support the stigmatisation that they experienced in early life. For potential interviewees, their former presence in a Magdalene laundry or mother and baby home was often a source of shame and embarrassment imposed upon them by deeply ingrained social and cultural attitudes. The researchers worked hard to reduce any re-traumatisation which could take place on this level. It was important to ensure that the way in which mid-twentieth century Northern Irish society marginalised these women was not allowed to become the dominant motif of these interviews. The researchers believed that it was most likely that the chances of re-traumatisation would be reduced by highlighting the extent to which these interviews contributed to a more complex and accurate historical narrative about sexual mores, the state, religion and society. This approach was designed to reassure the research participants, to signal empathy to them and to overcome the barriers that prevent many narratives of traumatic experience from reaching the public, as 'such experiences produce, shame, anger, often guilt in the victim, and are regarded as secrets rather than as stories to tell.'[16] The research team was highly conscious of the need, during the interviews, to be alert to 'trauma signals' These include 'silences, inability to construct a story, loss of emotional control and observable changes in voice and body language.'[17] In this respect, during several interviews, it was necessary to pause recording to allow an interviewee time to regather their composure and/or for the interviewer to ascertain that continuing with the interview was the right thing to do. Research indicates that oral history

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14 Jonathan Doak, "Honing the Stone: Refining Restorative Justice as a Vehicle for Emotional Redress," in Contemporary Justice Review, vol 14, no. 4 (2011), pp 439-456; Lundy, '"I just want justice"; Eric Stover, "Witnesses and the Promise of Justice in The Hague," in Eric Stover and Harvey M. Weinstein (eds.) My Neighbor, My Enemy: Justice and Community in the Aftermath of Mass Atrocity, (Cambridge, 2004), pp 104–20.

15 For more on QUOTE Hub see https://quote.qub.ac.uk/

16 J.A. Robinson, 'Personal narratives reconsidered', in Journal of American Folklore, vol 94, no. 371 (1981), pp 58-85.

17 Lynn Abrams, Oral History Theory, (London, 2009), p. 123.

interviews that contain traumatic testimony can be particularly tiring for those involved and care was given to this element of the encounters.[18]

The researchers were conscious of their role as oral historians rather than as counsellors and were aware that the interviews revolved around trauma in an unresolved and contested historical controversy. In fact, some oral historians argue that it is precisely because they are not therapists that projects such as this one, have the potential to make a positive intervention. From this viewpoint, oral historians are in the position to document the experiences of interviewees who can 'speak more freely when their interviews are not prerequisites for any kind of aid.'[19] Some oral historians argue that by recognising the sensitivity required in conducting interviews on difficult topics the process can enable research participants to engage in a therapeutic experience.[20]

In an essay on difficult oral histories, the eminent oral historian Sean Fields questions the notion that an oral history interview is either inherently healing or re-traumatising. He argues that both perspectives underestimate the individual interviewee's agency in the process. Field concludes that the oral historian must emphasise the agency that survivors can experience through 'regenerative memory work' This involves creating 'democratic spaces' in which narrators can express their diverse experiences and perspectives and reflect on difficult topics. In such a context, the interviews are no longer about reliving traumatic experiences only, they are also about producing empowering spaces.[21] Writing about interviews with Holocaust survivors, Henry Greenspan offers a similar argument. When faced with narratives that are marked by trauma, he maintains that oral historians need to create a situation in which agency balances vulnerability by enabling the interviewee to reflect and interpret.[22] Recent oral histories with women about their experiences of the Magdalene laundries in the Republic of Ireland have been marked by similar perspectives. They underline the agency that can be offered to interviewees even in the context of the highly traumatic personal histories about which they are being asked to reflect. Jennifer Yeager and Jonathan Culleton argue that for the women, these interviews 'provide a way both to understand the meaning of what happened to the Magdalene women and to provide a record of these narratives'.[23]
While the research team was sympathetic to the arguments made by Field, Greenspan and others about trauma and agency in a difficult oral history interview, there were barriers to creating the foundations of a project that put that approach into action. A challenge was presented by the fact that this was a commissioned research project rather than one that emerged organically from the team's existing research interests. As discussed above, this was an obstacle in the way of securing the straightforward engagement of organised victims groups. This was highly problematic due to the time constraints involved in what was a project with a short lifespan (12 months). Most oral history projects build momentum over a prolonged period of time, as trust and rapport are established between the researchers and those who agree to narrate their testimony. In many projects, the

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18 Wendy Rickard, 'More dangerous than therapy': interviewees' reflections on recording traumatic or taboo issues, in Oral History, vol 26, no. 2, (1998), pp 34-48.

19 Anna Sheftel and Stacey Zembryzcki, 'Who's afraid of oral history 50 years of anxiety about ethics', in Oral History Review, vol 43, no.2 (2016), pp 338-366.

20 Alison Parr, 'Breaking the silence: traumatised war veterans and oral history', in Oral History, vol 35, no.1 (2007), pp 61-70.

21 Sean Field, '"Beyond healing": trauma, oral history and regeneration', in Oral History, vol 34, no. 1 (2006), pp 31-44.

22 Henry Greenspan. 'The unsaid, the uncommunicable, the unbearable and the irretrievable', in Oral History Review, vol 41, no. 2 (2014), pp 229-243.

23 Yeager and Culleton, 'Gendered violence and cultural forgetting', p. 135.

initial interviewees introduce the researcher to further volunteers in what is known as a process of snowballing. Time was against this project in that respect. However, most significant was that many interviewees had not spoken about the topics under review, even to family or friends. Reaching out to them and convincing them to participate was a great challenge. Oral historians with experience of probing problematic historical topics in Northern Ireland explain that it can take years to locate a range of representative individuals.[24] It was in this context that the researchers estimated that they would be able to complete sixty interviews in the time available. Much time in the first few months was spent trying to achieve media attention for the project in order to reach individuals who, for many reasons, did not want to speak about their personal experiences in mother and baby homes or Magdalene laundries.

Once the oral history work began, each separate interview was a time-consuming and complex process. Potential volunteers had to first contact the researchers via the designated phone line, email, or post. The ensuing conversation would explain the project to prospective interviewees. In some cases, numerous discussions were held, and they did not all culminate in a recorded interview. Once an interview was arranged, further discussions took place before the recorder was switched on: often to reassure interviewees and to ensure that they were totally content to proceed. Often more dialogue took place, perhaps over tea or coffee immediately after the recording or in the days and weeks afterwards. The latter element centred primarily on ensuring interviewees were content with their transcripts. Preparing each transcript, including anonymization of named individuals and removal of identifying data was also time consuming. For every hour of recorded interview at least six or seven hours were spent on transcription/review. The outcome of this process was rich testimony that revealed the life journeys of the interviewees, often in emotional detail.

Of course, sixty testimonies are reflective of only a fraction of the many thousands of individuals who passed through (or worked in) the institutions analysed by the researchers. If the intention were to create scientific samples of informants from each of the homes, the Department of Health would have needed to create a very different project: one that involved the construction of surveys or structured interviews. Moreover, it would have been necessary to overrule any concerns about privacy and confidentiality by setting out to identify a sample that was deemed to match the age, religious, and socio-economic characteristics of the girls and women who passed through the doors of the mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries. A portion of those identified in this fashion would then have had to have been contacted with a request to participate. An approach of this nature would have been highly questionable ethically. Moreover, many oral historians argue that while such an approach might identity a more 'representative' group of informants, it offers findings that are of 'intrinsically lower quality' [25] Structured interviews or questionnaires, in this type of large sample approach, are best suited to broad social surveys rather than the collection of emotional and deeply personal testimony. Oral historians are much more likely to adopt a semi-structured interview approach. This involves the adoption of an interview schedule that identifies the key themes to be addressed during each interview, while also allowing a great deal of scope for the interviewee to offer their testimony in their own pace and structure.[26] The informant-centred oral history interview

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24 Anna Bryson, 'Victims, violence and voice: transitional justice, oral history, and dealing with the past', Hastings International and Comparative Law Review, vol 39, no.2 (2016), p. 335.

25 Paul Thompson with Joanna Bornat, The voice of the past: oral history (Oxford, 2017), p.215.

26 For a fine introductory discussion of this issue see Valerie Yow, Recording oral history: a guide for the humanities and social sciences (London, 2015), particularly chapter 3.

also carries the advantage of providing alternative perspective on historical events to those found in official sources written by those in positions of authority.

Elements of the oral history approach advocated by Field, Greenspan and others were factored into the project in a number of ways. The aim was to offer interviewees the opportunity to narrate testimony in a more inclusive, empowering format. It was made clear to potential interviewees that their voice would hold a central place in the final report together with the archival evidence. In taking this approach, the research team was conscious of the criticism of how oral testimony has been handled in recent similar official historical investigations. Witnesses at the HIAI felt that survivor's voices 'appeared weak compared to those of well-prepared, resourced, and legally represented institutions.'[27] In a similar vein, it has been observed that the McAleese Report described testimony from former Magdalene laundry residents as 'stories' rather than evidence. Although their personal experiences lay at the absolute heart of the McAleese committee's very existence, the women's testimonies did not appear until chapter 19 of the report. Moreover, the women's narratives were presented in a disjointed style which made them extremely difficult to process or contextualise. This was in contrast to much longer passages of testimony from male authority figures.[28]

Acknowledging concerns about these matters led to a decision on a clearer and extensive presentation of oral testimony in the pages of this report. It would be a mistake to relegate oral evidence to a secondary role in any historical investigation of this type. While extensive academic arguments can be developed about the nature of memory - what is remembered, what is forgotten or how individual memory operates in tandem with forms of collective memory - these cannot be deployed to fundamentally undermine oral testimony. At least not without an equally challenging critique of archival records that are themselves the product of an individual sitting down, many decades ago, to craft their own short notes or assessment of a young pregnant woman resident who entered, for example, the Salvation Army's Thorndale Industrial home or one of the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes. In popular understanding, the 'memory' that these archival sources offer are often understood to provide 'evidence' in a more reliable category than oral testimony. Many historians view that as a highly contentious claim. The work of renowned oral historian Lynn Abrams makes this point cogently:

> Oral history was [formerly] positioned down the hierarchy of sources because it seemingly did not produce 'data' which could be verified and counted. In terms of their reliability, contemporary letters, reports and parliamentary papers were at the top and supposedly more subjective sources such as diaries and autobiographies at the bottom … [However] all evidence is socially constructed, all is a product of purpose, and many documents were deliberately shaped to present a particular picture or interpretation of a phenomenon or event. In this sense then, there is little distinction to be made between an oral history interview based on memory and minute of a meeting, also reconstructed in part based on memory of what was said: in fact, the ordinary participant's memory will likely contain a frankness of observation missing from the 'contrived' neutrality of the minute-taker.'[29]

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27 Lundy, '"I just want justice", p.277.

28 Gallen, 'Redressing gendered mistreatment, p. 271

29 Lynn Abrams, Oral history theory, (2013), p. 80.

Taking the oral testimony seriously, particularly when similar themes recur across multiple interviews and sometimes multiple mother and baby homes, ensures that those who were silenced as young women were not silenced again due to a misconception that written sources, sculpted in the language of the professional, offer superior insights into this complex history.

Giving the oral testimony its due prominence in this report also enables readers to assess the range of contrasting and complex testimonies that were collected. These range from testimonies that are highly critical of the institutions that were under assessment through to very different narratives from individuals who worked within them. Most striking in this respect is the testimony related to the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. This is highly complex and includes interviews with two Good Shepherd Sisters, two priests, three retired social workers and an extensive number of birth mothers (or their children). All this testimony is presented in detail to enable readers to appreciate the diverse perspectives that exist on these homes. It is clear that birth mothers, in particular, had a range of experiences within the homes. The majority of testimonies from birth mothers report miserable and traumatic experiences and condemn the entire system. A smaller number of interviewees offered less critical accounts. It is not always possible to ascertain why the different perspectives emerge. In some cases, it clear that birth mothers felt pressured to give up a child for adoption or relate testimony about various forms of mistreatment. The latter included a range of details, spanning regimental regimes that imposed cleaning chores on heavily pregnant women through to, in a very small number of cases, more serious allegations of sexual abuse. Testimony in which negative experiences dominated the narrative followed similar patterns across the majority of testimonies related to Hopedene, Marianvale, Marianville and Thorndale House. The regular occurrence of similar themes was important in the assessment of memory of trauma. Oral historians have noted that ‘trauma makes the process of remembering more complex than in other situations’ and that survivors ‘are more likely to narrate in stories containing elements of disjointedness and symbolism’.[30] This can make this type of oral evidence difficult to assess. However, that task was simplified by the consistency between many accounts from women who spoke about different time periods and different mother and baby homes. Moreover, the detail provided in their accounts left a strong impression that this consistency was based on their time in the mother and baby homes, as they experienced it, rather than as a result of a subsequent process of collective memory over-riding a purer form of individual memory. Personal accounts of the past are never produced in isolation from public narratives and they are formed from the cultural scripts that are available to all of us, but oral historians also argue that it is clear that memories can be narrated that both draw upon public scripts and individual experience. In the context of this report, it is arguable that the testimonies that do not draw on personal experience require even more careful assessment. It is much more likely that cultural scripts partly shaped by wider depictions of Catholic mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries in the Republic of Ireland, will be drawn upon by those with no direct experience of the similar institutions in Northern Ireland. For example, one woman whose mother had spent time in the Salvation Army’s mother and baby home, Thorndale House, speculated that her mother might have worked in a commercial laundry there. In reality there was only a laundry for the use of Thorndale staff and residents. This is one example where, inevitably, second-hand testimony can be harder to assess than narratives offered by direct participants.

30 Selma Leysdesdorff et. al. (eds.) Trauma: life stories of survivors, (2004), p. 4.

Table 1: Information on respondents

Identifier	Gender	Relationship to home or laundry	Home/laundry/ function	Interviewer
GN	Female	Birth mother	Hopedene	OD
YN	Female	Birth mother	Hopedene	OD
FX	Female	Baby	Hopedene	OD
FD	Female	Birth mother	Hopedene	OD
IH	Female	Birth mother	Hopedene	IM
CD	Female	Birth mother	Malone Place	OD
JQ	Female	Birth mother	Mount Oriel	OD
MN	Female	Birth mother	Thorndale	OD
RG	Female	Birth mother	Thorndale	OD
JM	Female	Birth mother	Thorndale	OD
CC	Female	Relative of Birth mother	Thorndale	OD
AB	Female	Birth mother	Thorndale	OD
CO	Female	Daughter of Birth mother	Workhouse	OD
VV	Female	Sister of woman who was sent to St Mary's home/laundry	GS Laundry	IM
LT	Male	Son of adoptee	Various	SO'C
MW1	Female	Midwife	Various	IM
ID	Female	Birth mother/sent to St Mary's home/Laundry	Various GS homes	IM
HT/ DT	Male/ Female	Son (and his wife) of woman who entered St Mary's home/laundry	GS Laundry	IM
AM	Female	Daughter of Birth mother	Various	OD
QB (read a statement)	Female	Relative of Birth mother	Various	OD
PT	Female	Niece of woman who entered St Mary's home/laundry	GS laundry	OD
S1	Female	Nun	Various GS	SO'C
S2	Female	Nun	Various GS	SO'C
GP1	Male	Doctor	GS m & b home	OD
DL	Female	Former neighbour of St Mary's home/laundry	GS laundry	OD
P1	Male	Priest	GS Convent	SO'C
P2	Male	Priest	GS Convent	SO'C

Identifier	Gender	Relationship to home or laundry	Home/laundry/ function	Interviewer
WB	Female	Worked with former St Mary's home/laundry women	GS laundry	OD
SW1	Female	Social worker	Adoptions	OD
SW2	Female	Social worker	Adoptions	OD
SW3	Female	Social worker	Adoptions	OD
PO1	Female	Probation officer	Probation	SO'C
PO2	Female	Probation officer	Probation	SO'C
PO3	Female	Probation officer	Probation	SO'C
TY	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
KO (by phone)	Female	Daughter of Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
HS	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
LC	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
LP	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
TS	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
IA	Female	Daughter of Birth mother	GS m & b home	IM
SS	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	IM
PW	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	IM
JP	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
BC	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
DF	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
KF	Female	Daughter of Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
TR	Male	Son of Birth mother	GS m & b home	SO'C
CR	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
SC	Female	Birth mother/Sent to St Mary's home/laundry	GS various	OD
PN	Female	Daughter of Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD/SO'C
GT	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD/SO'C
NO	Female	Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
OC	Female	Daughter of Birth mother	GS m& b home/ laundry	OD
CS (by phone)	Female	Daughter of Birth mother	GS m & b home	OD
XY (written)	Female	Sent to St Mary's home/laundry	GS laundry	Via SO'C

Executive Summary

The report considers Magdalene laundries and mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland, 1922-1990. The following institutions were included:

Magdalene Laundries:

Roman Catholic Institutions

St Mary's Home, Belfast – 1867-1982 (Good Shepherd Sisters)
St Mary's Home, Derry/Londonderry – 1922-1982 (Good Shepherd Sisters)
St Mary's Home, Newry – 1946-1984 (Good Shepherd Sisters)

Protestant Institutions

Salvation Army Industrial/Rescue Home, Belfast- 1886-1965

Mother and Baby Homes:

Roman Catholic Run Homes

Mater Dei, Belfast (Legion of Mary) 1942-1984
Marianville, Belfast, 1950-1990 (Good Shepherd Sisters)
Marianvale, Newry, 1955-1984 (Good Shepherd Sisters)

Protestant Homes

Belfast Midnight Mission/Malone Place Maternity Home and Rescue Home – 1860-1948
Church of Ireland Rescue League/Kennedy House, Belfast – 1912-1956
Hopedene House, Belfast – 1943-1985
Salvation Army, Thorndale House – 1920-1977

Health and Social Services/Charities

Mount Oriel, Belfast (EHSSB) – 1969-1980s
Deanery Flats, Belfast (Barnardo's) – 1973-1991
Belfast and Coleraine Welfare Flats – 1940s-1980s

Records

The research team identified and negotiated access to a huge amount of material which included: admission registers, case files, financial records and correspondence relating to mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries. Records varied considerably across the institutions in terms of what was available and how they could be accessed. In some instances, the team was able to photograph material, in others they had to consult the material on site and could not employ digital photography. It is important to note that record keeping was often carried out using different categories in the various institutions. There were even differences, for example, in the recording of admissions to the three Good Shepherd St Mary's homes. Factors such as this make it impossible to create straightforward comparisons between various datasets.

Given the tight research timescale and the extensive range and number of sources, it was necessary to sample material in some of the archival collections. In other cases, limitations were placed on how the research was carried out as in the example noted above relating to digital photography. More detail is offered on this matter in the Introduction and in the relevant individual chapters. There is scope for further work to be carried out in a number of the archival records – and in additional archives – in order that the fullest possible understanding of these institutions is reached and to answer questions about what happened to women (and their babies) who entered them (see Chapter 17).

Sixty individuals offered oral testimony to the researchers and sincere thanks is due to each of them for doing so. Their important contribution is recognised throughout the report and their testimony is given a central place in the historical accounts of the mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries. Far more individuals came forward to offer accounts about mother and baby homes than for the Magdalene laundries. Testimony was received from priests, nuns, retired social workers, retired probation officers, a GP and a midwife. A retired RUC officer also offered testimony on Magdalene laundries, but later withdrew it and, therefore, an important gap exists in the oral testimony on police involvement with the Good Shepherd laundries and Thorndale Industrial Home. In addition, no one came forward who had experience as a member of Staff at a mother and baby home (with the exception of the two Good Shepherd Sisters who were interviewed).

Mother and Baby Homes – summary

It is estimated that between 1922 and 1990 over 10,500 women entered mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland. The numbers, based on the available data for the major homes are:

Hopedene	670	(1943-1985)
Kennedy House	168	(1950-1955)
Mater Dei	1,418	(1942-1984)
Marianvale	1,399	(1955-1984)
Marianville	2,278	(1950-1990)
Midnight Mission/Malone Place	2,485	(1922-1944)
Thorndale	2,222	(1922-1976)

However, the records relating to the mother and baby homes were not complete for all of the institutions and the actual number of women and babies who spent time in these institutions was therefore above this figure of 10,500. Moreover, it was not possible, given the research timescale, to explore the records for each of Northern Ireland's workhouses, where many thousands of unmarried women gave birth between 1922 and 1948. Work was carried out on a number of sample years for Belfast's Union Infirmary; a peak year for illegitimate births in this institution was in 1932 (202 births).

Numbers for entrants into mother and baby homes peaked in the late 1960s and early 1970s, before a rapid reduction in the 1980s. Only 21 women entered the last mother and baby home to close in its final year, 1990: this was Marianville in Belfast. It is to be noted that while over 10,500 women did enter mother and baby homes this represented only one in four of the total number of illegitimate births in Northern Ireland. This indicates that entrance to a mother and baby home was not the only option taken by unmarried pregnant women. Those who entered homes did so due to limited alternative options or, in many cases, because they were urged to do so by family members, members of the clergy or other influential individuals.

The majority of women and girls who entered the mother and baby homes were from Northern Ireland (86%). Smaller numbers of birth mothers had home addresses in the Republic of Ireland (11.5%), Great Britain (2%) or elsewhere (with a few women even appearing in the records who had home addresses in the USA, South Africa and the Netherlands). The youngest recorded admission to a mother and baby home was that of a 12 year-old girl and the oldest that of a 44 year-old woman. The majority of admissions were of women aged between 20 and 29 (58%). Another 33% were aged under 19.

Entrance Pathways

There existed in Northern Ireland a culture of stigma, shame and secrecy attached to unmarried mothers. This was particularly true during the early and middle decades of the twentieth century, but such sentiment was still significant in the 1970s and 1980s. However, those two decades did see some liberalisation of public opinion. For example, the *Belfast Telegraph* published a series of articles that was sympathetic to unmarried mothers in August 1971. These articles explained the difficult realities that had been faced by women in these circumstances, who had no support networks and were unable to provide for themselves during and following a pregnancy.

While women were referred to mother and baby homes from a variety of sources, the overwhelming factor in admissions to them, evident across all the homes, was familial pressure. The case histories discovered in the various institutional archives and the oral testimony collected by the researchers reveal countless stories of familial anger, upset and disappointment at the discovery or revelation of a pregnancy. To avoid what was believed to be the shame and a loss of respectability brought upon a family by an 'illegitimate' pregnancy, women and girls were placed in mother and baby homes before their pregnancy became obvious. In other situations, the fear of family anger or rejection led women to enter mother and baby homes without telling their families, or, sometimes, after sharing their secret with only one parent or a sibling.

Women often entered a mother and baby home when they were not in a position to marry, or continue a relationship with, the father of their child. Marriage was often regarded as a way of resolving the issue of a premarital pregnancy and legitimising a birth. Case records reveal situations

where marriage was not a possibility. Sometimes the father was already married; in other cases his identity was not known (or the birth mother did not want to reveal it); in religiously segregated Northern Ireland, religious differences were a common cause of opposition to a marriage. In other cases, the young age of a pregnant girl meant that marriage was not an option.

This last point indicates that a number of females entered mother and baby homes as the result of a sexual crime, including: incest, rape or unlawful carnal knowledge. The available records do not indicate whether the appropriate authorities were always informed about the criminal circumstances of these pregnancies. In at least one case, it appears that the authorities were not informed about a case of incest. In other instances it is clear that victims of sexual abuse were moved on to a Good Shepherd St Mary's home, to work in its laundry, after they gave birth in a mother and baby home. More generally, the oral testimonies indicate that staff in all the mother and baby homes were not trained to attend to the psychological trauma arising from sexual abuse and incest.

Referrals

The records are not always clear on the source of referral to the mother and baby homes. It is evident, however, that Protestant and Catholic voluntary organisations and in particular clergy were actively involved in the process. This included making referrals, advising families and in some cases transporting women to the homes. For the three homes (Hopedene, Marianvale and Marianville) where this information was recorded and could be quantified, 30% of referrals were from religious organisations and 20% from clergy. Across the denominations there was a clear condemnation for unmarried mothers and support for the role of mother and baby homes, contributing to the stigma associated with pregnancy outside marriage.

Medical professionals, including general practitioners, were also involved in referring and directing women to mother and baby homes. In those cases where data on the source of referrals was located, this group made up 11% of the total. This is unsurprising as general practitioners were, along with clergy, often the first individuals to whom a pregnancy was disclosed.

The involvement of State welfare authorities in referring women to mother and baby homes was recorded in 23% of admissions. They were also closely involved in financing the institutions. Before 1948, mother and baby homes could apply for grants or payments from Local Authority Welfare Committees. After 1948, women entering mother and baby homes were recorded as paying for their stay using a combination of sources. The majority of women applied for National Assistance (which became Supplementary Benefit from 1966) and others were also eligible for Maternity Allowance or Sickness Benefit. These benefits were supplemented by payments from Local Authority Welfare Committees (after 1973 Regional Health Boards) or self-funded by parents/the woman herself or by insurance claims. When the costs for some women were met privately, by themselves or by parents, this usually signalled a decision not to engage with the State authorities. It is evident then, that in the majority of cases, a variety of State bodies had the details of women resident in mother and baby homes and were paying their maintenance costs. However, as there is only fragmentary documentary material related to inspections carried out before the 1980s, the level of State intervention, involvement and oversight of the institutions is difficult to assess.

In terms of the remaining categories for referral to mother and baby homes, 11% of referrals were recorded as self or family referrals, with 2.3% from charities or voluntary organisations, 1% from the courts and 1.7% from elsewhere in the UK.

Living Conditions

The living conditions and care arrangements for women in the mother and baby homes are difficult to determine from the archival records as very little was recorded about this. Research at PRONI harvested little information on this question. The Good Shepherd Sisters have retained some copies of inspection reports relating to Marianville in the 1980s. However, no inspection reports relating to other homes were located. Inspection reports on Marianville in the 1980s offered a generally positive commentary on the living conditions within the home. However, as the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI) discovered, it was only in 1984 that it was noted that the home did not have in place the mandatory system of monthly visitors as required by the then Ministry of Home Affairs' Voluntary Homes Regulations (1952). Once this failure to comply with the regulations was flagged up, Marianville appointed the Mother Superior of the Good Shepherd convent as the designated visitor. The HIAI admonished both the Good Shepherd Sisters and the Ministry of Home Affairs/ Department of Health and Social Services and the Social Work Advisory Group for what it identified as a systematic failure.

The oral testimonies from women who spent time in the various mother and baby homes provide a greater insight into the lived experiences. Numerous testimonies recounted experiences that involved cleaning, polishing floors and domestic laundering, with no concession for women who were often in their final trimester of pregnancy. A smaller number of testimonies were less critical about the experience of life in a mother and baby home, while still lamenting the fact that such a system existed in the first place.

In the majority of testimony gathered on these four homes, women provided vivid accounts of being made to feel ashamed about their pregnancy and suggested that the atmosphere was authoritarian and judgemental. A frequent element of the testimony was that there was little preparation for birth and that antenatal classes were non-existent or limited. Most of the oral testimony described the attitudes of some staff as unsympathetic and sometimes cruel. A minority of testimonies offered a more positive assessment of life in the mother and baby homes. Those offering this perspective were often in two categories. The first were individuals who had been in one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. In their testimony they are positive about individual nuns, even though they often articulated regret and sadness about the familial, social and religious pressures that led to their having to enter a mother and baby home. These interviewees describe the mother and baby home as a refuge, or a haven, from family and the wider world during a time of personal crisis. The second category of less negative testimony about the mother and baby homes came from a small number of Protestant individuals who had spent time in homes operated by local welfare authorities (such as Mount Oriel) or, in one case, the Salvation Army's Thorndale House.

It should be noted that, in the vast majority of cases, trauma and, often, mental health issues have been an outcome of birth mothers' experiences around their pregnancy. This appears most acute in cases where adoption was the outcome. This issue is also prevalent in the testimony of the children of birth mothers who came forward to speak to the researchers. Many claimed that unnecessary difficulties were placed in their way by the institutions that hold their birth records. This testimony

should be read alongside that from the retired social workers who provided their accounts of what is called 'origin work' with birth mothers and their adopted children.

Many of the birth mothers also related negative experiences of giving birth in hospital and many described their sense that they were being judged morally by medical staff. Testimony on this subject also described the loneliness of giving birth alone and of being in a hospital ward without visitors. There was some corroboration in this area from a retired midwife who outlined how the instruction from her senior colleagues was that she was not to engage with unmarried mothers about their personal details or stories. She now regrets that this policy left their emotional and psychological needs unattended.

The testimonies also reveal the vulnerability, particularly of the younger women or girls. A number of testimonies include details of what the women described as predatory sexual behaviour and/or malicious actions that they experienced either in one of the homes or as a patient in a maternity hospital. One individual (who is now deceased), who was associated with one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes, was cited in three separate testimonies. The Good Shepherd's failure to appoint an Independent Visitor for their mother and baby homes, as required by the Voluntary Homes Regulations, is more significant in this context.

Mortality Rates

Thorndale and Malone Place/Midnight Mission were the only two mother and baby homes that had their own maternity ward. Before 1948, significant numbers of unmarried mothers gave birth in their local Union Infirmary (attached to each Workhouse). In the case of all the other homes, women gave birth either in a hospital or a private nursing home. Not all birth mothers returned with their child to the mother and baby home following birth. In the cases of those who did, unlike the situation in the Republic of Ireland, mothers and babies did not remain in Northern Ireland's mother and baby homes for very long after they had given birth. This shorter period of residence is one factor that ensures that the mortality rates were much lower than those for mother and baby homes in the Republic.

Data assembled from the available mother and baby home records suggests that 4% of babies were either stillborn or died shortly after birth (across the entire period). This figure can be compared with broadly equivalent statistics collected by the Registrar General between 1961 and 1980, which indicate a combined figure of 7.8% for deaths of 'illegitimate' neonatal babies (who died under one month) and stillbirths. This includes a figure of 6.1% for illegitimate stillbirths and 1.7% for illegitimate neonatal births. This is compared to a 1.4% stillbirth rate for legitimate births and 1.5 % for legitimate neonatal births. In addition, the figure for perinatal (under one week) mortality and stillbirths combined (which does not break down legitimate and illegitimate categories), was an average of 3.9% between 1961 and 1980.[31]

A more detailed overview of the mortality rates for babies born in mother baby homes will require scrutiny of the records for those baby homes to which an estimated 32% of infants were sent following separation from their birth mother. Although these baby homes were not on the list of institutions under assessment by this report, towards the end of the research timetable, efforts were made to identify and assess their records. It proved possible to assess records for only one relevant

31 Government of Northern Ireland, Registrar General Reports, 1961-1980

baby home (St Joseph's in Belfast). From information made available, it is evident that mortality rates were alarming in this home between the 1920s and 1950s. Death rates may have been as high as 50% of those admitted at some points during the 1920s. As **Chapter 17** indicates, further research is needed to draw full conclusions about the outcomes for children born in mother and baby homes who then moved to a number of other baby homes/units.

Exit Pathways

Detailed information on where birth mothers went when they left a mother and baby home was only recorded for two homes (Marianvale and Marianville). In the records for many of the other mother and baby homes, it was often the case that details were not recorded, or an address was given with no identification of what it might be. From the available evidence, it appears that 68% of women returned to the address recorded as their home address. This may have been their family home, or the location of their lodgings or employment.

More detail is available about what happened to babies. In 26% of cases, babies left the mother and baby homes with their mother. It is not clear if all of these mothers kept their children, or if they were subsequently placed for adoption or into care. It is also not evident from the records if these women all returned to their family home, to friends or to partners. It is clear from both the archival and oral history sources that babies were often passed off as the children of other (married) family members. The available records indicate 32% of babies were placed in institutional homes. A further 23% were recorded as adopted, with another 15% listed as going to foster parents. As the records only record a baby's immediate destination, it is not possible to assess what proportion of those children who were sent to baby homes were ultimately adopted or fostered. Further research using adoption records and the records of baby homes would allow for a greater understanding of this very complex situation.

The Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 and the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Act 1967 both included the requirement that no adoption consent forms should be signed until six weeks following a birth. Many mothers returned to mother and baby homes for those six weeks before their children were given up for adoption. A number of the oral testimonies raise concern over the issue of 'informed consent' for adoption. Most commonly, these testimonies featured discussion of the traumatic and highly pressurised circumstances in which often very young women were asked to make decisions about adoption. In a smaller number of cases, testimony included allegations of irregularities around the signatures on consent forms. In contrast, interviews with two Good Shepherd Sisters and three retired social workers included testimony that pointed to the strict regulation of adoptions and cast doubt on the existence of any coercion in adoption cases. However, one of the retired social workers discussed the reality of the term 'consent' in this context. Her testimony provided an element of corroboration to those whose testimony argued that many birth mothers had no choice about what happened to their baby. While official consent may have been given, this was in the context of the birth mother being faced with the prospect of not being able to return home (with an 'illegitimate' baby) and being told that adoption was best for baby and mother. For many birth mothers, signing adoption papers was not a heart-felt indicator of their consent. As a number of testimonies revealed, (including those from retired social workers as well as birth mothers or their family members), there have been long-term mental health implications in the wake of these life-changing decisions.

There is evidence that a number of babies were moved from mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland to baby homes in the Republic of Ireland and were then adopted in the Republic of Ireland, USA and Britain. For the vast majority of cases, the researchers were unable to pursue the adoption routes involved for a number of reasons. Adoption certificates are held at GRONI but these record the adoptive name of a child, and the name of their adoptive parents, information that the research team did not have access to in many cases. In cases where cross-border adoptions took place, there is the additional complication that relevant certificates may be held in the Republic of Ireland. Without access to individual adoption files held by adoption agencies, Health and Social Care Trusts or the Courts in Northern Ireland (and/or the Republic of Ireland), at this point it cannot be confirmed that these adoptions were carried out following due legal process.

Adoption

The legal framework and process

A more detailed outline of the historical legislation in relation to adoption appears in **Appendix 1**, which provides a summary of legislative and procedural developments related to adoption in Northern Ireland.

The research indicates that children, born to mothers resident in Mother and Baby Homes, were adopted in Northern Ireland and outside Northern Ireland, including in the Republic of Ireland, Britain and the US. The legal framework governing adoption in Northern Ireland changed five times during the period covered by the research. Since 1929 consent to adoption has been required at every stage. The process around adoption was strengthened with each new piece of legislation.

Since 1950, there has been provision in legislation relating to adoption abroad. Adoption abroad was permitted under specified circumstances. While adoption abroad was permitted, the legislation specified the circumstances in which, or the conditions under which it was permitted, including a requirement to obtain a license from the court (under the 1950 Act) or a provisional adoption order (under the 1967 Act). Legislation governing adoption has been in place in the Republic of Ireland since 1952 and has changed eight times since then. The research clearly shows that a significant number of children, born to mothers resident in Mother and Baby Homes in Northern Ireland at the time of their birth, were adopted by families in the Republic of Ireland, other parts of the UK or in the USA. However, it is not yet possible to reach firm conclusions about whether those adoptions took place in accordance with what the law in Northern Ireland required at the time the adoptions occurred. In relation to birth mothers from the Republic of Ireland and other parts of the UK, whose babies were adopted after their residence in a Northern Ireland mother and baby home, the legal framework relating to adoption in each of those jurisdictions also needs to be taken into account. In summary, further work is required to conclusively determine the legality or otherwise of adoptions of children born in mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland. This would require access to relevant Northern Ireland adoption records and, ideally, to relevant adoption records held in the Republic of Ireland and other parts of the UK. It is acknowledged that this is a hugely sensitive issue, which would require very careful handling.

Drawing on a reading of that legislation, legal opinion received by the Inter-departmental Working Group suggests a number of ways in which cross-border adoptions (between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland) could have complied with the relevant legislation. Section 23 of the Adoption (Northern Ireland) Act 1950 includes this Stipulation:

> It shall not be lawful for any person, in connection with any arrangements made for the adoption of an infant who is a British subject, to permit, or to cause or procure, the care and possession of the infant to be transferred to a person who is not a British subject or the guardian or a relative of the infant and who is resident abroad.

However, legal counsel (included in **Appendix 1** on adoption legislation) identifies a number of circumstances in which the transfer of a child to another country might have taken place without contravening the law. These were:

> Via an application, to a court, for a license (under Section 23.2 of the 1950 Act) to allow the transfer of a child for the purposes of adoption to a British subject resident abroad. Adoptions arranged in this way might involve, a third party individual, a registered adoption society or a welfare authority. In this respect the British Nationality Act 1948 was significant. As Eire left the Commonwealth on 18th April 1949, citizens of Eire lost British subject status automatically on 1st January 1949. They could apply to remain British subjects, but no provision was made for the retention of British nationality by Irish citizens born in the Republic of Ireland after 1949: British subject status was not transmissible by descent.

The 1950 Act did not prohibit children who were not British subjects from being taken abroad from Northern Ireland for adoption. In the case of the Republic of Ireland, this would probably only apply to children born in the Republic of Ireland, moved to a home in Northern Ireland, and then moved outside Northern Ireland in connection with an adoption. No child in the research could be placed in that category.

Via the 1967 Act (which came into force on 1 January 1969) the role of licences was replaced by 'provisional adoption orders'. Where an adopter was domiciled in a country other than Northern Ireland, and intended to adopt an infant from Northern Ireland in his or her own country, the Court could make a provisional adoption order under section 38, giving the applicant custody of the infant. Unlike the licence system, the order was granted in favour of the actual adopter, and required the place of adoption to be the domicile of the adopter.

Section 1 of the 1967 Act extended the right to adopt to those domiciled anywhere in the UK, Isle of Man or Channel islands, so long as they were resident in Northern Ireland; and those who were domiciled but not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland. This tackled the problem of those UK nationals who were obligated to work away from home within the UK, such as members of the armed forces stationed in Northern Ireland, or those from Northern Ireland working in the rest of the UK.

Research in the records of the mother and baby homes examined by this report revealed only one reference to a licence in relation to an adoption outside of Northern Ireland. This was in 1966 when a solicitor acting for the Mater Dei home explained this process to a couple living in the USA, but originally from Northern Ireland, who wanted to adopt a baby. In another case, from 1954, also involving a Mater Dei baby, it is apparent that official state agencies were involved in the process of cross-border adoption. In this instance, correspondence from the Irish An Bord Uchtála (Adoption Board) to Mater Dei, referred to an application to adopt a child who had been born in Jubilee hospital to a mother with a Belfast address.

The oral testimony of three retired social workers, all with a great deal of experience in adoption work, offered slightly different accounts that were no doubt based on their individual experiences (or lack of personal experience) in regard to cross-border adoption. Two of the three held the view that babies born in Northern Ireland could not be adopted in the Republic of Ireland. This suggests that they had not encountered cases involving factors such as adoption by a child's relatives on the other side of the border. For example when Social Worker 1 was asked if it was possible for someone resident in the Republic of Ireland to adopt a child from Northern Ireland, she explained that she 'had a lot of enquiries from people from the south. Could they adopt?' Her reply was 'no' and she reflected that some of the legal situation was 'actually rather ridiculous, you might have found somebody approved just over the border, they might have been very good, but they could not adopt, full stop.' Social Worker 2 thought it possible that some birth mothers from Northern Ireland had their babies adopted in the Republic, but only if they had given birth in a mother and baby home south of the border. Social Worker 3 thought that a birth mother (but no one else) might have been able to take her child into the Republic of Ireland for the purposes of adoption.

The archival evidence viewed by the researchers included little discussion of the legal issues associated with cross border adoptions. One letter sent to Marianvale in 1972 by an official of the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society Ireland (CPRSI) advised one of the Good Shepherd Sisters against travelling over the border with a baby, as the letter's author believed that this would not comply with the law. Instead, she was advised to see if one of the child's relatives would carry out this journey with the infant. This suggests that the CPRSI operated on the assumption that cross-border adoptions met legal requirements if the baby was transferred by a family member.

On the issue of whether or not the cross border movement of babies was possible in cases where the adopters were the child's relatives who lived in the Republic of Ireland, a report published in 1963 by the Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council offers some insight. It analysed the 1,409 adoption applications that were lodged in Northern Ireland in the 5 years up to 31 December 1959. Among its discoveries was the fact that 301 (21%) applications were made by a relative of the child. 118 applicants were the child's mother; 9 applicants were the father of the infant concerned; 10 were made jointly by the mother and father; 77 were made by an aunt; 53 were lodged by the grandparents of the child concerned; and 17 applications were made by other relatives.[32] This indicates that adoption by relatives was common. However, the same report included no mention of any cases involving adoption of a child born in Northern Ireland by relatives living in the Republic of Ireland. The report's discussion of the legal situation regarding domicile and residence included other parts of the United Kingdom only, not the Republic of Ireland.[33] The report's authors did, however, recommend that foreign nationals should be included in a system of provisional adoption orders, if Northern Ireland introduced such a system (which it did via the 1967 Act).[34]

The archival records of the mother and baby homes reveal that there was considerable cross-border movement of babies. It is calculated that 202 babies from Marianvale (between 1957 and 1982), 171 from Marianville (between 1950 and 1990), 120 from Mater Dei (between 1942 and 1970) and 58 from Thorndale (between 1930 and 1970) were moved across the border to the Republic of Ireland.

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32 Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, Adoption of children: a report (Belfast, 1963), p.18.

33 Ibid., pp. 34-35.

34 Ibid., p. 40.

It must be noted that this figure only takes account of where a reference was made to a baby's initial destination after leaving the mother and baby home. Babies from Marianvale, Marianville and Mater Dei were placed most frequently in Nazareth House in Fahan, County Donegal. The next most regular cross-border destination was the Sisters of St Clare Home in Stamullen, County Meath. Smaller numbers of babies were moved to a number of baby homes/organisations in Dublin which included, Temple Hill, St. Patrick's Guild Baby Home; the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society Ireland (CPSRI); and the Holy Faith Convent, Eccles Street. In addition, a number of other babies were taken by named individuals to addresses in the Republic of Ireland but their relationship to the baby is unclear.

The baby home in Fahan was the recognised baby home for the Catholic Diocese of Derry and a number of babies whose mothers were originally from this Diocese were placed there. It was managed by the Sisters of Nazareth and had been established during the Second World War when a number of babies were evacuated from Nazareth Homes in Derry/Londonderry. Testimony from the Good Shepherd Sisters, a priest and retired social workers suggested that it was a matter of practicality that babies were sent to Fahan. The Good Shepherd Sisters indicated that babies were only moved by social workers, or the birth mother or her family, and that they did not take part in these movements.

It is more difficult to explain the placing of babies in Stamullen, County Meath, from mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland. There is no obvious logical reason for these cross- border movements in terms of either Catholic diocesan administrative logistics or the home addresses of their birth mothers. It is estimated that at least 165 babies, from Marianvale, Marianville and Mater Dei, were placed in Stamullen and it is unclear why they were placed there rather than in appropriate homes in Northern Ireland. From the baptismal records for Marianvale, additional information about what happened to the babies following their cross-border transfer is available. This identifies 72 babies who were moved to Stamullen and then adopted in the Republic of Ireland. A further 4 babies went first to Stamullen and then made the return journey to be adopted in Northern Ireland. It is not always clear who was responsible for transporting Marianvale babies to Stamullen. In 13 cases, it is recorded that the mother brought her baby to Stamullen. In 3 other cases, a nun from Stamullen is recorded as coming to collect the baby from Marianvale.

In cases involving babies being sent to Fahan, Co. Donegal, from Marianvale, 10 babies were recorded as being adopted in the Republic of Ireland and 19 returned to Northern Ireland to be adopted. The Marianvale records also indicate that 26 babies were adopted using the services of the St. Patrick's Guild in Dublin with 25 of these babies adopted in the Republic of Ireland. 3 babies were adopted in Dublin through the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland; 3 were adopted from the Holy Faith Convent, Eccles Street, Dublin; and 2 were adopted through St. Anne's Adoption Agency Cork. All these children went to live with families in the Republic of Ireland.

The baptismal records relating to Marianvale also reveal a number of babies whose final adoption destination was the USA. One baby boy who was moved to Fahan in 1967 was subsequently adopted by a couple in New York. A baby boy born in 1960 and moved to St. Patrick's Guild in Dublin was adopted, by a family in Illinois, in 1963. The highest number of transatlantic adoptions involved a stay for the babies at Stamullen on route to the USA. A baby boy, born in 1961, was adopted by a New Jersey couple in 1963; a baby girl born in 1963 was adopted by a couple from Massachusetts in 1966; a baby boy born in 1965 was moved to Stamullen and then adopted by a family in Louisiana, and the same family adopted a baby girl born in 1966. As the testimony from KO indicates (see

Chapter 4), she was a further Marianvale baby who was adopted by a couple from the USA in the late 1960s, having first been taken over the border to the Republic of Ireland. In her case, she had two different birth certificates; one from Northern Ireland and one from the Republic of Ireland. Later on her adoptive parents acquired a third birth certificate for her, this time in the USA.

Cross-border adoptions also occurred after Marianvale babies were moved, initially, to children's homes in Northern Ireland. Of the babies who were placed in the Nazareth Home in Portadown, four were then adopted by families in the Republic of Ireland. One baby born in 1954, moved to St. Joseph's Belfast and later was the subject of an adoption order recorded in Dublin in 1959. One baby who was placed in the Coneywarren Welfare Authority Children's Home in Omagh, in August 1959, was adopted in Dublin in June 1960. Finally, there are also records of 21 Marianvale babies being adopted in the Republic of Ireland for whom the files do not record what, if any, adoption agencies or institutions were involved.

There is also evidence of Northern Irish welfare authorities placing babies, from mother and baby homes, in the Republic of Ireland; in Fahan. In 1968, 'X and her baby were taken by … Derry Welfare … the baby was placed in Nazareth Home Fahan'. The Child Care Advisor for the Sisters of Nazareth Adoption Society, in Fahan, was also actively involved in taking at least 20 babies from Marianvale to Fahan throughout the 1970s and 1980s, 'with a view to adoption' or 'pending adoption'. The Marianville records also indicate the involvement of priests in the placing of babies across the border and arranging their subsequent adoption.

Private arrangements were also made for cross-border adoptions. The case notes for Marianville record a woman who had given birth in a private nursing home in Belfast, during 1954, and that a 'lady from Dublin came and adopted the infant'. In 1967, a Marianville baby was adopted privately by a couple living in Dublin. The following year, another Marianville baby was privately 'adopted in Sligo'. The surviving paperwork on these cases offers no indication of the processes involved in these adoptions. This is not unusual. Formal adoption case files are not held by any of the mother and baby homes.

While the majority of the cross-border movement was related to Catholic run mother and baby homes, research also revealed that 58 babies were moved from the Salvation Army's Thorndale House mother and baby home over the border to the Republic of Ireland. The records do not always reveal where the babies were sent. In a number of cases a name and address in the Republic of Ireland was recorded, but it is unclear what connection this address had to the baby or what role it was to play in the child's future. The address may have been that of a relative of the baby, a foster parent, a social worker, welfare officer or representative of a voluntary organisation.

The connections between various Protestant voluntary homes can be seen by the fact that at least 5 babies were moved from Thorndale to the Bethany Home in Dublin, a Protestant mother and child home with close links to the Church of Ireland. It is one of a number of institutions under investigation by the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes in the Republic of Ireland. In addition, at least 10 babies over the period were sent to the Kimberly home in Greystones, outside Dublin which became the Westbank Orphanage. This institution was originally the Protestant Home for Orphan and Destitute Girls, with a base in Dublin city before it relocated to Greystones in the 1940s. It has been the subject of public scrutiny due to allegations of abuse and the trafficking of children across the border (to Northern Ireland).

Good Shepherd laundries (St Mary's homes) – summary

The numbers of girls and women estimated to have entered the three Good Shepherd St Mary's homes are:

St Mary's Belfast	1,358
St Mary's Derry	992
St Mary's Newry	458

Entrance pathways

For the Good Shepherd St Mary homes, admissions peaked in the 1930s. For example the Derry laundry admitted 160 in the 1920s, 252 in the 1930s, 214 in the 1940s, 150 in the 1950s, 146 in the 1960s and 70 in the 1970s. Girls and women entered the Good Shepherd laundries via a variety of routes. Referrals were made by welfare authorities, probation/the courts, police, parents (or other family members), priests, Catholic organisations and mother and baby homes. The records for each entrant are usually lacking in any real detail on the background to her admission. Therefore, categories in which each referral was placed should be treated with great circumspection. A full analysis of the records for the St Mary's home Derry indicated that referrals were from the following sources:

20%	Family members
15%	Priests
13%	Sisters of Mercy
10%	Welfare authorities/health boards
8%	Sisters of Nazareth
7%	Police
6%	Other Good Shepherd convents
4%	St Louis Nuns
4%	Legion of Mary
4%	Other
3%	Self-referral
2%	The courts
2%	Doctors
2%	Hospital

The McAleese report on Magdalene laundries in the Republic of Ireland attempted to assign a percentage of women entering the institutions to categories it identified with the Irish State. Such an exercise is difficult to accomplish for Northern Ireland given the limited nature of the recorded notes on each of the several thousand admissions viewed by the researchers. Adopting McAleese's

categorisation of State sources of referral would involve welfare authorities/health boards, courts, police and industrial schools. This would suggest a figure of 27% of entrants referred by State sources (or 29% if we include doctors). However, there may be others not included by this measure, who were moved between Catholic institutions, who should also be assigned to a broader 'State' category. Most obviously, this might include many of the individuals cited as having been referred by the Sisters of Mercy. This Order managed the County Home in Stranorlar, County Donegal. In addition, when the courts in Derry/Londonderry appointed three part-time probation officers in 1916 they included a Salvation Army officer, a representative of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Sister Mary Joseph from the Sisters of Mercy convent in Londonderry/Derry city. It is likely that Sister Mary Joseph was the source of a number of entrants to the Good Shepherd laundry who were sent there on probation under the terms of the Probation of Offenders Act 1908. Moreover, the three Good Shepherd St Mary's homes were used as an alternative to imprisonment by Northern Ireland courts. Often those convicted of offences were offered the option of imprisonment in Armagh jail, or confinement on probation, for a designated period, in one of the Good Shepherd St Mary's Homes. This practice appears to have ceased by the 1970s, as three retired probation workers recall little contact with the Good Shepherd convents in the 1970s.

The proximity of St Mary's Derry to the border was a factor in the large numbers of girls and women it received from the Republic of Ireland. 30% of entrants to the Good Shepherd laundry in Derry appear to have come from the Republic of Ireland: the majority being from Donegal. In comparison, the number of entrants to St Mary's Belfast who came from the Republic of Ireland was smaller, at an estimated 14%. Many of the girls and women coming to St Mary's Derry came via the Sisters of Mercy and the County Home at Stranorlar (a mother and baby home). However, in at least one case, a magistrate in Donegal employed the St Mary's Home in Derry as an alternative to imprisonment for a young woman who appeared before him. Both these examples suggest the border was not a barrier to the use of the St Mary's Home by Donegal Catholics and representatives of the State in the Republic of Ireland.

Large numbers of girls and women were sent to the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes with the involvement of family or priests (presumably their parish priest). The records rarely provide any detail of the reasoning behind the decision to place a daughter or sister in the laundries. Testimony from two Good Shepherd Sisters and a priest, who was familiar with one of the St Mary's homes, maintained that some entrants had learning disabilities and that their families placed them in the laundry for this reason. In cases where the various St Mary's home admissions records indicate this was the case, there is no corroborating medical evidence: the admissions registers provide only jotted handwritten notes on individual cases. Some of the oral testimony, including the interview from a priest familiar with one of the St Mary's homes, queries the length of time for which many such women remained in the St Mary's homes and suggests that many were capable of living independently and could have been enabled do so earlier than was the case.

Significant numbers of girls and young women were sent from mother and baby homes to the Good Shepherd laundries or to 'the class' as a St Mary's home was sometimes termed. At least 5% of Marianvale birth mothers entered the neighbouring St Mary's home and worked in its laundry after the birth of their child. The term 'the class' was itself a phrase that evolved from the term 'penitents' class' associated with the original role of the laundries opened in Good Shepherd convents across Ireland in the nineteenth century. Its origins lay in nineteenth century Catholic moral thought on sinfulness and female sexuality. In this context, the St Mary's homes were deemed to be sites of

reflection and penitence following sinfulness. Elements of this thinking were retained until at least the 1960s. For example, in 1968, a priest advised that a young mother who had just given birth should be taken from Marianvale and 'received into the classroom for a short time after the baby's adoption in order that she may have an opportunity to reorient herself and prepare herself properly for her return to the outer room and a more orderly life from now on'. In another case, a few years earlier one woman (ID) spent time in a St Mary's home after her infant child was adopted from the adjacent mother and baby home. In an oral interview, ID outlined her view that her mother had arranged this with the Good Shepherd Sisters as punishment for her moral transgression. In several cases, from the 1950s and 1960s, the Good Shepherd records indicate that girls and young women who were the victims of sexual assault and incest were placed in a St Mary's home at the direction of the courts. Alternatively, some young women were placed in one of the St Mary's homes by a family member following incestuous abuse. In these cases it is not always clear what punishment, if any, their abuser faced while the abuse victim was sent to the St Mary's home.

Other women and girls entered a St Mary's home due to personal crises of various types and the circumstances behind these changed over the decades. By the onset of the Troubles, there were a number of cases in Belfast, Derry and Newry of teenage girls and women being sheltered from forms of community rough justice by the Good Shepherd Sisters. Examples in this category include young females who had associated with British soldiers and the Protestant girlfriend of a Catholic male who brought her to a Good Shepherd convent to protect her from retribution by the Ulster Defence Association. In other cases, individuals referred themselves to one of the St Mary's homes due to a personal crisis. Issues included domestic abuse, alcohol addiction, homelessness, or the break-down of family networks. Some individuals in this category had a record of entering and leaving a Good Shepherd laundry numerous times.

In St Mary's Derry, 4% of entrants were aged between 41 and 50 and another 4% were between 51 and 78. However, the single biggest cohort was aged 15 to 17 (33%) and a further 10% were aged 10 to 14. 28% were aged 18 to 23; 9% were from 24 to 28; 5% were aged 29 to 33; and 7% were aged between 34 and 40. The data for St Mary's Belfast offered similar findings. The Newry records did not include date of birth for many entrants to the laundry, but at least 63 of the 458 entrants were under 18. The HIAI debated evidence relating to whether or not teenage girls had worked in the Good Shepherd laundries. In conclusion, it ruled that their accommodation in the St Mary's home was inappropriate and accepted that there were instances where they did work in the laundry. The HIAI report concluded that this should not have been permitted by the Good Shepherd Sisters and considered it 'to amount to systemic abuse'.[35] The HIAI's concerns about the presence of girls under 18 in St Mary's homes in Northern Ireland may have been greater still if the Inquiry had access to the age data discussed here. The HIAI assumed that girls under 18 years old represented a small proportion of those sent to the St Mary's homes. The HIAI concluded that 'it is clear that the majority were women over eighteen'. However, the data revealed in this report indicates that under-18s represented a very significant proportion of those admitted to the St Mary's homes.

35 HIAI, Inquiry Report, Volume 1: Findings, para 320; Volume 6, Chapter 21, para 69.

Living conditions

Evidence on living conditions is drawn from a range of sources. These include the testimony of Good Shepherd Sisters, testimony from two priests familiar with the St Mary's homes, testimony from girls and women who were sent to work in one of the laundries at some point, testimony from relatives and associates of former laundry women. The researchers also drew on relevant statements offered to the HIAI and on conclusions reached in its report. This was a significant resource because the numbers of oral testimonies including material on what have become known as Magdalene laundries were much lower than for mother and baby homes (15 individuals as opposed to 47 individuals).

The available evidence gives an impression of the three Good Shepherd laundries as austere environments, with a great emphasis on regimented routine. This was particularly true of the period before the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which liberalised elements of Catholic theology and social action. Thereafter, the St Mary's women were provided with holidays (one week per year) and occasional day trips at weekends. It is important to note, that before this time the Good Shepherd Sisters were a closed order and its members did not normally leave the confinement of the convent. Thus, the Sisters were themselves institutionalised and habituated to a circumscribed existence cut off from a modernising world.

Girls and women carried out a full week's work in the laundries without payment between the 1920s and the 1970s. From the 1970s, modest amounts of 'pocket money' were paid to the women. For those women who spent many years in the St Mary's home, their status as unpaid labourers raises potential questions about issues such as national insurance payments and their entitlement to a pension. This report discusses the controversial issue of the unpaid work that the women carried out in some detail. In their defence, the Good Shepherd Sisters have argued that operating a commercial laundry served two functions. First, that it provided an element of training for girls and women who would later leave the convent for paid employment. Second, that it provided the necessary finance through which to meet the costs of operating the St Mary's home and providing accommodation and food for all the women for whom the Sisters received no State funding. This must have included those women placed by family members, priests, self-referrals and those who stayed beyond any period of confinement imposed on them by courts orders.

The financial records made available to the researchers by the Good Shepherd Sisters were limited in extent. They suggested that the laundries did not make extensive profits for the St Mary's homes and often operated close to, or at, a loss. However, the Second World War offered an opportunity for more substantial profits as the Good Shepherd laundries were awarded numerous contracts from the military. During this period, government officials carried out inspections of the laundries but their interest was in the quality of the technological equipment and the ability of the premises to fulfil contracts. The working conditions of the women received no official comment during these wartime inspections. This was despite objections made by trade union representatives and owners of commercial laundries, who claimed that they were being undercut by the Good Shepherd Sisters. Their complaints related to the fact that the Good Shepherds had an unpaid labour force, constantly on site, which gave them an unfair competitive advantage. These complaints appear to have emerged out of self and/or commercial interest rather than stemming from any concern for social justice and the laundry women's unusual circumstances and status. It was during this period, in 1945, when the one recorded potential workplace fatality occurred amongst the laundry women. This was the case of a woman in the Derry laundry who 'met with an accident' in March 1945. It is not clear if this incident occurred during working hours in the laundry. As was the case with all other

commercial laundries, those managed by the Good Shepherd Sisters were subject to visitation by factory inspectors under the auspices of the Factory and Workshop Act 1907. However, reports from these visits were not found in either PRONI or in departmental searches carried out on behalf of the Inter-departmental Working Group.

Although the sparse financial records available indicate that the laundries did not make significant profits, one bank statement issued in 1973 noted that the bank reserves for St Mary's Derry were £41,000 (equivalent to approximately £320,000 today). It is not known how long these reserves had been in place or when they were amassed. It was around this point that the Good Shepherd homes began to offer 'pocket money' to their laundry workers. Moreover, the Sisters began paying a small number of employees who came in to work in the laundry each day (alongside the unpaid St Mary's women) from outside the convent's walls.

Daily routines began in early morning with Mass and breakfast and were followed by a lengthy working day. Speaking to the HIAI, the Good Shepherd Sisters acknowledged that a regime of silence was enforced in the St Mary's homes. At meal times, a Sister read aloud from religious tracts. This was an element of life in the St Mary's homes which began to change after the Second Vatican Council. Oral testimony collected by the researchers, as well as that for the HIAI, suggests that physical punishment was rare in the context of the Good Shepherd laundries in Northern Ireland. The Order had placed a prohibition on it since the nineteenth century. Instead, discipline was instilled by a regimented regime and other forms of punishment. For example, the HIAI concluded that a 'systemic failure' by the Good Shepherd Sisters involved the punishment of girls and women for 'misdemeanours in front of others and making the offender kneel, or making an offender stand to eat her meal'.[36]

Until the late 1960s, the Good Shepherd Sisters discouraged those in the Order's care from leaving their premises. The HIAI described this 'a practice of containment',[37] which was a 'poor and outdated practice'.[38] Oral testimony offered to the researchers by the Good Shepherd Sisters and others indicates that some of the women in the St Mary's homes reached the status of auxiliaries and were entrusted to take other laundry residents, who were not permitted to leave the convent alone, to hospital or other medical appointments.

There was a practice of re-naming new arrivals. Girls and women received 'class names' including Perpetua, Camillus, Dominic, Scholastica, Alphonsus, Borgia, Bernard, Pelegia, Celsus and Cyrille. The class names allocated to new arrivals became more commonplace by the 1960s; the final names recorded in the St Mary's Derry register, in 1970, were Cissie and Gwyneth. Discussing this policy, the HIAI concluded that it 'caused considerable distress and confusion to those affected.'[39] Oral testimony collected during the current research indicates that work was carried out by social workers to 'recover' the real names of the remaining St Mary's women once they were relocated into residential homes in the 1980s.

Some of the evidence given to the HIAI suggested that the food in the St Mary's homes was not very good quality or that there were insufficient amounts. However, analysis of the death certificates for the

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36 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 136.

37 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 65.

38 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 103.

39 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 138.

significant numbers of St Mary's women who died either in the home or in the follow on residential homes, indicates that they commonly lived long lives. This suggests that diet and basic living conditions were of a sufficient standard to maintain good health and longevity.

The testimony of the Good Shepherd Sisters indicated that there were leisure activities in the evenings and that this included board games, table tennis and television. Local entertainers made occasional visits to the St Mary's homes. The women had access to books but not newspapers and there was no telephone. According to the Sisters, many St Mary's women did not receive visitors. One Sister recalled examples of people who 'befriended' the women and visited the St Mary's homes. In some cases, the women took a break weekends in the homes of the befrienders. Evidence given to the researchers and to the HIAI suggests that the St Mary's women, particularly the younger new arrivals, found the evening leisure activities limited and boring. The St Mary's homes had a tradition of hosting concerts and musical evenings to which outside guests were invited. Newspaper reports from the 1920s and 1930s, in particular, comment on the annual musicals hosted at St Mary's Derry. One of the former laundry women who contacted the researchers remembered taking part in musicals such as My Fair Lady that were 'performed for the local community'. This individual also had memories of weekend trips to the seaside when the 'nuns brought big hampers with sandwiches, fruit, lemonade and tea and we all enjoyed a picnic.' At other times, there were 'evening classes for us – knitting and sewing, cooking, baking and typewriting.' According to one of the Good Shepherd Sisters these developments followed the Seebohm Report of 1968, after which she believed the welfare authorities began providing greater financial assistance to the St Mary's homes.

Exit from St Mary's homes

Analysis was carried out to assess the length of time that girls and women remained within the St Mary's homes. A departure date was not included on the admissions registers for all women. In other cases, women never left and either died there or after they had re-located to one of the follow-on residential homes. Analysis for the whole Derry records and a sample of the Belfast records indicates the following length of stays.

For St Mary's Derry, 20% of entrants departed within one month; 35% remained for between one month and one year; 10% Stayed between 13 months and 2 years; 8% remained for between 2 and 3 years; 12% remained for between 3 and 6 years; 5% remained for between 6 and 10 years; 2% remained for periods between 11 and 25 years; and 8% of women are recorded as having made multiple entries and exits from the laundry at unspecified periods.

The figures in the sample of St Mary's Belfast entrants produced the following results. 8% stayed for less than one month; 50% stayed for between 1 and 6 months; 17% remained for between 7 and 12 months; 14% remained for between 2 and 8 years; 4% remained for between 9 and 19 years; 2% stayed beyond twenty years. Finally, 5% of individuals in this sample had multiple entries and exits from the St Mary's Belfast home.

These figures include only those who left the St Mary's homes at some point and do not include those who died in either St Mary's Belfast or St Mary's Derry. Numerous individuals were identified who worked in the laundry for several decades before their death. For example, in St Mary's Belfast one woman entered in 1890 and died in 1947; another entered in 1894 and died in 1949, another

arrived in 1899 and died in 1946. A further entrant arrived in 1908 and died in 1963 and a woman who died in 1949 had arrived in 1906. Later entrants included a woman who arrived in 1929 and died in 1980 and another who passed away in 1966 after entering in 1933.

A number of exit routes were identified from the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes, although the admissions registers are not always clear on this matter. In the case of St Mary's Derry, it has been possible to compile the following estimates and categories for exit pathways. 28% were recorded simply as having 'Left/Sent out'. In principle, those over 18 years-old were free to leave if not subject to a court order enforcing their detention. For those placed in the home by their families, the Good Shepherd Sisters indicate that a request from an individual to leave would be followed by an interview with the Sister in Charge who might consult with the woman's family and/or attempt to secure employment for her before departure. 24% were recorded as 'went to family' (or similar wording). In 13% of cases girls or women were 'dismissed'. In some cases expulsion from the laundry was because the Sisters had difficulties managing the behaviour of those concerned. Other women proved unsuitable for work in the laundry, due to a physical or mental disability. Individuals in this category were often sent back to the source of their referral, usually an institution managed by another religious order.

7% of girls and women were sent from St Mary's Derry to other Catholic institutions – orphanages, convents and other Good Shepherd homes. A further 10% were sent to hospitals and other medical facilities. 19 women, for example, went from the laundry to long-term care in Gransha Hospital. 26 women were noted as having gone to 'mental' hospitals or asylums. The very limited commentaries on these cases does not allow for any analysis on the nature or causes of the psychiatric illnesses involved.

4% of women left the laundry to work elsewhere. Some went of their own accord, others went to positions, arranged for them by the Good Shepherd Sisters, in hotels, hospitals and parochial houses. A further exit route was taken by 5% of women, who were recorded as running away. These included one young woman placed in the St Mary's home by her local welfare authority in 1959, who was caught attempting to run away by climbing down a drainpipe. Often girls who absconded were returned to the St Mary's home by the police. There has been debate about the role of the police in such cases and the legal grounds under which they pursued runaways. The McAleese Report maintained that this was only the policy in the Republic of Ireland in cases where the girls or women concerned were incarcerated in the laundry under a court or probation order.[40] Notes on one case from St Mary's Derry, in the early 1970s, suggest that police involvement with a teenage runaway may have led them to conclude that the girl should not have been resident in St Mary's. The 14 year-old involved had 'continually run away' and was on one occasion 'brought back by Army with RUC.' However, the case notes recorded that eventually, 'the police took her home as we had no legal right to keep her and had no guarantee she would not run again'. Although not conclusive evidence of how these interactions worked, this example suggests a degree of negotiation between the police and the Good Shepherd Sisters to identify the legal issues involved in individual cases.

40 Report of the inter-departmental committee to Establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene laundries, Chapter 9.

Deaths and burials

The analysis of this issue was complex. Using details in the admissions registers, the researchers identified a number of individuals who died while resident in the three St Mary's homes: 34 for Belfast 29 for Derry and 3 for Newry. However, there were a number of individuals for whom no departure details were recorded and these were recorded in a category labelled 'unknown' in the analysis of exits from the homes. For example, in the St Mary's Derry records 5% of women were in this category because there was no clear indication of when, or if, they had departed the home. As the research process continued, some of the women in this group appeared on a number of burial lists that the Good Shepherd Sisters supplied. These contain the names of many more deceased women for the Belfast and Derry St Mary's homes than are recorded by the admissions register. On the burial lists are 80 women for Belfast, 49 women for Derry and 1 woman for Newry. The Newry burial list provided by the Good Shepherd Sisters list did not include two of the deceased women discovered by the researchers in the admissions register. The researchers also noted that a number of the women recorded as deceased in the Belfast and Derry admissions registers do not appear on the relevant burial lists provided by the Good Shepherds Sisters: 15 for Belfast; 12 for Derry. In addition, two women who are recorded in the Belfast and Newry admission registers, as having passed away after they were relocated to the Derry laundry, do not appear on the burial list. It is not clear where these women were interred. It is not clear why the burial lists and admissions registers do not accord. However, after the research report was submitted, the Good Shepherd Sisters indicated that the remains of some women were taken home by family for burial and this might explain the differences.[41]

Among those not on the list is the young woman who died in March 1945, six weeks after she 'met with an accident' in St Mary's Derry. She had worked in the laundry for nine years at this juncture, having been brought there by a family member. There is no record of any inquest dealing with this woman's death and a search of GRONI for a death certificate was fruitless. Examination of a large number of other death certificates for women associated with the three Good Shepherd St Mary's homes revealed a series of common causes of death, such as various cancers, bronchopneumonia, strokes and cardiac failure. Using the names and dates of death on the burial lists supplied by the Good Shepherd Sisters, it was possible to trace death certificates, at GRONI, in 59 of the Belfast cases, 30 of the Derry cases and for the one name on the list for Newry.

Burials took place in four cemeteries across Northern Ireland. At Ardmore cemetery for women connected with St Mary's Derry; at Carrickcruppen for the one woman on the St Mary's Newry burial list; and at Milltown Cemetery and the City Cemetery for women associated with St Mary's Belfast. According to the Good Shepherd Sisters, requiem masses took place in the appropriate convent chapel for each of these women and, in some cases, relatives of the deceased woman were present. This was corroborated by oral testimony from relatives of two women.

In the case of the Belfast burials, those who have died since the 1980s are interred in marked graves with their name and date of death engraved on a headstone: with up to four names on each headstone. Those buried before that point were interred in larger communal graves that are marked only by a reference to the fact that the grave holds individuals from St Mary's Good Shepherd Convent Belfast and the Greenvale residential home. Death notices for individual women appeared,

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41 Communication to IDWG from the Good Shepherd Sisters.

in the *Irish News*, following the deaths from 1984 onwards but not before that point. It would appear that there was a change in policy, in this regard, once these women left the laundry and moved into residential homes.

Burials of the former laundry women at Ardmore followed a similar pattern to those at St Mary's Belfast. The women were laid to rest in unmarked graves at Ardmore. Some of the plots contain the remains of four of the St Mary's Derry women, but there is also a bigger grave on which large headstones record the names of 19 women who died between 1978 and 1999. On the smaller plots, headstones appear to have been erected in recent years to mark deaths that took place in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. The *Derry Journal* contained death notices for these women only from the mid-1990s.

The former St Mary's Newry resident who is listed as having been buried at Carrickcruppen cemetery, Bessbrook is buried in a large plot that also contains a number of deceased babies born to Marianvale mothers. This woman's name is recorded on a small individual gravestone.

Thorndale Industrial Home - summary

As well as being the location of a mother and baby home, the Salvation Army's Thorndale site was the site of an Industrial Home that served some of the functions that were performed by the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes discussed above.

Number of entrants: 707

Thorndale Industrial Home was part of the Salvation Army complex off the Antrim Road in Belfast, it operated as a 'girls' training home' and also as a probation home for women sent by the police, courts and social services. The surviving records for this home are arranged in a format that makes it difficult to create some of the quantifiable statistics that have been laid out for some of the other institutions examined by the researchers. However, the most marked difference between the Thorndale Industrial Home and the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes is the fact that periods of residence at Thorndale were much shorter.

Entrance routes

The available figures cover the years between 1922 and 1955 and suggest that 707 women and girls entered during that period. This is a larger number than the 389 which is recorded in the Salvation Army Statistics for the period between 1922 and 1964. This difference here may be an issue of recording practice. It is possible that the Salvation Army's own figures did not include women who stayed at Thorndale for only a few nights.

Individuals were referred from a range of sources. The pattern shifts from one that featured a large number of women and girls being referred to Thorndale by named individuals, in the 1920s, to one that was more heavily dominated by welfare authorities, social workers, probation officers and the police by the 1950s.

Like representatives of other institutions, members of the Salvation Army attended courts to offer their services for suitable women under the Probation Acts. Many women are recorded as coming directly from the courts to Thorndale. The prison registers for Armagh Prison also record girls and women who were sent to Thorndale rather than entering the prison. These referrals from the probation service continued into the 1950s and 1960s.

Whilst Thorndale was used in this way between the 1920s and 1960s, its role in this respect appears to have ceased by the 1970s. The three retired probation officers who provided testimony for this research recalled very few dealings with Thorndale. Their careers in the probation service began in the 1970s and 1980s and they explained that they had more familiarity with Armagh Prison, and the two training centres for female offenders: Middletown and Whiteabbey.

As was the case with the Good Shepherd Convents, Thorndale Industrial Home was also used by the police when they required emergency accommodation for girls and young women. Families also placed women and girls in the Industrial Home when they had concerns about their behaviour. Alcohol addiction was a feature in a number of cases, and the admission registers required new arrivals to answer whether or not they had 'ever been a drink case'. The number of women recorded as being a 'drink case' declined significantly from the 1920s, which may have reflected a change in policy for the Salvation Army.

Women with learning disabilities and mental health issues also entered Thorndale Industrial Home. Sometimes they were sent by their parents who were unsure how to care for them. The evidence suggests the courts, the police, the probation service and the wider community clearly placed extensive demands on what was an underfunded voluntary body.

Living conditions

The records provide little information about the living conditions in the Industrial Home. Unlike the Good Shepherd institutions, women did not work in a commercial laundry but labour of some kind was carried out. No former resident of the Thorndale Industrial Home came forward to offer testimony to the researchers and unlike the equivalent Good Shepherd homes, it was not investigated by the HIAI. As such, details of day to day life within this part of the Thorndale complex remain unclear.

Exit

There were a wide range of exit pathways for women depending on their situations. Due to the different terminology and complex methods used to record this information by the Thorndale Staff, it is impossible to quantify these statistically. However, it can be stated that the majority of women left 'to a situation' or were recorded as 'left to seek work'. The majority of women who stayed longer than for a few days, spent several months in the industrial home rather than several years.

Chapter 1:

Historical Background to and Literature Review on Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries

This chapter introduces some of the historical issues which the report discusses. It is designed as an accessible and user-friendly introductory essay. Those who wish to read further on the issues raised here will be able to identify further reading from the footnotes attached to this chapter. The chapter commences with a discussion of some of the terminology which is used in the report, with an acknowledgment that this is controversial in the contemporary world. It then offers an overview of Magdalene laundries, explaining their history, role and the locations in which they operated in Northern Ireland (including those operating before partition). The historiography (or historical debates) which have developed around the subject of Magdalene laundries is also introduced; hopefully in a style that is accessible and enlightening for non-academic readers. The chapter then repeats this process for mother and baby homes, explaining their location in Northern Ireland, outlining the history of these institutions and providing a broad introductory discussion of the historical debates which have emerged on them.

Historical Terminology

The term 'Magdalene Laundry', which was employed in the commissioning of this report, is associated with the institutions established and run by religious orders in Ireland. However, throughout their history, these institutions were rarely described as Magdalene laundries and instead used a variety of alternative names, such as asylum, penitentiary, refuge and rescue homes. They were also operated by lay people as well as both Protestant Churches and Roman Catholic Religious Orders. Throughout the report, the specific name of the institution will be used, and Magdalene laundries used to refer to the collective institutions.

As this is an historical report there are a number of terms used which were deployed in the past which may not be regarded as appropriate or acceptable today. These are used when necessary to maintain historical accuracy.

Illegitimate: This term was common in official documentation and in many of the records used in this report. Today, of course, it is recognised that no child should be considered 'illegitimate' or 'legitimate'

The terms, Irish Free State, Eire and the Republic of Ireland are used when discussing the relevant historical periods they were in use.[42]

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42 For more on the discussions relating to geographical terminology see, Mary E. Daly, 'The Irish Free State/ Éire/ Republic of Ireland/ Ireland: "A Country by Any Other Name"?' in Journal of British Studies, vol 46 (2007), pp 72-90.

Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland

Roman Catholic Institutions
Good Shepherd Sisters

St Mary's Home, Belfast – 1867-1982
St Mary's Home, Derry/Londonderry – 1922-1982
St Mary's Home, Newry – 1946-1984

Protestant Institutions

Belfast Midnight Mission/Malone Place Maternity and Rescue Home – 1860-1948
Salvation Army Industrial/Rescue Home, Belfast – 1886-1965
Ulster Female Penitentiary/Edgar Home, Belfast – 1819-1928
Ulster Magdalene Asylum, Belfast – 1842-1916
North-West of Ulster Women's Home, Derry/Londonderry 1829 – (closed by 1911)
Rosevale House, Lisburn, 1862 – (closed by 1920)

Magdalene Laundries: Historical Background

The first Magdalene Asylum was established in Ireland, in 1767, by Lady Arabella Denny in Dublin and there was an emergence of similar lay and religious institutions in the nineteenth century. Maria Luddy records at least forty-one asylums of refuge established in Ireland by the beginning of the twentieth century.[43] As female sexuality and behaviour was increasingly controlled and defined through the nineteenth century, these institutions were established to rescue and reform 'fallen' women, those involved in prostitution and considered to be living a life of sin.[44] They were also a response to growing concerns about prostitution in expanding cities and to 'rescue and elevate' the 'fallen woman' to an 'acceptable level of womanhood'.[45] For example, Rev. John Edgar of the Ulster Female Penitentiary described its purpose as withdrawing from society 'a class of its worst tempters and nuisances and affording to those bent on reformation, a refuge and means of improvement'.[46]

The post-Famine period in Ireland saw the growth and expansion of the Magdalene laundries run by the religious orders with an 'extensive and organised network of refuges which operated throughout the country'.[47] These institutions were often larger than the lay-run asylums and while lay asylums saw two years as an ideal length of stay to reform women and prepare them for domestic service roles, religious-run institutions had no defined time limit on the length of stay and there was less obvious focus on training for employment.[48] Maria Luddy has shown how in the nineteenth century

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43 Maria Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, 1800-1940 (Cambridge, 2007), p. 77.

44 Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, p. 77; James M. Smith, Ireland's Magdalene laundries and the nation's architecture of containment (Manchester, 2007), p. 25.

45 Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, p. 92.

46 Annual Report, Ulster Female Penitentiary, Belfast Newsletter, 21 Apr. 1851.

47 Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, p. 93.

48 Smith, Ireland's Magdalene laundries, p. 26; Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, pp.113-114; Leanne McCormick, Regulating sexuality: women in twentieth century Northern Ireland, (Manchester, 2009), pp. 63-64

and the first decade of the twentieth century there was a high turnover of women entering and leaving the institutions. She suggests that between 1912 and the 1920s they appear to have become 'less flexible institutions, or at least acquired this reputation'.[49]

Many of the institutions, both Protestant and Catholic run, had a laundry attached. In the view of those who managed these homes, laundry work provided essential income and also ensured that women were 'kept fully employed in helping towards their own support'.[50] As is discussed below, the fact that women were not paid for their physically demanding labour was a highly controversial aspect of these homes. The Edgar Home Annual Report of 1911 described how the laundry enabled the women 'to earn their bread by working with their hands' and while 'occupied making soiled linen clean and white they have been taught higher things as well'.[51] Historian Peter Hughes has argued that, in the minds of those operating the laundries, there was a symbolic link between the 'fallen woman and the dirty linen' and close connections between transforming dirty washing into something clean and the transformation of penitents (a term used to describe the women) from their sinful ways.[52] These institutions were part of a wider range of philanthropic organisations which were established in the nineteenth century many of which had a specific focus on women.[53] While workhouses, established under the Irish Poor Law Act of 1838 were the main source of welfare, a fear of proselytisation ensured the development of a range of separate Protestant and Catholic charitable organisations.[54]

The history of Magdalene laundries gained increasing public attention in Ireland in the 1990s with the removal and reburial of human remains discovered in grounds of the Convent of Our Lady of Charity of Refuge at High Park, Dublin, in 1993. The public was shocked to learn that women who died in the laundries had been buried in unmarked graves, and not afforded the customary rites that Catholic Ireland usually offered its dead.[55] Moreover, as the remains were exhumed it was evident that not all deaths in the High Park laundry had been properly recorded, raising new questions about the treatment of the Magdalene women and adherence to burial laws.[56] The heightened public awareness of the laundries drew attention to the closure, three years later, of the last Magdalene Asylum, operated by the same religious order, in Dublin's Sean MacDermott Street.[57] In the decades following this, there have been films, plays, songs and other media representations of the

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49 Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, p. 103.

50 Rev. Dr O'Loughlin, Sermon in aid of the Magdalene asylum, Belfast, 27 Mar. 1900.

51 Edgar Home, Annual Report, 1911.

52 Peter Hughes, 'Cleanliness and godliness: a sociological study of the Good Shepherd Refuges for the social reformation and Christian conversion of prostitutes and convicted women in nineteenth century Britain' (Unpublished doctoral thesis, Brunel University, 1985), p. 376; McCormick, Regulating sexuality, p. 62.

53 For more on female philanthropy and charity in Ireland see for example, Maria Luddy, Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland (Cambridge, 1995); Alison Jordan, Who cared? charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast (Belfast, 1993); Oonagh Walsh, Anglican women in Dublin: philanthropy, politics and education in the early twentieth century (Dublin, 2005); Margaret Preston, Charitable words: women, philanthropy, and the language of charity in nineteenth-century Dublin (London, 2004).

54 Olwen Purdue, 'Surviving the industrial city: the female poor and the workhouse in late nineteenth century Belfast' in Urban History, vol 44, no. 1 (2017), p. 75. For more on the Poor Law in Ireland see for example, Virginia Crossman, Poverty and the Poor Law in Ireland, 1850-1914 (Liverpool, 2013); Peter Gray, The Making of the Irish Poor Law, 1815–43 (Manchester, 2009).

55 Irish Times, 25 Aug. 1993; Irish Press, 24 Aug. 1993.

56 See in particular the work of Mary Raftery, Irish Times, 21 Aug. 2003.

57 Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, p. 76. Irish Times, 25 Sept. 1996.

institutions and their inmates.[58] The institutions were, however, not unique to Ireland, with similar establishments across Europe, Australia, USA, Canada, as well as across the United Kingdom and there has been significant academic research on their histories in a number of national contexts.[59] Frances Finnegan suggests that by the 1890s most towns in Britain contained at least one Magdalene Asylum, with 'many boasting three or four competing Refuges and Homes.'[60] What sets Ireland, north and south, apart is the continued operation of these institutions into the late twentieth century.

Northern Ireland

As the list above demonstrates, there were a number of Protestant and Catholic run Magdalene institutions established in the nineteenth century, in what became Northern Ireland, with the aim of rescuing and reforming prostitutes. By the beginning of the twentieth century most of the institutions had changed their focus and the women admitted were not generally prostitutes and if they were involved in sex work it was only briefly. [61] The Edgar Home, in 1898, only wished to admit women who had only a 'short time entered a life of sin' The home also declared a preventative focus, which was 'not only to rescue the fallen, but to save from falling those who may be tempted to walk in forbidden paths'.[62] Others such as the Belfast Midnight Mission/Malone Place, which continued operation into the mid-twentieth century, became more focused on the unmarried mother rather than their rescue and reform work.[63]

In contrast, similar institutions managed by Catholic religious orders were willing to accept women based on broader admittance criteria, resulting in larger institutions and continued operation long into the twentieth century. In the 1911 census, there were 135 women in the Good Shepherd St Mary's Home in Belfast as opposed to forty-seven in the Edgar Home, twenty in the Ulster Magdalene Asylum and twenty-four women in the Salvation Army home.[64] The Good Shepherd Sisters, who had arrived in Belfast in 1867 to establish a St Mary's home, continued this element of their work there until 1982. Subsequently, they established similar institutions in Derry/Londonderry in 1922 and Newry in 1946.

The majority of the Protestant institutions in Northern Ireland closed in the early 1920s with the Edgar Home ceasing to operate by 1928. Its Annual Reports in the 1920s record how it became increasingly difficult to get women to enter the home. It noted that 'younger women and girls living lives of sin in our city' were resisting 'all efforts to draw away from a life of freedom and lawlessness' and when they did enter the home 'they are more difficult to control than they used to be'.[65] Thus,

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58 See for examples, http://jfmresearch.com/educational-resources/.

59 See for example: James Franklin, 'Convent slave laundries? Magdalene asylums in Australia' in Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society, vol 34 (2013), pp 70-90; Michelle Jones and Lori Record, 'Magdalene laundries: the first prisons for women in the United States' in Journal of the Indiana Academy of the Social Sciences, vol 17, no. 1 (2017), pp 166-179; Linda Mahood, The Magdalenes: prostitution in the nineteenth century (Abingdon, 1990); Paula Bartley, Prostitution: prevention and reform in England, 1860-1914 (Abingdon, 2000).

60 Frances Finnegan, Do penance or perish, Magdalene asylums in Ireland (Oxford, 2004), pp. 16-17.

61 McCormick, Regulating sexuality, p. 46.

62 Edgar Home, Annual Meeting, Belfast Newsletter, 30 Nov. 1898.

63 Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, pp.113-114; McCormick, Regulating sexuality, p.66.

64 Census of Ireland, 1911 accessed at http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie

65 Belfast Newsletter, 12 January 1922

by the time that Northern Ireland was created, refuge or rescue homes were in decline with the exception of those operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters, the Salvation Army Industrial Home, and to a lesser extent, Belfast Midnight Mission.

From its establishment, Northern Ireland 'lagged behind the rest of the United Kingdom' in terms of services such as housing, public health and education.[66] The Northern Ireland government was cautious about committing money to health and welfare but also felt that it needed to keep policies in line with those of Westminster.[67] Health and welfare were largely underfunded and the voluntary sector played a crucial role in welfare, 'indeed philanthropy was the main mechanism for poverty relief in the first two decades after partition'.[68] The Poor Law 'remained more influential in the region than elsewhere in the UK and provided the bulk of free health care, emergency accommodation and aid to the destitute'.[69] It was not until the 1940s, following a series of scandals involving Belfast City Council, that the Northern Ireland government was shaken 'from its years of inertia into assuming responsibility of the administration of health and social services'.[70] There was a long established tradition of separate Protestant and Catholic voluntary organisations and these continued into the twentieth century. Financially challenged local authorities and Government departments were content to allow religious and voluntary agencies to continue to provide services.[71] There was also a desire from the Northern Irish Government not to interfere in the operation of Catholic institutions for fear of causing further alienation from the state on the part of the Catholic community.[72] The Social Services (Agreement) Act of 1949 between the Northern Ireland and Westminster governments ensured services were provided in Northern Ireland on the same basis as in Great Britain with deficit financing by Westminster.[73] While it was believed that voluntary organisations would become redundant in the new welfare state, they became 'ever more necessary to deliver services'.[74]

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66 Patrick Buckland, The Factory of Grievances: devolved government in Northern Ireland, 1921–39 (Dublin, 1979), p.49. For more on this see Derek Birrell and Alan Murie, Policy and government in Northern Ireland: lessons of devolution (Dublin, 1980); John Privilege and Greta Jones, 'Crisis and scandal: government, local government and health reform in Northern Ireland, 1939–44' in Irish Economic and Social History, vol 42, no.1 (2015), pp 33-52; Peter Martin, 'Social policy and social change since 1914', in Liam Kennedy and Philip Ollerenshaw (eds.) Ulster since 1600: politics, economy and society (Oxford, 2012), pp 308-325.

67 Privilege and Jones, 'Crisis and scandal', p. 35.

68 Deidre Heenan and Derek Birrell, Social Work in Northern Ireland: conflict and change (Bristol, 2011), p. 12.

69 Martin, 'Social policy and social change', p. 311

70 Privilege and Jones, 'Crisis and scandal', p.51

71 This was similar to the situation in the Irish Free State, see Earner-Byrne, Mother and child, p.180.

72 McCormick, Regulating sexuality, p. 71

73 Nicholas Acheson, Brian Harvey, and Arthur Williamson, 'State welfare and the development of voluntary action: The case of Ireland, north and south' in Voluntas: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, vol 16, no. 2 (2005), p. 195

74 Ibid.

Literature Review

The initial focus in the academic literature about these institutions has been on their role in nineteenth-century history.[75] However, more recently their functions in the Republic of Ireland in the post-1922 period have been centre stage.[76] The fact that Magdalene laundries existed in Northern Ireland has been largely ignored.[77] The literature relating to Magdalene laundries operated by religious orders, has drawn attention to the changing role of these institutions following the creation of the Irish Free State and their more coercive nature and reputation in the twentieth century, in contrast to the institutions of the nineteenth century.[78] Maria Luddy has argued that the majority of women entering institutions in the nineteenth century did so voluntarily with many women using the homes as an alternative to the workhouse and the decision to stay was often 'made by the women themselves'.[79] However, it is also clear that women were placed in the institutions by religious authorities, families and the police or judiciary. They were used by families to 'hide the "shame" visited on their families by wayward or pregnant daughters'.[80]

While some historians have been granted access to nineteenth-century records of Magdalene laundries, the restrictions on access to the records for the twentieth century have made it difficult to answer fully the questions which exist about how the institutions operated in more recent decades.[81] An exception to this is recent work by Jacinta Prunty who had access to the archives of the Sisters of Charity. [82] However, while this is an important work, as Catriona Crowe has pointed out in a review of the book, the archive is closed to other researchers. This prevents the records being 'inspected and

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75 See for example: Finnegan, Do penance or perish; Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society; Smith, Ireland's Magdalene laundries; Rebecca Lea McCarthy, Origins of the Magdalene laundries: an analytical history (Jefferson, 2010).

76 See for example, Brian Titley, 'Heil Mary: Magdalene Asylums and moral regulation in Ireland', in History of Education Review, vol 35, no.2 (2006), pp 1–15; James M. Smith, 'The Magdalene Sisters: evidence, testimony… action?', in Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society vol 32, no.2 (2007), pp 431-458; Maeve O'Rourke, 'Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the state's duty to protect', in Hibernian Law Journal, vol 200, no. 10 (2011), pp 200–37; Clara Fischer, 'Gender, nation, and the politics of shame: Magdalene laundries and the institutionalisation of feminine transgression in modern Ireland', in Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, vol 41, no. 4 (2016), pp 821-43. Jennifer Yeager and Jonathan Culleton, 'Gendered violence and cultural forgetting: the case of the Irish Magdalenes', in Radical History Review, vol 126 (2016), pp 134-146; Maeve O'Rourke and James M. Smith, 'Ireland's Magdalene Laundries: confronting a history not yet in the past', in Alan Hayes and Máire Meagher (eds), A century of progress? Irish women reflect, (Dublin, 2016), pp 107–34; Katherine O'Donnell 'Academics becoming activists: reflections on some ethical issues of the Justice for Magdalenes Campaign', in Pilar Villar-Argáiz (ed.), Irishness on the margins: minority and dissident identities, (London, 2018), pp 77-100; Jennifer O'Mahoney, Lorraine Bowman Grieve, Alison Torn, 'Ireland's Magdalene Laundries and the psychological architecture of surveillance' in Susan Flynn and Antonia Mackay (eds) Surveillance, architecture and control (Basingstoke, 2019), pp 187-208; Laura McAtackney, 'Materials and Memory: Archaeology and Heritage as Tools of Transitional Justice at a Former Magdalene Laundry' in Éire-Ireland, vol 55, no 1 &2 (2020), pp 223-246; Encarnación Hidalgo-Tenorio, Miguel-Ángel Benítez-Castro, 'The Language of Evaluation in the Narratives by the Magdalene Laundries Survivors: The Discourse of Female Victimhood', in Applied Linguistics, (2020), pp 1-28.

77 For discussion of institutions in what was to become Northern Ireland, see: Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society, chapter 3; McCormick, Regulating sexuality, chapter 2; Diane Urquhart, 'Gender, family and sexuality, 1800-2000' in Kennedy and Ollerenshaw (eds), Ulster since 1600: politics, economy and society, pp 248-9.

78 Eoin O'Sullivan and Ian O'Donnell, Coercive confinement in Ireland: patients, prisoners and penitents (Manchester, 2012) p. 13; Smith, Ireland's Magdalene laundries, p. 30.

79 Luddy, Prostitution and Irish Society, p. 95

80 Ibid., p. 122.

81 Ibid.; Smith, Ireland's Magdalene laundries, p. xvi.

82 Jacinta Prunty, The monasteries, Magdalene asylums and reformatory schools of Our Lady of Charity in Ireland, 1853-1973 (Dublin, 2017).

interrogated by others and assertions tested'.[83] In the words of Jennifer Yeager and Jonathan Cullen, the restrictions placed on the archival material relating to the laundries 'contributes to the invisibility' of the survivors.[84]

The discussion of Magdalene laundries in the Republic of Ireland from 1922 has often located the institutions within what James Smith has described as an 'architecture of containment' In addition to Magdalene laundries, this included a range of institutions, such as 'mother and baby homes, industrial and reformatory schools, mental asylums and adoption agencies'.[85] These establishments and the associated legislative developments, it is argued, 'empowered the decolonizing nation-state to confine aberrant citizens, rendering invisible women and children who fell foul of society's moral prescriptions'.[86] A national identity was promoted that 'privileged Catholic morality' and particularly condemned women who did not meet the standards of the ideal Irishwoman, a morally pure wife and mother.[87] As Diarmaid Ferriter suggests, in the decade after the creation of the Irish Free State it was believed that 'sexual morality was in decline and that perceived moral failings needed to be tackled by a joint alliance of state, Catholic Church and voluntary lay Catholic groups ... to recover a historic (or mythical) Irish chasteness'.[88]

By the twentieth century those who found themselves in Magdalene laundries and rescue homes were rarely involved in sex work. They entered, or were placed in, the laundries for a variety of reasons. The McAleese Report, published in 2013, considered the history of these institutions in the Republic of Ireland and identified women who entered via state or non-state routes. State routes included women being sent to a Magdalene laundry via the criminal justice system: the courts, the probation service, the police, and the prison service. Many were placed in a laundry on remand, or as part of a probation order, or if the Garda Síochána needed emergency accommodation for any girl or woman who was deemed to be vulnerable or morally at risk. State involvement was also identified in both the direct and indirect transfer of girls from industrial or reformatory schools to a Magdalene laundry. During the period of post-discharge supervision from Industrial or Reformatory Schools, which, from 1941, was up to the age of twenty-one, the Minister for Education could direct that it was necessary for their protection and welfare that young women were placed in a Magdalene laundry. Health and Social Services also referred, from County Homes (the renamed Poor Law Union workhouses) women who could not support themselves, and unmarried mothers; often those with

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83 Irish Times, 2 September 2017

84 Yeager and Culleton, 'Gendered violence and cultural forgetting', p. 135.

85 Smith, Ireland's Magdalene laundries, p. xiii.

86 Smith, Ireland's Magdalene laundries, p. 46.

87 Ibid., p. 47. For more on the Irish Free State and sexuality see: Tom Inglis, Moral monopoly: the rise and fall of the Catholic Church in modern Irish society (Dublin, 1987); Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, 'Neither feminist nor flapper: the ecclesiastical construction of the ideal Irish woman' in Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert (eds), Chattel, servant or citizen: women's status in church, state and society (Belfast, 1995), pp 168-78; Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, 'Power, gender, and identity in the Irish Free State', in Journal of Women's History, vol 7, no. 1 (1995), pp 117-136; Catriona Beaumont, 'Women citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922-1948', in Women's History Review, vol 6 no. 4 (1997), pp 563-585; Chrystal Hug, The politics of sexual morality in Ireland, (Basingstoke, 1999); Sandra McAvoy, 'The regulation of sexuality in the Irish Free State, 1929-35' in Greta Jones and Elizabeth Malcolm (eds), Medicine, disease and the state in Ireland, 1650-1940 (Cork, 1999), pp 253-66; James M. Smith, 'The politics of sexual knowledge: the origins of Ireland's containment culture and the Carrigan Report (1931)', in Journal of the History of Sexuality, vol 13, no. 2 (2004), pp 208-233;Una Crowley and Rob Kitchin, 'Producing "decent girls": governmentality and the moral geography of sexual conduct in Ireland (1922-37)', in Gender, Place and Culture, vol 15, no. 4 (2008), pp 355-72.

88 Diarmaid Ferriter, Occasions of sin: sex and society in modern Ireland (London, 2009), p. 100.

more than one illegitimate child. Social workers and organisations such as the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children also referred girls and women directly to the Magdalene laundries if, for example, there was a concern about their living conditions or their moral well-being.[89]

Non-state routes into a laundry included girls and young women being placed by families for a variety of reasons. These included placement as a means of discipline for what was considered bad behaviour or following family disputes. It has been argued that the fact that many girls and women referred in this way were victims of sexual or other forms of abuse 'retraumatized abused children and punished already vulnerable citizens'.[90] Others were placed in Magdalene laundries by their families after they became unmarried mothers. The McAleese Report also identified the placing of women and girls with physical disabilities, mental illness, intellectual disabilities or those in advanced age.[91] Women and girls were also referred by Catholic priests, often in combination with family members and for similar reasons to those when confined by their families alone. A number of women are recorded as being 'self-referrals' which most commonly related to cases of poverty, homelessness, domestic abuse, and old age, where women had no alternative places to go.[92] The Irish Human Rights Commission concluded that the relationship between the State and the Magdalene laundries was one of 'inter-dependence' where 'the State clearly relied on the Laundries to provide certain services at low cost, on behalf of the State, and with minimal oversight or intervention, while the Laundries equally relied on the State both in terms of the commercial aspect of the Laundries, but also in terms of relying on direct State funding to continue in operation'.[93]

The McAleese Report was criticised heavily by lawyers, academics and activists who argued that its conclusions did not reflect strongly enough its own evidence that the 'state colluded with the laundries, provided the religious orders with support, and failed to supervise the running of the laundries'.[94] Critics argue that the report highlighted its establishment of 'the facts', such as its calculations of the numbers of girls and women sent to the Magdalene laundries (over 10,000), or what it believes was the average length of their confinement, rather than engaging more deeply with survivor testimony and more fundamental discussions about human rights and social justice.[95] Thus, it has been argued, for example, that McAleese failed to probe fully death and burial records and also underestimated the periods women remained in the laundries. Justice for Magdalenes Research, themselves instigators of an extensive and significant oral history project (based at University College Dublin) with Magdalene victims and survivors, also noted the relatively limited engagement with survivor testimony in the report.[96]

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89 Martin McAleese, Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to Establish the Facts of State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries (Dublin, 2013), Part III

90 Yeager and Culleton, 'Gendered violence and cultural forgetting', p. 137.

91 McAleese, Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee, p. 859.

92 Ibid., chapters 9, 10, 11, 18.

93 Irish Human Rights Commission, Follow-Up Report on State Involvement in the Magdalene Laundries, June 2013, p. 29, para. 60.

94 Yeager and Culleton, 'Gendered violence and cultural forgetting', p. 139.

95 Irish Independent, 5 July 2014; Claire McGettrick, "Death, Institutionalisation & Duration of Stay: A critique of Chapter 16 of the Report of the Inter-departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries", pp. 59-60; See http://jfmresearch.com for further details.

96 Máiréad Enright and Sinéad Ring, 'State Legal Responses to Historical Institutional Abuse: Shame, Sovereignty, and Epistemic Injustice', in Éire-Ireland, vol 55, no. 1 & 2 (2020), p.80.

There have been calls for further investigation of abuse as well as a number of concerns surrounding the implementation of a redress scheme for women who had been detained in the Magdalene laundries.[97] In terms of potential additional research, academic and Justice for Magdalenes Research activist, James Smith deployed his own experience of examining the archival records of the Galway Magdalene laundry, operated by the Sisters of Mercy, to dispute McAleese's conclusions that the Magdalene laundries 'were operated on a subsistence or close to break-even basis rather than on a commercial or highly profitable basis'.[98] In contributions which have received widespread media interest, Smith maintains that McAleese did not investigate a number of files relating to the Galway Magdalene laundry and that research by the committee did not investigate other sources of income such as bequests, donations, income from annual appeals, dividends from investments and payments from tenants.[99] This issue is central to the controversies around the Magdalene Laundries as it goes to the heart of the religious orders' claims that they could not afford to pay a wage to the women who worked in the laundries because they were not profit-making institutions. It has been widely alleged that the Magdalene laundries operated a system that breached international labour laws as well as the women's human rights. As this dispute has continued, Smith faced demands from the Galway diocesan archive that he destroy the research notes he collected a decade earlier.[100]

The debate about the women working as free labour within the Magdalene laundries is not one that emerged first as part of the contemporary scrutiny of Irish Catholic institutions. As early as the late nineteenth century, the issue was a cause of concern to liberal Catholics in France and England. A debate emerged after a woman called Marie Lecoanot made several attempts to take legal action against the Sisters of the Good Shepherd after she was confined to one of the Order's French laundries. Her case led to a dispute between the Sisters and the Bishop of Nancy about the system the Good Shepherds operated. An article on 'Philanthropy and wage-paying' in the influential Economic Journal in 1901, written by Virginia Crawford, offered a critique of the system from an English Catholic perspective. Crawford's article was careful not to question 'the motives or the personal devotion of the women of every religious denomination who give their lives to the care, training and reformation of their less fortunate sisters' However, Crawford pondered whether it was time to ask, 'is the welfare of the individual inmate ever subordinated to the general welfare of the institution' and on what terms 'employment should be given to those unfortunate girls and women who for one reason or another are not in a position to compete successfully in the open labour market'.[101] In Crawford's view, 'a grave injustice is often done to those who pass through what are known as rescue homes' She did not believe that the maintenance they received was a just return for their labour, and nor did she believe that they received any form of training which was of any long-term advantage in most cases. Her article also discussed the demanding physical nature of the work and the poor diet on offer in the rescue homes operated mainly by Sisters of various Catholic and Church of England religious orders. Crawford suggested that every girl or woman working in a rescue

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97 Colin Smith and April Duff, 'Access to Justice for Victims of Historic Institutional Abuse', in Éire-Ireland, vol 55, no. 1 & 2 (2020), pp 100-119; Enright and Ring, 'State Legal Responses to Historical Institutional Abuse', pp 68-69; James Gallen, 'Redressing gendered mistreatment: Magdalene laundries, symphysiotomy and mother and baby homes', in L. Black and P. Dunn (eds), Law and gender in modern Ireland (Dublin, 2019) pp 263-280

98 Report of the Interdepartmental Committee to establish the state's involvement with the Magdalene Laundries (2013), Chapter 20, Summary of findings.

99 The Times, 12 Aug. 2017; Irish Examiner, 1 Nov. 2017.

100 https://www.irishexaminer.com/viewpoints/analysis/four-years-on-questions-continue-to-be-asked-of-report-into-magdalene-laundries-461988.html

101 Virginia Crawford, 'Philanthropy and wage-paying' in Economic Journal, vol 11, no. 41 (1901), pp. 96-7.

home laundry should have a weekly allowance which could be given to her on departure from the home and with which she could establish herself independently, or to be drawn upon as needed. In the absence of such a measure, Crawford believed that the practices operated in these rescue home laundries were 'certainly not Christian charity'.[102]

Dissatisfaction with the McAleese Report also came via a powerful intervention by the United Nations Committee on Torture (UN CAT). The Committee believed it had heard a 'great deal of evidence that there had indeed been abuse' within the laundries and felt that McAleese's criticisms were not extensive enough. It offered a public rebuke to the Irish State, accusing it of 'walking back from the famous apology made by Enda Kenny': a reference to the then Taoiseach's emotional apology to the Magdalene women delivered in February 2013.[103] Speaking in the Dáil, Kenny acknowledged the common thread that ran through the women's stories was 'a palpable sense of suffocation not just physical in that they were incarcerated but psychological, spiritual, social'.[104] The 2017 UN CAT Concluding Observations called for a 'thorough, impartial investigation into allegations of ill-treatment' in Ireland's Magdalene laundries that 'has the power to compel production of all relevant facts and evidence, and if appropriate, ensure the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators.'[105] It also queried the ex-gratia scheme established for former Magdalene women and stated that there should be more strenuous efforts to ensure that 'victims of ill-treatment who worked it the Magdalene laundries obtain redress'.[106] The Committee also voiced concerns about the scope of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes which was established in 2015.[107]

Mother and Baby Homes

Roman Catholic Run Homes

Mater Dei, Belfast (Legion of Mary) – 1942-1984
Marianville, Belfast (Good Shepherd Sisters) – 1950-1990
Marianvale, Newry (Good Shepherd Sisters) – 1955-1984

Protestant Homes

Belfast Midnight Mission/Malone Place Maternity Home and Rescue Home – 1860-1948
Church of Ireland Rescue League/Kennedy House, Belfast – 1912-1956
Hopedene House, Belfast – 1943-1985
Salvation Army, Thorndale House – 1920-1977

Health and Social Services/Charities

Mount Oriel, Belfast (EHSSB) – 1969-1980s
Deanery Flats, Belfast (Barnardo's) – 1973-1991
Belfast and Coleraine Welfare Flats – 1940s-1980s

102 Ibid., pp. 97-100.

103 Felice Gaer (Committee vice-chair) questions to Irish government regarding Magdalene Laundries, 61st Session of the United Nations Committee against Torture (UN CAT), Examination of Ireland's Second Periodic Review,27th July 2017.

104 Enda Kenny, "Magdalene Laundries Report: Statements," Dáil Éireann Debates, 793 (19 Feb. 2013),

105 UN CAT, Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Ireland, 31 August 2017 (para. 26).

106 Ibid.

107 UN CAT, Concluding Observations on the Second Periodic Report of Ireland, 31 August 2017 (para. 27)

Historical Background and Literature Review

There was a stigma attached to unmarried motherhood in Ireland, north and south, across the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The infant mortality rate for children of unmarried mothers was higher than for legitimate children and for an unmarried mother 'once her status was known, found it difficult, if not impossible to find respectable employment and was often shunned by her family'.[108] The wider context for unmarried mothers, in the period around partition, has been described as 'acute poverty, mortality among infants due to starvation and disease and the near impossibility of raising a child as a single mother in so conservative a society as Ireland'.[109]

For many unmarried mothers, from the mid-nineteenth century, the shame and lack of support networks ensured that many ended up in the workhouses which were established in Ireland by the Poor Law (Ireland) Act of 1838. These workhouses offered relief for those in poverty and those who were destitute. The workhouse authorities in the nineteenth century were concerned about the presence of unmarried mothers in the workhouse because they were viewed as 'immoral and their children a drain on the rates'; a view which continued into the twentieth century.[110] The stigma attached to illegitimacy also had an incremental element, as is seen by the fact that the workhouse authorities categorised women who had more than one illegitimate child alongside prostitutes. They were thereby separated from the 'more respectable poor inmates'.[111] However, it has been argued that the Poor Law in Ireland at least offered a 'safety net' for the single mother that had not existed before.[112]

There were contemporary concerns that the workhouses encouraged illegitimacy by offering this limited form of support.[113] In Ulster workhouses in 1859, the percentage of illegitimate children was higher than other provinces, suggesting that there was a 'higher rate of pre-marital sex in Ulster counties and possibly even less support for single mothers within local communities.[114] Considering the Belfast workhouse, Olwen Purdue argues that, in the early twentieth century, 'large numbers of young single women either with children or in various stages of pregnancy' were admitted to the workhouse.[115] She suggests that because they were 'deemed 'immoral' and ostracised by family and community, the workhouses represented one very important option as a source of shelter, healthcare and food' for these women. Moreover, women may have chosen the workhouse rather than other religious or philanthropic institutions to avoid their 'overtly religious ethos or their attempts to exert moral control'.[116]

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108 Maria Luddy, 'Unmarried mothers in Ireland, 1880-1973' in Women's History Review, vol 20, no. 1 (2011), p. 110.

109 Ciara Breathnach and Eunan O'Halpin, 'Scripting blame: Irish coroners' courts and unnamed infant dead, 1916-32' in Social History, vol 39, no. 2 (2014), p. 226.

110 Luddy, 'Unmarried mothers', p. 111.

111 Luddy, 'Unmarried mothers', p. 111; Crossman, Poverty and the Poor Law,, p. 174.

112 Crossman, Poverty and the Poor Law, p. 182.

113 Ibid.

114 Ibid., p. 183.

115 Purdue, 'Surviving the industrial city', p. 89.

116 Ibid.

For other women, their situation may have led them to more drastic action. Research on infanticide has drawn attention to the plight of the unmarried mother and the tragic consequences which were associated with the stigma of illegitimacy.[117] Elaine Farrell has shown the contemporary association between infanticide and illegitimacy and demonstrated that in infanticide cases in the nineteenth century the perpetrator was typically unmarried, and often was or had been employed as a servant.[118] This profile continued into the twentieth century across the island of Ireland and Cliona Rattigan argues that 'material circumstances militated against the unmarried mother. The sense of shame attached to premarital conception should not be underestimated.[119] As Lindsey Earner-Byrne and Diane Urquhart contend, in the first half of the twentieth century for many women on the island of Ireland, 'there were limited options when facing an unwanted pregnancy: infanticide; concealment of birth; the abandonment of a child; adoption, or an illegal abortion at home or in Britain'.[120]

Research on abortion has revealed the array of methods used by women to self-abort a pregnancy, including 'pills, herbal remedies, douches, physical exercise, syringes and salt baths before seeking help from anyone.'[121] It is unclear what the rate of induced abortion was prior to the legalisation of abortion both north and south of the border as the cases which came to public attention were often when a fatality had occurred. However, there is evidence from the early twentieth century of networks of knowledge across the island about how to access illegal 'backstreet' abortions.[122] For some unmarried mothers other options involved migration to Britain or further afield, to escape the shame attached to their condition and the possibility of having to enter an institution. Emigration also offered unmarried mothers' greater options for adoption or for keeping their baby.[123]

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117 For more on infanticide see, Elaine Farrell, 'A most diabolical deed': infanticide and Irish society, 1850-1900 (Manchester, 2013); Karen Brennan, '"A fine mixture of pity and justice:" The criminal justice response to infanticide in Ireland, 1922-1949' in Law and History Review, vol 31, no. 4 (2013), pp 793-841; Ciara Breathnach and Eunan O'Halpin, 'Registered 'Unknown' infant fatalities in Ireland, 1916-32: gender and power' in Irish Historical Studies, vol 39, no. 149 (2012), pp 70-89; Elaine Farrell, 'Infanticide of the ordinary character': An overview of the crime in Ireland, 1850–1900 in Irish Economic and Social history, vol 39 (2012), pp 56-72; Cliona Rattigan, 'What else could I do?' Single mothers and infanticide in Ireland, 1900-1950 (Dublin, 2011); Clíona Rattigan, '"I thought from her appearance she was in the family way": detecting infanticide cases in Ireland, 1900–1950', in Family and Community History, vol 11, no.2 (2008), pp 134–51; Louise Ryan, '"The massacre of innocence": infanticide in the Irish Free State' in Irish Studies Review, vol 14 (1996), pp 17–20.

118 Farrell, 'A most diabolical deed', pp. 37-38.

119 Rattigan, What else could I do?, p. 19.

120 Lindsey Earner-Byrne and Diane Urquhart, The Irish abortion journey, 1920-2018 (London, 2019) p. 43.

121 Ibid., p.45. For more on abortion see, Sandra McAvoy, 'Before Cadden": abortion in mid-twentieth-century Ireland', in Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea and Carmel Quinlan (eds), The lost decade: Ireland in the 1950s (Cork, 2004), pp 147-63; Cliona Rattigan, '"Crimes of passion of the worst character": abortion cases and gender in Ireland, 1925-50', in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis (ed) Gender and power in Ireland (Dublin, 2008), pp 115-40; Leanne McCormick, '"No sense of wrong-doing": abortion in Belfast, 1917-67' in Journal of Social History, vol 49, no. 1 (2015), pp 125-48; Mark Benson, 'The provision of abortion in Northern Ireland, 1900-1968' (unpublished PhD thesis, Queen's University Belfast, 2017); Cara Delay, 'Pills and potions and purgatives: women and abortion methods in Ireland, 1900-1950' in Women's History Review, vol 28, no.3 (2018), pp 479-499; Cara Delay, 'Kitchens and kettles: domestic spaces, ordinary things, and female networks in Irish abortion history, 1922–1949' in Journal of Women's History, vol. 30, no.4 (2018), pp 11-34.

122 McAvoy, 'Before Cadden', p.153; McCormick, '"No sense of wrong-doing"', pp 132-138; Earner-Byrne and Urquhart, 'The Irish abortion Journey', p. 47.

123 For more on this see: Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'The boat to England: an analysis of the official reactions to the emigration of single expectant Irishwomen to Britain, 1922-1972' in Irish Economic and Social History, vol 30 (2003), pp 54-71; Paul Garrett, 'The abnormal flight: the migration and repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers' in Social History, vol 25, no. 3 (2000), pp 330-44; Jennifer Redmond, 'Sinful Singleness? Discourses on Irish Women's emigration to England, 1922-1948' in Women's History Review, vol 17, no.3 (2008), pp 455-76; Louise Ryan, "Sexualising Emigration: Discourses of Irish Female Emigration in the 1930s," Women's Studies International Forum, vol 25, no.1 (2002), pp 51–65.

As with the literature on Magdalene laundries, research on mother and baby homes in Ireland has focused largely on developments in the Republic of Ireland.[124]

Following the partition of Ireland, there was particular concern in the Irish Free State about the unmarried mother as part of the wider concerns about sexual immorality and the ideal role of women.[125] As Lindsey Earner-Byrne has suggested, in the early years of the Irish Free State, 'pregnancy outside wedlock became a symbol of the perceived moral degradation of the nation'.[126] It has been argued that before the 1960s most unmarried mothers in Ireland 'had little option but to enter institutions and to relinquish custody of their children'.[127] As noted above, before partition many unmarried mothers were admitted to the workhouses. Following partition, in the Irish Free State most workhouses were closed or converted to hospitals. Each county retained one workhouse as a County Home, which accommodated many unmarried mothers along with the 'aged, infirm, chronically sick, children ... mental defectives and epileptics'.[128] There was particular governmental concern for the first-time unmarried mother and in response institutions were developed to deal with them separately.[129] Ten such homes were set up in the Irish Free State, which were run by religious orders. These included three 'Extern Homes', which were financed by local authorities but run by religious orders.[130] It has been suggested that there was a class dimension to the institutions and that these homes were open for the reception of middle-class women as opposed to poorer women who entered the County Homes.[131] Women often spent up to two years in the mother and baby homes before their children were then boarded out (fostered) or moved to other residential institutions such as industrial schools.[132] Alternatively, children were often adopted, in many cases without court oversight, from these homes.[133]

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124 See for example, Lindsey Earner-Byrne, Mother and child: maternity and child welfare in Dublin, 1922-60 (Manchester, 2007); Maria Luddy, 'Moral rescue and unmarried mothers in Ireland in the 1920s' in Women's Studies, vol 30, no. 6 (2001), pp 809-13; Maria Luddy, 'Unmarried mothers in Ireland, 1880–1973', Women's History Review vol 20, no. 1 (2011), pp 109–26; O'Sullivan and O'Donnell, (eds), Coercive confinement; Paul Garrett, '"Unmarried mothers" in the Republic of Ireland' in Journal of Social Work, vol 16, no. 6 (2016), pp 708-27; Donnacha Seán Lucey, The End of the Irish Poor Law? Welfare and Healthcare Reform in Revolutionary and Independent Ireland (Manchester, 2015); Sarah-Anne Buckley and Caroline McGregor, 'Interrogating institutionalisation and child welfare: the Irish case, 1939-1991' in European Journal of Social Work, vol 22, no. 6 (2019), pp 1062-1072; James M. Smith, 'Knowing and unknowing Tuam: state practice, the archive, and transitional justice', Éire-Ireland, vol 55, no. 1 & 2 (2020), pp 142-180; Paul Garrett, 'Creating "common Sense" responses to the "unmarried mother" in the Irish Free State' Éire-Ireland, vol 55, no. 1 & 2 (2020), pp 120-141.

125 Luddy, 'Unmarried mothers', p. 112. Moira Maguire, Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland (Manchester, 2009).

126 Earner-Byrne, Mother and child, p. 173.

127 Rattigan, 'What else could I do?', p. 15.

128 O'Sullivan and O'Donnell, Coercive confinement, p. 15.

129 O'Sullivan and O'Donnell, Coercive confinement, p. 18.

130 Ibid., p. 19.

131 Earner-Byrne, Mother and child, p. 195.

132 Garrett, 'Unmarried mothers', p. 715; Maguire, Precarious childhood, p. 88.

133 Sarah Ann Buckley, The cruelty man: child welfare, the NSPCC and the state in Ireland, 1889-1956 (Manchester, 2013) p.32.

The Irish Mother and Baby Home Commission[134] is currently examining issues relating to adoption from these institutions, along with others matters including the burial practices for children who died in the homes (such as the Bons Secours Sisters home in Tuam)[135], and medical tests carried out on children resident in these institutions.[136]

Northern Ireland

There has been considerably less research on the specific experiences of unmarried mothers or mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland.[137] There has been some work on rescue and refuge homes, issues around family planning, abortion, infanticide and on the moral concerns around female behaviour.[138] What is evident is that the concerns regarding illegitimacy and unmarried mothers north of the border reflected those in the Irish Free State, where 'shame and secrecy formed fundamental bulwarks of societies which placed a high premium on sexual 'purity''.[139]

Northern Ireland also experienced, 'stigmatisation of birth outside marriage' which caused 'familial ostracisation'.[140] The illegitimate birth rate in Northern Ireland was higher than the rest of Ireland throughout the twentieth century. In 1944, illegitimacy rates reached a mid-century peak of 5.62% of births compared with a peak of 3.9% in Irish Free State in the same year. The figure for Northern Ireland dropped to under 4% in the late 1940s and to under 2.5% by the late 1950s. The average figure for the 1960s was 3.01%, rising to an average for the 1970s of 4.77%.[141] These rates can be compared with the figure for the end of the twentieth century, which was 31.8%. The rate in the Republic of Ireland followed a similar sharp increase, reaching 32% in 2000.[142] From the early twentieth century, discussions concerning the comparatively high illegitimacy rate in Ulster suggested it was related to the fact that as a manufacturing centre its major towns attracted

134 http://www.mbhcoi.ie/mbh.nsf/page/index-en

135 For more on Tuam see Smith, 'Knowing and unknowing Tuam'; Paul Michael Garrett, 'Excavating the past: Mother and Baby Homes in the Republic of Ireland', British Journal of Social Work, vol 47, no.2 (2017), pp 358–74; Tuam Oral History Project, https://www.nuigalway.ie/tuam-oral-history/.

136 For more on adoption and experiences in mother and baby homes, see: Maguire, Precarious childhood; Moira Maguire, 'Foreign adoptions and the evolution of Irish adoption policy, 1945-52' in Journal of Social History, vol 36, no. 2 (2002), pp 387-404; Mike Milotte, Banished babies: the secret history of Ireland's baby export business (Dublin, 1997). Interim reports of Mother and baby homes Commission of Investigation, http://www.mbhcoi.ie/MBH.nsf/page/index-en. For more on vaccine trials see for example Michael Dwyer, Strangling Angel Diphtheria and Childhood Immunization in Ireland (Liverpool, 2017).

137 Exceptions to this include, Christopher Shepard, 'The Legion of Mary, unmarried mothers and the expansion of the welfare state in Northern Ireland, 1945-55' in Sarah O'Connor and Christopher Shepard (eds), Women, social and cultural change in twentieth century Ireland: dissenting voices (Cambridge, 2008), pp 124-47; Alexandra Tierney, 'Partition, women and social policy, 1921-1939' (Unpublished PhD thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2018), chapter 2.

138 Earner-Byrne and Urquhart, The Irish abortion journey. Farrell, 'A most diabolical deed'; Rattigan, 'What else could I do?'; Breathnach and O'Halpin, 'Scripting blame'; Urquhart, 'Gender, family and sexuality'; McCormick, '"No sense of wrong-doing"; McCormick, Regulating sexuality; Leanne McCormick, '"The scarlet woman in person": the establishment of a family planning service in Northern Ireland, 1950-1974' in Social History of Medicine, vol 21, no. 2 (2008), pp 345-60.

139 Earner-Byrne and Urquhart, The Irish abortion journey, p. 11.

140 Urquhart, 'Gender, family and sexuality', p. 248.

141 Registrar-General's Annual Report for Northern Ireland, 1944; Annual Report of the Registrar General for Saorstat Eireann, 1944.

142 Registrar-General's Annual Report for Northern Ireland 1960-200; Central Statistics Office, Report on Vital Statistics, 1960-2000.

inward migration of large numbers of young female textile workers.[143] Undoubtedly, many young women were vulnerable to pregnancy outside of marriage when living, outside family bounds and paternalistic control, in new homes in Belfast or one of the other larger urban areas.[144] It is also unsurprising that the institutions which established to cater for unmarried mothers were mostly in Belfast, which offered the anonymity of a city for those wishing to hide their condition.

There were clearly contradictory views held by the authorities regarding unmarried mothers in the years following the establishment of Northern Ireland. They were viewed as vulnerable, the victims of unscrupulous males and, as such, deserving of charity and assistance; but they were also often 'feared, criminalised and shamed.'[145] This was evident in the debates in the Northern Ireland Parliament surrounding the 1924 Illegitimate Children (affiliation Orders) Act.[146] This allowed unmarried mothers to compel the fathers of their children to pay maintenance and was modelled on similar English legislation passed in 1923.[147] The legislation provided support for the child, rather than the mother, and there was no call for the use of public funds to support single mothers and their children.[148] Similar legislation was passed in the Irish Free State in 1930.

Dr Hugh Morrison, the MP for Queen's University, Belfast, who was a keen advocate of the legislation, described unmarried mothers as 'innocent, helpless, possibly emotional girls'.[149] However, as Dehra Chichester, the MP for Derry City stated during the same debate, sympathy for the 'seduced innocents' was not universal, she believed 'what we sow we must reap. It is the mother who reaps in shame, sorrow, anguish and suffering ...it is not for the woman I am making an appeal; it is for the child'.[150] The debates also reveal, as in many issues relating to morality, the belief held by many local politicians and clergy that Northern Ireland was morally superior to Great Britain and England in particular.[151] These debates also reflected the class issues surrounding unmarried mothers.[152] There was considerable discussion of the threat to men of blackmail from 'unscrupulous and immoral women';[153] something that was also seen in the debates on the issue in the Irish Free State.[154] The fear of blackmail, was as Tierney suggests, the only element of potential agency that unmarried mothers were given in debates in which they were usually positioned as 'vulnerable powerless victims to male sexuality'.[155]

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143 Royal Commission on Venereal Disease, PP 1914, Cd. 7475, Government Board of Ireland, 27 February 1914, qq. 8286-8289.

144 Urquhart, 'Gender, family and sexuality', p.247.

145 Tierney, 'Partition, women and social policy', p. 29.

146 Tierney, 'Partition, women and social policy', p.29.

147 Tierney, 'Partition, women and social policy', p. 25.

148 Buckley, The Cruelty man. p. 77.

149 Parliamentary Debates of Northern Ireland House of Commons, vol. 3, col. 732, 733 (8 May 1923)

150 Ibid., col. 734.

151 McCormick, Regulating Sexuality, p. 140; Tierney, 'Partition, women and social policy', p. 38.

152 Tierney, 'Partition, women and social policy', p. 51.

153 Debates of Northern Ireland House of Commons, vol. 4, col. 268 (20 Mar 1924)

154 Lindsey Earner-Byrne, 'Reinforcing the family: The role of gender, morality and sexuality in Irish welfare policy, 1922–1944' in The History of the Family, vol 13, no. 4 (2008) p. 362.

155 Tierney, 'Partition, women and social policy', p. 51.

Both north and south of the border in Ireland, as new political regimes were established, a premium was placed on morality and sexual purity. There was considerable evidence 'of the social intolerance of sex outside marriage and in particular, the shunning of unmarried mothers.'[156] Religious authorities, both Protestant and Catholic, were vocal in their concerns about the behaviour of young women and their fears of declining morals. This was frequently articulated in connection with changes in leisure activities.[157] Alcohol, dancing and the cinema all featured prominently in the concerns about how young women could be led astray.[158] The upheaval caused by the Second World War exacerbated many of these anxieties, in particular the presence of large numbers of military personnel in Northern Ireland including thousands of US troops.[159] The Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association, which was closely involved with two mother and baby homes, Kennedy House and Hopedene, was concerned that young people wanted to 'grasp life while they had it' and that the inevitable result of this would be a 'lowering of [moral] standards.'[160] Similarly the Reverend Neil, delivering the Home Mission Report to the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in June 1943, stated that 'the number of girls running through the streets of Belfast and Derry today is staggering.'[161] Catholic clergy expressed similar concerns, with the Bishop of Derry, in 1944, appealing for stricter parental controls on young women as 'Irish parents have always regarded the purity of their daughters as a very important thing'.[162] The records of the Mater Dei mother and baby home record several instances where women became pregnant after encounters with US troops.[163] The concerns about a loosening of moral behaviour were reflected in an increased illegitimacy rate for Northern Ireland in the war years.[164]

While the illegitimacy rates had fallen in the 1950s it is clear that 'the stigmatisation of birth outside marriage which caused ostracisation continued 'into and beyond the 1950s'.[165] The fact that four mother and baby homes, Mater Dei, Hopedene, Marianville and Marianvale, were established in the 1940s and 1950s illustrates this. It should be noted that mother and baby homes developed differently in Northern Ireland compared to the Republic of Ireland. Workhouses in Northern Ireland continued to operate until 1948 when the establishment of the National Health Service restructured health and social services. Until that point, many unmarried mothers continued to use the workhouse as their predecessors had done since 1838. Midnight Mission/Malone Place Rescue Home, which was a Protestant institution (but not attached solely to any one denomination) was the first institution in Belfast to specifically focus on the unmarried mother as it developed its work as

156 Earner-Byrne and Urquhart, The Irish abortion journey, p.11.

157 See for example, McCormick, Regulating Sexuality, pp 98-101; Beaumont, 'Women Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State'.

158 See for example, Maria Luddy, 'Sex and the Single Girl in 1920s and 1930s Ireland', in The Irish Review, vol 35 (2007), pp 79-91; Crowley and Kitchin, 'Producing "decent girls", pp 355-72; Louise Ryan, 'Constructing 'Irishwoman': Modern Girls and Comely Maidens', in Irish Studies Review, vol 6 no. 3(1998), pp 263-272.

159 For more on this, see Leanne McCormick, "' One Yank and They're Off': Interaction between U.S Troops and Northern Irish Women, 1942-45', in Journal of the History of Sexuality, vol 14 no. 2 (2006), pp 228-257; Leanne McCormick, '. 'Filthy little girls: Controlling women in public spaces in Northern Ireland during the World Wars', Gillian. McIntosh, & Diane Urquhart (eds), Irish Women at War (Dublin, 2010), pp 103-119.

160 Church of Ireland Diocesan Meeting, Moral Welfare Association, Feb 1943.

161 Londonderry Sentinel, 10 June 1943.

162 Londonderry Sentinel, 29 April 1944.

163 See Mater Dei section.

164 Registrar-General Report for Northern Ireland, 1946.

165 Urquhart, 'Gender, family and sexuality', p. 248.

a maternity home from the early twentieth century. The Church of Ireland Rescue League operated a small home for unmarried mothers from 1912, which subsequently became Kennedy House and the Salvation Army's maternity home, Thorndale House, was established in 1920. The first Catholic mother and baby home established was Mater Dei, in 1942, which was run by the Legion of Mary. This was followed in 1943 by Hopedene (Protestant) and in 1950 and 1955 by the Marianville and Marianvale homes, which were operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters. As discussed above, the long tradition of separate Protestant and Catholic charitable organisations is evident in the separate provision of mother and baby homes. Even after the establishment of the welfare state and the health and welfare reforms, there continued to be voluntary organisations which offered social service provision.

It is very important to acknowledge that not all women who had children outside of marriage entered a mother and baby home. Even during the years when the numbers passing through the mother and baby homes peaked, in the late 1960s, the proportion involved was never more than 25% of the number of illegitimate children born in Northern Ireland. For women who found themselves pregnant and unmarried, there were a number of possible options, some of which remained unchanged from the nineteenth century. For many, the solution was a quickly arranged marriage with the baby's birth presented as a legitimate one. Alternatively, a marriage might take place soon after the birth.[166] In other situations, babies were brought up as part of a wider family, passed off as siblings or as the child of other married family members. Other women travelled to stay with relatives (often outside Northern Ireland) or friends for the duration of their pregnancy and had the baby adopted or placed in care before returning home. In some situations, women brought up children on their own, with or without family support. By the early 1970s, two-thirds of unmarried mothers were opting to do so according to the Belfast Telegraph.[167] Newspapers engaged in more open discussion of the issue and of the economic and social problems that women faced when they found themselves in this situation. In 1974 the Belfast Telegraph's readers learned of the Single Woman's Guide to Pregnancy and Parenthood, which addressed the 200,000 single women in the UK who had a baby each year. It covered everything from morning sickness through to supplementary benefit and listed organisations that could help single mothers, including those in Northern Ireland.[168] By 1978, these included Gingerbread Northern Ireland.[169] Moreover, it appears that the creation of the Housing Executive benefited unmarried mothers. It claimed to treat 'unmarried mothers in the same way as all single parents in terms of accommodation'.[170]

Most of the women who entered mother and baby homes did so because there was no backing from their family and they were unable to locate support and accommodation during their pregnancy. For many families, pregnancy outside of marriage was seen as shameful and the source of social stigma. When a pregnancy became obvious and if marriage was not an option and/or the family would not support the woman in maintaining the child herself, placement in a mother and baby home for the duration of the pregnancy was regarded as a solution. In some cases, women were involved in consensual relationships which could not be formalised in marriage. This may have been because a partner was deemed unsuitable by a family. In Northern Ireland this was very often due to religious

166 Urquhart, 'Gender, family and sexuality', p.247.

167 Belfast Telegraph, 20 October 1972.

168 Ibid., 1 December 1974.

169 bid., 18 March 1978.

170 Ibid., 15 June 1981.

background. However, this could also relate to social class and relationships which upset a family's sense of their social station. In other cases, marriage was ruled out because the putative father was already married or because the individual concerned had simply disappeared and could not be traced. In yet other cases, the young age of some girls or women deemed marriage an unsuitable option and their removal from the family home and the secret adoption of their baby allowed them the possibility of a marriage in the future without a perceived blemish on their character. From the 1960s onwards records of the mother and baby homes identify more students, often nurses and teachers entering the homes, reflecting the changes in education and how these women were continuing with studies and careers.

For other women, pregnancy was the result of incest or rape and being removed from a family home and having the baby adopted was considered a necessity. In some situations, the authorities (health/social services, police) were involved and facilitated the placing of a woman in a mother and baby home. In other cases, it seems likely that the authorities were not involved in these situations and rape or incest were not reported as crimes and the perpetrators were not brought to the attention of the authorities. Unfortunately, secrecy, shame and silence may well have enabled abusers to continue their behaviour in such cases.

One of the other important differences between mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland was the length of time for which women remained. For the majority of homes in Northern Ireland, mothers and babies rarely stayed more than a couple of months following a birth. Mothers left at the same time as their baby, whether the baby was to be adopted, fostered, placed in an institution, or if mother and baby left together. As there was a minimum of six weeks before a mother could consent to her baby being adopted, a number of women remained in the home for this period and then the paperwork was completed for adoption and both mother and baby left. In other situations, women did not return to the mother and baby home from hospital following a birth and babies were placed in care or children's homes. They may have been subsequently fostered or adopted. One exception to this pattern was Hopedene, which provided a nursery for babies and the possibility for mothers to remain in the home for longer periods while they went out to work. In the 1970s, with a slow thawing of censorious attitudes towards unmarried mothers, Deanery Flats, run by Barnardo's and other Health/Social Service organisations provided accommodation for mothers and babies.

Thorndale and Belfast Midnight Mission/Malone Place were also the only two mother and baby homes to have a maternity home attached where women gave birth. These were two of the first homes to be established before the NHS provided free maternity care. Prior to 1948, women from Hopedene often went to Belfast Midnight Mission/Malone Place to give birth and women in Mater Dei often either to the Belfast Board of Guardians-operated Jubilee Maternity Hospital or to private maternity homes. With the establishment of the NHS, the majority of women gave birth in the hospital closest to the mother and baby home. After 1948, some women from mother and baby homes continued to use private maternity although this had become very unusual amongst the general population. In 1955, 3.7% (397) of all births in Belfast were in a nursing home and this had dropped by 1968 to 0.8% (80.)[171]

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171 Report on the Health of the County Borough of Belfast for the Year, 1955,1968

Adoption

Legislation relating to adoption in Northern Ireland is discussed in the Executive Summary and in detail in **Appendix 1**. Prior to the introduction of the Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1929, there was no formal legal basis for the adoption of a child by an individual or couple who were not the child's birth parents. Poor Law Guardians could take over parental rights for children boarded out (fostered) but who technically remained under the Guardians' care. Private adoptions could take place but were not regulated by the law. The Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1929 required consent for adoption from 'every person or body who is a parent or guardian of the infant… or who has the actual custody of the infant or who is liable to contribute to the support of the infant' Adoptions were dealt with by the court and a guardian ad litem was appointed to safeguard the interest of the infant before the court. The Court did not have the power to make an adoption order in respect of any infant who was not 'a British subject and so resident'.

The Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland 1950) introduced a new two-part process where an 'interim order' was required before a final adoption order was granted. In contrast to the 1929 Act, general consent could be given which did not have to specify particular proposed adopters. The Act also prevented consent for adoption being given less than 6 weeks after the birth of a baby and, in rules brought in, in 1954, it was required that the signature of a mother for consent had to be witnessed by a Justice of the Peace. The 1950 Act also legislated that adoptions could only be facilitated by adoption societies who were registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The 1950 adoption legislation prohibited anyone not resident in Northern Ireland from adopting a baby born there. It also prohibited children who were British subjects being transferred abroad for adoption by a non-British subject. They could be transferred abroad for adoption by a British subject if a licence was obtained, although in two cases cited by the Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council in 1963, the requirement for a licence was dropped when it became known that the petitioners were related to the child.[172]

The Adoption Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 which came into law in 1969 extended the right to adopt to those domiciled anywhere in the UK, Isle of Man or Channel Islands, so long as they were resident in Northern Ireland; and those who were domiciled but not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland. This was in reference to the issue of those UK nationals who were obligated to work away from home within the UK, such as members of the armed forces stationed in Northern Ireland, or those from Northern Ireland working in the rest of the UK. The 1967 Act also increased the role of the guardian ad litem in ensuring consent was freely given. Regulations in Northern Ireland also allowed for the religious upbringing of the child to be specified.[173]

In the Republic of Ireland adoption legislation was introduced in 1952, due to pressure from, amongst others, the Catholic hierarchy. The latter had longstanding anxieties about babies born to Catholic mothers being adopted by Protestants, including those in Northern Ireland.[174] Sarah-Anne Buckley explains that while the legislation enacted in 1952 established legal adoption in the Republic of Ireland, it did not prohibit sending illegitimate children abroad and was 'more concerned

172 Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, Adoption of children: a report (Belfast, 1963), p. 25.

173 Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, Adoption of children: a report (Belfast, 1963), p. 25.

174 For more on adoption in the Republic of Ireland see, Earner-Byrne, Mother and Child; Maguire, Precarious childhood.

with keeping Irish babies out of the hands of Protestant couples'.[175] A number of academic studies have concluded that between the 1940s and 1970s, 'hundreds if not thousands' of children from the Republic of Ireland, 'mostly illegitimate were sent to the United States in illegal adoptions organised by Catholic agencies'.[176]

One of the only available sources that examined the issue of adoption in Northern Ireland during the historical period under examination by this report was an investigation published by the Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council (NICWC) in 1963. Its task was to investigate adoption in Northern Ireland. It had previously reported in 1959 on children in care and recognised the difficulties placed on unmarried mothers during the first two years of an illegitimate child's life when 'the greatest pressure is brought to bear by the mother or her relatives to have the child placed in care' and that often the only solution is seen as 'placing the child in a home, and the return of the mother to the community without the social handicap of an illegitimate baby'.[177] It also recognised the strong tradition of boarding out in Northern Ireland, which left a child 'technically in care but living in the community'.[178] The NICWC report also recorded the high levels of illegitimate children who were in care. For children under five years old, 69.4% of children under the care of welfare authorities and 82.5% of children in voluntary homes were illegitimate.[179]

For the 1963 report, the Council scrutinised the 1,409 adoption applications submitted in the five years to 31 December 1959. Its findings provide insights into a number of factors. The vast majority of adoption applications were granted by the courts. Of the small number that were not granted, in 2 cases the birth mother retracted her consent; in 2 cases the health of the female applicant was considered unsatisfactory; in 2 cases the female adopter was considered too old; in 3 cases the financial and home circumstances of the adopters were considered unsatisfactory; in 1 case the male applicant had a criminal record; in 3 cases the legal conditions required were not satisfied (with one of these instances involving a problem of the domicile of the applicant); and in the final case the reason for refusal was not recorded.[180]

A very small number of applications (6) were withdrawn because applicants were either not domiciled in Northern Ireland or they resided outside the jurisdiction; in 4 cases, legal issues other than those relating to domicile and residence led to withdrawal; in 3 cases the consent of a natural parent was unobtainable; in 2 cases the child's health proved 'unsatisfactory'; in 1 case the infant died; in 5 cases other reasons, such as a child not settling down with an adoptive family or being unwilling to leave their grandmother, led to withdrawal of an application; finally, in 3 cases the reason for withdrawal was not recorded.[181]

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175 Buckley, The cruelty man, p. 35.

176 Ibid., p. 32. For more on foreign adoptions see, Maguire, 'Foreign adoption'; Milotte, Banished babies; Mary Burke,'"Disremembrance": Joyce and Irish Protestant Institutions', Éire-Ireland, vol 55, no. 1 & 2 (2020), pp 201-222.

177 Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, (Belfast, 1959).

178 Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, (Belfast, 1959).

179 Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, (Belfast, 1959).

180 Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, Adoption of Children: a report (Belfast, 1963), p.15.

181 Ibid.

Analysis of the adopted children demonstrated that there were greater numbers of female children adopted than males. 769 (53.6%) applications for adoption were made in respect of girls as opposed to 665 (46.4%) for boys. Most applications (96%) were made jointly by husbands and wives. The only two applications from single males were made by the natural father of the baby concerned. These men were part of the 21% of applicants who were blood relatives of the child involved in the adoption application. In these 301 cases, 118 were made by the mother of the infant; 9 by the father of the child; 10 by mother and father jointly. It is likely that these cases centred on establishing the legitimacy of a child or ensuring the legal recognition of parenthood in cases of adultery or similar personal circumstances. In the remaining instances of adoption by a blood relative, 77 were by the child's aunt, 53 by grandparents, 17 by uncles and 17 by other relatives.[182]

The age of the applicants was also recorded. This revealed that by far the largest age cohort was aged between 21 and 39 and they adopted 62.1% of these children. Those aged 40 to 44 adopted 17.9%; the 45-49 group represented 10.4% of adopters; those over 50 years of age adopted 9.4%; and those under 21 adopted only 0.2%. Adoption patterns reflected the religious demarcation lines that existed in so many areas of life in Northern Ireland. Only 8 children born to a Catholic birth mother were adopted by a Protestant, while 1 was adopted by a couple in a mixed marriage and 613 by Catholics. Of children born to Protestant birth mothers, 805 were adopted by Protestants, 3 by Catholics and 1 was adopted by someone of 'unknown' religion. These statistics may have been driven in part by Regulation 10 of the Children and Young Persons (Boarding-out) Regulations (Northern Ireland) which obliged welfare authorities to attend to the religious upbringing of the children in their care.[183] Adoption legislation also provided for consent to specify the religious faith in which the child should be brought up.

In terms of the persons or organisations that placed children for adoption, the highest number were place by local authorities (31.9%). Others involved included registered adoption societies, who placed 29.2% of these children; birth mothers placed 22.3% of the children; fathers were responsible in 3% of cases; both birth mother and father in 1.2% of cases; an 'other person' was cited in 12.3% of cases; and in 0.1% of cases the placement was by 'unknown' In the 'other person' category 84 of the 176 cases were placed by 'voluntary organisations connected with childcare.' In a further 33 cases in this sub-set, persons 'who had been in touch with the unmarried mother in a professional capacity' placed the child.[184]

The report offered a relatively positive verdict on the implementation of adoption legislation within Northern Ireland. Comparing the 1955-1959 data with trends identified for 1960/1961, the Committee concluded that there was a welcome trend away from third party adoption and direct placements (these were adoptions recorded as being instigated by mothers, fathers or 'other persons'). In 1955-9 this was 35.8% of the total and in 1961/2 it was 32.4% of the total. The Committee concluded that in these situations adoptions were the most likely to be rushed and ill-considered and expressed a hope to see ever greater involvement of trained social workers as advisors in these cases.

182 Ibid, p. 17.

183 Ibid. p. 17; 24.

184 Ibid. pp. 17.

Although they found no evidence that anyone was 'making a practice' of placing babies for adoption, they did raise concern about one individual, who was based in London, who had placed 13 children from Northern Ireland in five years. The report did not offer any further detail on this matter aside from urging 'more rigorous control of such placements.' The Committee suggested that legislation be introduced to provide supervision for children placed for adoption directly by their parents or third parties. It also recommended that the third parties name should be made known to the court and they could also be held responsible for reporting on the child's background.

The Committee declared its satisfaction that local authorities and registered adoption societies were taking care to follow the provisions of the Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1950. However, it had some suggestions in terms of the adoption societies. Twelve had registered following the 1950 Act. Three were defunct at the time of the Committee's report and a further five had never carried out any adoption work. Of the four that remained active only one employed a full-time field worker. The Committee hoped to see more specialist staff employed and the potential de-registration of inactive societies.[185] The active adoption societies were the Church of Ireland Adoption Society, Catholic Family Welfare Adoption Society, Sisters of Nazareth Adoption Society and Mater Miscordeiae.

The Committee's report also provides some insights into the thinking of contemporary social workers on issues relating to adoption. Social workers told the Committee that some among their number insisted that where an unmarried mother was under 21 years old she must be interviewed about potential adoption in the presence of her own parents, although it was acknowledged that in 'many cases she would prefer that her parents were not informed of her present circumstances.' The Committee concluded that social workers were often compelled to agree to keep the young woman's secret from her family because, otherwise, they could not build the necessary level of trust to create a working relationship with their client.[186] There was evidence of some very conservative thinking among the social workers, including the view of those who reported their reluctance to place for adoption an unmarried mother's second, or subsequent, illegitimate child as, in their opinion, this implied 'a taint of immortality that may possibly be hereditary. 'The Committee found 'no evidence to support this view.'[187]

In discussing issues around the domicile and residence of potential adopters, the Committee surveyed the issue only in the context of the rest of the UK. The Republic of Ireland was not mentioned in the report. This appears to suggest that cross border adoption was not something that appeared with great regularity in the evidence it had surveyed for 1955-59 and 1960-61. The Committee noted that in cases where a British subject resident overseas (including in the Republic of Ireland) sought a licence for the adoption of a child born in Northern Ireland, British consular officials had to provide a report on the individual .[188] Among the final substantive comments included in the report, the Committee noted that in Scottish law an adopted 17 year-old had the right of access to their birth certificate. They did not support the introduction of a similar measure in Northern Ireland, judging that it was too 'small' a community and that the opportunities for emotional harm

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185 Ibid., p. 19-23.

186 Ibid., p. 26.

187 Ibid., p. 27.

188 Ibid., pp 34-39.

outweighed the advantages. It did not, however, discuss this in great detail.[189] It was not until 1987 that legislation provided for access to birth records for an adopted person. The Committee's report is relatively brief; it ran to only 45 pages. However, it did offer a number of insights into adoption policy in the 1950s and 1960s that resonate with the evidence from the archival and oral history sources that are discussed in the remainder of this current report. It is this evidence that this report considers in the chapters that follow.

189 bid., pp 43-44.

Chapter 2:

Marianvale

Marianvale mother and baby home was opened in 1955 on the site of the Good Shepherd Convent, Armagh Road, Newry. It closed in 1984, at which point it was purchased by the Mercy Sisters and became a unit for those suffering from alcohol dependency issues. The closure of Marianvale saw protests made by a deputation from the Knights of St. Columbanus (an order of Catholic laymen) to the Archbishop of Armagh. However, they were told that the decision was taken by the Good Shepherd Sisters because they did not have enough staff to operate the home and because only twenty girls and women had been resident there in the previous twelve months.[190] This intake was the last of the 1,399 pregnant women admitted to Marianvale during its lifespan.

The proposals for the opening of Marianvale, presented to the Armagh County Council Children's Welfare Sub Committee in December 1953, described how 'County and Borough Welfare Authorities have for long sought accommodation, under Roman Catholic auspices for unmarried Catholic Mothers and their children' The proposals also suggested that 'no such accommodation is available in Northern Ireland' This was not actually the case, given the existence of Marianville and Mater Dei in Belfast.[191] The Good Shepherd Sisters while 'willing and anxious to co-operate with the Welfare Authorities' felt that in the best interests of the home, admissions would only be made following examinations by the medical officer attached to the home. The Sisters were prepared to embark on the cost of setting up of the facility 'if assured by Welfare Authorities that the home will be used by them and that they will be responsible for the maintenance of all unmarried mothers and their children admitted to the home at their request' It was not the intention of Marianvale to cater for other than 'first cases'; meaning single women having their first child. Admissions to Marianvale were to be direct from hospital, or from hospital following a pre-natal period in the Good Shepherd mother and baby home at Ormeau Road, Belfast (Marianville).[192]

The Marianvale admission numbers follow the pattern experienced in other mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland in the post-war period. Entry numbers were at their highest in the 1960s, with 630 admissions for the decade. They fell to 492 in the 1970s and 154 between 1980 and Marianvale's closure in 1984. Broken down into yearly totals the 1960s spike featured a shift upwards from 51 babies in 1965 to 83 in 1966 and 99 in 1967, before a decline to 80 in 1968 and 62 in 1969. Numbers fell steadily thereafter to 49 in 1979, 27 in 1983 and just 8 in 1984, prior to closure.

190 Irish Independent, 24 May 1984.

191 J.A. Oliver (HLG) to E. Jackson (HA) 9 Dec. 1953, HA/13/56A, Grants to Voluntary Organisations by the Ministry of Home Affairs, PRONI.

192 Minutes from the Proceedings of Armagh County Children's Welfare Sub-committee, 7 Dec. 1953, HA/13/56A, Grants to Voluntary Organisations by the Ministry of Home Affairs, PRONI.

Profile of Women Entering Marianvale

The age of those entering Marianvale ranged from 14 years-old to a number of women in their forties. However, the majority of women were under 29. 38% of all women admitted were between the ages of 14 to 19, and as with Marianville and Mater Dei the largest age-range cohort, at 51%, was in the 20-29 age range.

The majority of women had home addresses in Northern Ireland, with 202 from the Republic of Ireland and 43 from Britain. One woman was from Holland, and one had no fixed abode.

By 1980, five women had entered Marianvale to give birth, accompanied by another child, whose ages ranged from nine months to six years old.

The majority of women, (1,030 or 74%), entered the home while pregnant and returned to Marianvale after they gave birth. Usually, the nearby Daisy Hill Hospital was where the babies were born. The majority of women (70%) arrived in the final trimester of their pregnancy. A small number (4) had the unusual experience of spending eight months in the home before giving birth. Residency in the home following birth was short lived and the majority of women (58%) departed within a month of giving birth. There were five women, however, who stayed more than a year in the home.

Of those women who arrived at Marianvale pregnant, 144 (14%) did not return to Marianvale after giving birth. 244 (17%) of Marianvale residents entered having already given birth. Of these women, the majority stayed for less than three months but a small number (18) stayed for more than a year and a further three women remained between two and three years. Of these, two women were referred by Special Care Services. One woman was recorded as 'mentally retarded', in 1977, with another woman, in the same year, being 'assessed for psychiatric problems'.[193]

Entering Marianvale

Of the women for whom the source of referral was recorded, the largest amount (33%) involved Welfare Authorities. The next largest proportion (21%) were referred from Catholic organisations or homes, which included diocesan welfare offices, Catholic Protection and Rescue Society, Marianville, and other religious orders. A further 16% were referred directly by individual priests and 8% were sent by GPs or hospitals. Another 17% were recorded as 'voluntary'/friends and family/self-referrals. Britain was recorded as the source of 4% of entrants and the final 1% were referred by probation officers or prisons.

Reasons for Entering

The societal shame attached to illegitimacy, the impact of an unmarried daughter's pregnancy on their families and the desire to conceal the truth from communal scrutiny are all apparent in the Marianvale records, as is the case for the other mother and baby homes.[194] Correspondence, sent in

193 Case notes Marianvale, 1977.

194 For more on the changing societal context around illegitimacy see Chapter 1 of this report.

1971, from the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland to Marianvale illustrates the lengths that parents would go to ensure no one found out about their situation. It requested admittance of a woman into Marianvale who had been planning to enter the Good Shepherd home in Dunboyne, County Meath. However, as the women from Dunboyne went to Holles Street Hospital in Dublin for their antenatal care and to give birth and 'in view of the girl's extreme youth [sixteen] and the danger of her being seen by people visiting the hospital, her parents prefer to get her away from Dublin'.[195] The authorities also worked together to manage parental shame and keep a pregnancy secret. For example, in 1972 the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland wrote to Marianvale about a woman who was being admitted. It was arranged that the Eastern Health Board, Republic of Ireland, was to pay her costs and it was requested that the account was to be sent 'as we did in the former cases, to Dunboyne and it can be sent into the Eastern Health Board on their account' The letter went on to say that a different surname was to be used – 'if this would not cause you too much inconvenience for your records' – as the woman's father was potentially identifiable to Health Board officials scrutinising the paperwork. Confidential arrangements had been made with the Health Board officer in charge of payments and it was explained that 'there will be no difficulty' with payment. In terms of what happened to the baby the letter also states: 'I have promised to help make arrangements for the baby afterwards but if you would like to make arrangements and if the family agree, naturally I will have no objections'.[196] Another letter to the Sisters at Marianvale, written in 1967 by a doctor requesting admission for a woman, explained, 'they are a very decent family and this is a severe blow to them'.[197]

The secrecy about pregnancy also existed within families, with many women concealing their condition from their parents. One Marianvale resident, in 1972, had not told her parents and 'at the moment she thinks she will have the baby adopted as she wants to be home for Easter in case her parents suspect anything'.[198] The stigma attached to illegitimacy and the fear of parental reaction was still evident in 1978 in a letter from a social worker from the North-West Health Board, County Donegal, explaining that while a woman's two sisters were aware of her pregnancy she had not told her parents and because she was 'a rather plump young lady it would not be difficult to conceal the pregnancy' The letter explained that she was 'afraid of her father's reaction, hence her plan to go to a Mother and Baby Home'.[199] That some family members, but not others, were aware of the situation was also common. The birth mother's father was the parent least likely to be informed about the situation. However, case notes from 1972 record how a woman had 'told her father but he advised against informing her mother' So, X 'preferred to sacrifice the child rather than lose the relationship with her mother'.[200]

There are a number of distressing cases detailed in the Marianvale records where the pregnancy was a result of incest. These are described variously; in one case of a 17 year-old, the baby was described as a product of 'father/daughter union'.[201] In another case, which involved a 15 year-old, it was described as incest. In this case the girl's brother was the father of the baby. The case notes record

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195 Marianvale correspondence, 1971.

196 Ibid., 1972.

197 Ibid., 1967.

198 Ibid., 1972.

199 Marianvale correspondence, 1978.

200 Case notes Marianvale, 1972.

201 Ibid., 1972.

that a social worker had been in touch about the matter and had advised that if Social Services were involved they would have to inform the police. It is recorded that the family involved were 'totally against this and they would not consent to have welfare involved' and took on the financial responsibility themselves rather than claim benefits.[202] The family were Protestant and, given the availability of several Protestant mother and baby homes, it appears they chose a Catholic home for additional secrecy to ensure no one recognised their daughter and possibly to ensure that their son escaped prosecution: the records do not reveal if the RUC were called in eventually. In another case, where the notes stated that 'putative father is her brother', the woman returned to her parents' home. There is no reference to whether the police were involved or if the brother remained within the family home.[203]

See **Chapter 4**, which discusses the oral testimony collected on the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes, for further examples of the factors behind the entry pathways to these homes.

Living Conditions

The report on the plans for the establishment of Marianvale described how unmarried mothers would be 'given training in the care and management of their children; training in simple domestic economy, needlework etc.' There would also be opportunity for training in other types of work 'the aim being to help such girls become fitted for suitable employment and enable them to rear their children properly. Girls would remain for a period between 6-12 months'.[204] This may have been modelled on the mother and baby homes in the Republic of Ireland. As seen above, women did not generally remain in the home for this length of time and there is no evidence that this type of training took place. There are very few inspection reports available for Marianvale. One from September 1962 by Ministry of Affairs inspector, Kathleen Forrest, stated that 'Marianvale Home was in excellent order and the mothers and babies appeared very well cared for'[205] and another in June 1973 stated that the 'unit appears to be functioning without special problems and to be providing suitably for the mothers and babies in residence'.[206]

Accommodation appears to have been in dormitories or rooms of multiple occupancy until at least 1975. At that point, an inspection report details how adaptations were underway to 'provide each mother or expectant mother with a cubicle of her own, each with wash-hand basin and fitted wardrobe'.[207] It was recorded that:

> No architect was involved but they [Marianvale Sisters] themselves with their builder have worked out what appears to be a very satisfactory use of space. There has been some loss of old bed spaces in the former dormitories but this has been partly made by using the former baby nursery. So few babies stay for any length of time that it is not now required.

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202 Ibid.

203 Ibid., 1973.

204 J.A. Oliver (HLG) to E. Jackson (HA) 9 Dec. 1953, HA/13/56A, Grants to Voluntary Organisations by the Ministry of Home Affairs, PRONI.

205 Inspection Report by KB Forrest, 14 Sept. 1962, Marianvale Fire Reports, HA/13/202, PRONI.

206 Report on Good Shepherd, Newry by Miss J. Hill, Good Shepherd Newry, 28 June 1973, HSS/34/14, PRONI.

207 Inspection Report, Good Shepherd Convent Newry, 1975, HSS/34/14, Good Shepherd Newry, PRONI.

> A total of 18 mothers can now be housed. Fire Authority advice is being carried out including smoke stop doors. An extra exit has been provided over and above NIFA requirements. This seems likely to be quite a costly project with plumbing and re-wiring as well as partitions. New beds and bedding are also being provided. For this project, the Area Board was asked to help but was presumably unable to do so. Mr Nelson has no knowledge of any approach.[208]

Birth Experience

The majority of women who entered prenatally gave birth in Daisy Hill Hospital in Newry. However, some women did give birth in private maternity homes in the local area. It is unclear how or why this choice was made. It was increasingly unusual following the establishment of the NHS for women to use private maternity homes to give birth. Figures for Belfast show that 397, 3.7% of births were in private maternity homes but this had dropped to 80 and 0.8% by 1968.[209] For some women from the Republic of Ireland it may have been due to an inability to be treated in an NHS hospital, but for women from Northern Ireland the choice may have been related to secrecy and the privacy offered by a private nursing home as opposed to a busy hospital. A private nursing home also arguably offered possibilities for less scrutiny by the authorities.

Infant Mortality

The issue of infant mortality in mother and baby homes has become a matter of significant public interest due to the discovery of the remains of large numbers of babies and children at the St Mary's home in Tuam, County Galway. Several hundred children were buried there whose deaths had been recorded but not their burials. Public concern has focused on the manner and location of their interment in the grounds of the home.[210] This discovery was one factor that created the demand for a geophysical and topographical search of grounds on the former Marianvale site. This was undertaken in 2017 to establish any evidence of unregistered burials on the site. The research provided no evidence of any burials.[211] It should also be noted that mothers and babies did not remain in Northern Ireland's mother and baby homes for prolonged periods, as they did in the Republic of Ireland in homes such as that operated by the Bon Secours Sisters in Tuam.[212]

In Marianvale, as in Marianville, women did not give birth in the institution but in hospital or nursing home and no deaths occurred in the institution. Twelve Marianvale babies were stillborn and all of these births took place in hospital. Twenty babies died shortly after birth, again all in hospital. As mothers and babies only stayed for relatively short periods of time in Northern Irish mother and baby homes, the ultimate outcomes for babies born in Marianvale (and other mother and baby homes) will not be identifiable unless the records for the baby homes, to which the majority entered in the weeks after birth, are interrogated to examine mortality rates (see **Chapter 17**).

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208 Report on Good Shepherd Convent Newry, 1975, Good Shepherd Newry, HSS/34/14, PRONI.

209 Report on the Health of the County Borough of Belfast for the Year, 1955,1968.

210 Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation: Fifth Interim Report, 15th March 2019, Chapter 8.

211 Information received from archaeologist Toni Maguire who led the investigation.

212 For more on the differences between mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland see Chapter 1 of this Report.

Six babies, three who were stillborn, and three who lived for a short time after birth are buried in Carrickcruppen Cemetery, Bessbrook.[213] The Good Shepherd Sisters believe that other babies who were stillborn or died in hospital were buried by the Hospital Authorities.[214] Enquiries by Department of Health officials were unable to trace any formal protocols that might have been used by any hospitals when dealing with these tragic circumstances. One birth mother died in Marianvale, of a brain tumour, in 1969.[215]

Financial Affairs

For women from Northern Ireland entering a mother and baby home, benefits and payments could be claimed from the relevant authority. The Good Shepherd Sisters informed the researchers that financial records on all of their former homes in Northern Ireland were limited. As a result, individual financial records were only made available for women who were in Marianvale between 1980 and 1983. These record the time spent in the home and the benefits received (in general sickness and supplementary benefit). These payments went towards the charge for residency at Marianvale which was £42.50 per week in 1982 rising to £52 per week in 1983. The remaining total was then billed to whoever was paying the costs. For women from Northern Ireland this was often their local Health and Social Services department. Alternatively, a private arrangement was made if welfare authorities were not involved.

For women who were from the Republic of Ireland, there were several systems for payment. Some women paid privately, but for others the bill was recorded as being sent directly to the appropriate Health Board for the woman involved. As discussed above, for others, a more complex system was employed where the bill was sent to the Good Shepherd Sisters in Dunboyne, County Meath, who then sent it to the relevant Health Board. This process was further described in a letter from a social worker at the National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street in Dublin in 1971. It explained that she had been in touch with the Eastern Health Board who had agreed to pay the fees of a woman in Marianvale if the 'account went through Dunboyne in the usual way'.[216] As this example and the others discussed previously indicate, the authorities were clearly aware of the process. Similarly, a letter from the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland, which in 1971 requested the admittance of a woman to Marianvale, related that the Dublin Health Authority had agreed to be responsible for her maintenance. In making their claim, the Good Shepherd Sisters at Marianvale were instructed to quote 'a number which will be allotted for this girl and which we will give you on admission'.[217] The process of using a code rather than personal details was described in a letter about another young mother-to-be, sent to Marianvale in 1973 by the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society, providing the code to employ when submitting the account to the Midland Health Board through Dunboyne. The nuns at Marianvale were again instructed not to include the woman's name or address in any correspondence.[218]

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213 Submission from the Good Shepherd Sisters.

214 Ibid.

215 Case notes Marianvale, 1969.

216 Marianvale correspondence, 1972.

217 Ibid.

218 Marianvale correspondence, 1973

For the years for which financial records were available, which were from the mid-1970s until its closure, Marianvale mother and baby home ran at a deficit. A letter from the Northern Ireland Association of County and County Borough Welfare Committees, sent in 1973 to Marianvale, recommended an increase of payment per week for each woman from £7.50 plus £1 pocket money to £11 inclusive of pocket money per mother and £2 per infant.[219] This was increased two years later to £20 per week and £2 pocket money and the issues relating to finances were reported by the Health and Social Services Department, who offered to help the nuns at Marianvale to try and 'sort out their approaches to their financial problems'.[220] This report, written in 1975, also raised concerns about staffing and that the Sister in Charge:

> appeared to be feeling the strain of being almost constantly on call day and night … the fact that mothers can sometimes be discharged from Daisy Hill Hospital because of pressure on beds with their babies on the same day the babies are born must add [to] considerably to the work and worry. The emotional drain in dealing with a succession of distressed mothers is considerable and when financial worries are added it can no doubt seem overwhelming at times. I hope at a later stage to discuss … the possibility of some relief … perhaps some clerical help, some part-time nursing help and a degree of social worker attachment which Southern Area Board seems willing to provide.[221]

By 1983, Marianvale was receiving from the Health and Social Services Boards in Northern Ireland, £52 per week for each woman which included £5.90 pocket money. The home operated on a financial deficit that year of £1,445.25, a reduction from a deficit of just over £10,000 in 1981.[222] In 1984, Marianvale was given £7,800 in Grant Aid, which appears to have been sourced from the Director of Social Services, presumably in the Southern Health Board.[223]

Exit Routes

On leaving Marianvale, the majority of women (74%) returned to their family homes/previous addresses or to family and friends. However only 17% of babies returned home with their mother. 8% of women left Marianvale for other institutions and this included at least sixty women (5%) who went from Marianvale to the St Mary's home in Newry. This was sometimes recorded as entering the 'class', which was itself short-hand for the 'penitents' class'.[224] Marianvale correspondence includes the advice of a priest who suggested that a young mother who was in Marianvale in 1968, should to be 'received into the classroom for a short time after the baby's adoption in order that she may have an opportunity to re-orient herself and prepare herself properly for her return to the outer room and a more orderly life from now on'.[225] References to women being sent to 'the class' appear in the

219 Ibid.

220 Report on Good Shepherd Convent Newry, 1975, Good Shepherd Newey, HSS/34/14, PRONI.

221 Ibid.

222 Marianvale correspondence, 1972-84.

223 Ibid., 1984.

224 Peter Hughes, '"Cleanliness and Godliness": a sociological study of the Good Shepherd refuges for the social reformation and Christian conversion of prostitutes and convicted women in nineteenth century Britain' (unpublished PhD thesis, Brunel University, 1985), chapter 8.

225 Marianvale correspondence, 1968.

Marianvale records until the early 1970s.[226] Another woman was sent to the Good Shepherd Convent in Bishopton, Scotland, in 1965.[227]

The other destinations for women leaving Marianvale included, 3% to employment, 1% to hospital, 1% in the care of welfare and 5% to hostels or boarding. For a further 8%, the destination was not fully identified. As in other mother and baby homes, the largest percentage of babies left Marianvale for other institutions. For the babies where this information is recorded, 40% were placed in institutional care. A 1959 report, on children in care in Northern Ireland, raised concerns about the high percentage of children in voluntary homes and suggested that voluntary homes accepted the 'illegitimate child because no other solution can be found in the immediate crisis of the child's birth' Moreover, some of these voluntary institutions were linked with homes that provided for the 'unmarried mother and hence they feel a responsibility for accepting the illegitimate baby'.[228] As was the case with Mater Dei and Marianville, Marianvale sent the largest proportion of its new born babies (34%) to Catholic voluntary homes. This included 167 babies sent to Nazareth House in Portadown, 108 babies to St. Clare's Baby Home in Stamullen, County Meath, 97 babies to Nazareth House in Belfast and 67 to Nazareth House in Fahan, County Donegal.

The 1959 report on child welfare also recognised that during the first two years of an illegitimate child's life 'the greatest pressure is brought to bear by the mother or her relatives to have the child placed in care' and that often the only solution is seen as 'placing the child in a home, and the return of the mother to the community without the social handicap of an illegitimate baby' This was a set of circumstances which the report's author felt was unfortunate because 'the immediate and ultimate good of the child is in these cases not sufficiently considered'.[229] For some mothers, the choice of foster care or placing a baby in an institution was a way to hold off a decision on adoption, if they could not make up their mind in the few short weeks after birth that they might spend in Marianvale. Case notes from Marianvale reveal examples of this. In 1977, one set of notes stated that a baby had been 'placed in a foster home with a view to adoption, Mother undecided'.[230] In another case, from 1979, a baby was placed in 'Fahan pending decision by mother'.[231]

Adoption

From information provided by the Good Shepherd Sisters, 13 children are recorded as having been adopted directly from Marianvale.[232] It is assumed that this means that the paperwork for adoptions to be processed took place while both mother and baby were in Marianvale and these babies left directly to their prospective adopted homes. Overall, 157 babies were recorded in the files as being adopted. A further 196 were fostered or placed with welfare with a view to being adopted, making a total of 366 (26%). The true number of cases for which adoption was the end outcome is unknown, as a number of the babies who went to institutional care were placed there with a view to being

226 Case notes Marianvale.

227 Case notes Marianvale, 1965.

228 Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, 1959.

229 Ibid.

230 Case notes Marianvale, 1977.

231 Ibid., 1979.

232 Good Shepherd Sisters, Analysis of Marianvale, Oct. 2018.

adopted. Neither Marianvale nor Marianville were registered adoption agencies under the Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 or the Adoption Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 and were not legally permitted to facilitate adoptions. The oral testimony from two Good Shepherd Sisters (S1 and S2) reveals what they considered to be the Good Shepherd Sister's minimal role in adoption. Sister 1 explained the nuns 'let the social worker do all that once the social worker came on board. We referred them always back to our social worker really, and the social worker made the decision with them'.[233] Sister 2 concurred with this view. However, it is clear from the correspondence sent to Marianvale that there was close involvement with the adoption process in a number of cases. Two of these cases involved adoptions outside of Northern Ireland, something prohibited under the 1950 legislation unless a court had granted a special license or, after the Adoption Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 came into force in 1969, a 'provisional adoption order' In three examples, Sisters from Marianvale were recorded as taking the babies to institutions, or to families, with a view to adoption in Northern Ireland, the Republic of Ireland, or England.[234] The records do not record any information on whether or not licenses or provisional adoption orders were obtained in any of these situations. As is discussed in the introductory chapters of this report, the researchers did not have access to adoption records and cannot comment definitively on whether what happened was in adherence to policy and changing legislation over the period.

There was clearly a close involvement between priests and other Catholic organisations and the women placed in Marianvale, with the Welfare Authorities making use of these Catholic networks. A letter from the County Tyrone Children's Officer, written in 1969 to a parish priest in County Tyrone, explained that a baby placed with foster parents for adoption had been returned to the Good Shepherd nuns because of 'upheaval in the foster home' The Children's Officer had been asked to find new adopters for the child, but her concern was that the child's mother would believe 'the child has been legally adopted by now so no doubt this turn of events will come as rather a shock to her, particularly if her husband does not know about the child' She asked the priest to see the 'girl and discuss the up-to-date position' because if the child was placed for adoption she would have to complete the required paperwork.[235]

Further involvement of priests in family dynamics was evident in a 1969 letter that explained that a parish priest had persuaded a mother to allow her daughter to come back home after the baby was adopted. This reconciliation was 'conditional on her agreement to observe certain conditions, principally with regard to being indoors at nights and supervision of the company she keeps in the future'.[236] The oral testimony from Priest 2 (see **Chapter 4** on oral testimony on the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes) also provided an insight into the roles priests often had in the wake of the family dramas set off by the pregnancy of an unmarried Catholic woman.

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233 Interview with Sister 1, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 17 November 2018

234 Case notes Marianvale, 1962; 1970; 1981.

235 Marianvale correspondence, 1969.

236 Marianvale correspondence, 1968.

Adoptions to Great Britain

The 1950 adoption legislation prohibited anyone not resident in Northern Ireland from adopting a baby there. It also prohibited children who were British subjects being transferred abroad for adoption by a non-British subject. They could be transferred abroad for adoption by a British subject if a licence was obtained, although it appears that in practice the licence was not required if the person seeking to facilitate the adoption was a relative. The Adoption Act (Northern Ireland) 1967 which came into law in 1969 extended the right to adopt to those domiciled anywhere in the UK, Isle of Man or Channel Islands, so long as they were resident in Northern Ireland; and those who were domiciled but not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland. This was in reference to the issue of those UK nationals who were obligated to work away from home within the UK, such as members of the armed forces stationed in Northern Ireland, or those from Northern Ireland working in the rest of the UK.

The Marianvale records detail a number of adoptions that took place involving families in England and Scotland. Access to the relevant adoption case files is necessary to ascertain if the correct legal procedures were followed in reference to residence and domicile. Correspondence from a man in Dorset in 1970 to Marianvale, explained that he and his wife would like to adopt. The correspondent described how he had observed with interest 'what you have already done in Swindon'; presumably a reference to some arrangement for a previous adoption. He welcomed the prospect of adopting an 'Irish Colleen' because, he explained, 'my mother came from County Cork'.[237] The same man sent a further letter to Marianvale stating that he had been in touch with Dorset County Council and a local welfare officer. He claimed that both raised no objection to the plans and that 'there is nothing to prevent us from picking up *baby's name redacted* fourteen days after you notified them.' The letter went on to say that 'as soon as we have her [a Marianvale baby] in our possession we can apply for adoption and the three months' period in which the mother can change her mind runs from that date' He requested a full paediatric report and as much information about any potential baby's birth mother and father as possible and was happy to pay any costs involved.[238] The man and his wife did subsequently adopt a baby girl from Marianvale through a Catholic Adoption Society based in Weymouth.

Three years later, in 1973, there was similar correspondence from a couple in Bristol, who wrote to Marianvale saying 'we are delighted to hear from you that you will be able to offer us a baby … the fact that the baby will be only two or three weeks old, is … immaterial to us. We both think that having a baby this young will be all the better for us' The following month a letter was received from the Clifton Catholic Children's Society in Bristol, which stated that the couple were not approved by their adoption committee. As a result, the committee explained that it would not be involved in any arrangements Marianvale might make for an adoption.[239] A few weeks later, however, a letter arrived from Bristol Social Services saying that they understood Marianvale were going to place a child with the couple and having had one interview with them, felt they were 'warm, understanding people and … would consider them as understanding the implications of adoption'.[240] The couple adopted a baby boy in 1973.

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237 Ibid., 1970.

238 Ibid.

239 Ibid., 1973.

240 Marianvale correspondence, 1973.

Four babies from Marianvale were adopted by families living in England via Stamullen baby home, County Meath. Three babies were adopted by families in Essex in 1965, 1966 and 1968, two going to the same family, and a fourth baby was adopted by a family in Warwickshire in 1968. A number of other babies were adopted from Marianvale by English-based families in 1963, 1966, 1970 and in 1971; one couple adopted two girls (not related). In 1971, a baby girl was placed in foster care before being adopted in England and in 1972 a baby was placed with a family in Birmingham by a Sister from Marianvale before being adopted. Two baby girls were adopted by a family from Sheffield on separate occasions in 1971 and 1973.[241]

Cross border adoption

As discussed above, the Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 prohibited the placing abroad, for the purposes of adoption, an infant who was a British subject with a person who is not a British subject. However, there were caveats to this legislation. It was possible to move a British subject out of the jurisdiction for adoption by a relative. Additionally, under the 1950 legislation it was possible to apply to court for a licence to allow the adoption of a child to an individual in another country if they were a British subject. Following the Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1967, provisional adoption orders, served a similar function. Without access to individual adoption files (or the records from baby homes, such as Stamullen and Fahan, in the Republic of Ireland), it was not possible to assess whether requirements under adoption law in Northern Ireland were met in cases where babies were moved from Northern Ireland to baby homes for the purpose of adoption in the Republic of Ireland.

There were 202 Marianvale babies placed in Stamullen, Fahan and a number of other baby homes in Dublin between 1957 and 1982, with the largest number of babies crossing the border in the 1960s. Fahan was the recognised baby home for the Catholic Diocese of Derry, and a number of babies whose mothers were from that Diocese were placed there. However, the high number of babies (108) placed in Stamullen, in County Meath, is more difficult to explain. The site at Stamullen was run by the Franciscan Sisters of St Clare who operated an Adoption Society (St. Clare's) and a babies' home (St. Joseph's). They appear to have been in operation between 1951 and 1986.[242] The majority of babies moved from Marianvale to Stamullen were born during the 1960s, with only 4 babies placed there in the 1970s and 3 in the 1980s. There would appear to be no clear reason in terms of either the logistics of Catholic diocesan administrative or the home addresses of birth mothers that explain why so many Marianvale babies were placed in Stamullen rather than appropriate homes in Northern Ireland. Details of the birth places of 99 women whose children went to Stamullen were available, of these, only 30 were born in the Republic of Ireland with 65 women born in Northern Ireland and 4 women from England.[243]

It is also clear from the information held in the Marianvale baptismal records that 72 babies moved to Stamullen from Marianvale were then adopted in the Republic of Ireland.[244] A further 4 babies

241 Marianvale correspondence and case notes.

242 Interim Report of the Inter-Departmental Group on Mother and Baby Homes, July 2014, p. 12.

243 Case Notes Marianvale; St. Peter's and St. Paul's, Bessbrook, Baptismal Register.

244 St. Peter's and St. Paul's, Bessbrook, Baptismal Register.

went first to Stamullen and then made the return journey to be adopted in Northern Ireland. It is not always clear who was responsible for transporting Marianvale babies to Stamullen. In 13 cases, it is recorded that the mother brought her baby to Stamullen. In 3 other cases, a nun from Stamullen is recorded as coming and collecting the baby from Marianvale.[245] As discussed below a number of children were also adopted in the USA having moved from Marianvale to Stamullen. A further matter to be noted in connection with the movement of babies from Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland to Stamullen is that this home was discussed in Dáil Éireann, in 2017, in a debate about the use of young children in vaccine trials.[246]

In cases for which there is surviving information involving babies being sent to Fahan, County Donegal, it is noted that 10 of these babies were adopted in the Republic of Ireland and another 19 returned to Northern Ireland to join an adoptive family. The records indicate that 26 Marianvale babies were adopted using the services of the St. Patrick's Guild in Dublin. All of these, bar one, found their adoptive family in the Republic of Ireland, while the one exception was adopted by a couple in the USA. 3 babies are recorded as being adopted in Dublin through the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland; 3 were adopted from the Holy Faith Convent, Eccles Street, Dublin; and 2 adopted through St. Anne's Adoption Agency Cork. All were adopted by families living in the Republic of Ireland.

Cross-border adoptions also occurred after Marianvale babies were moved, initially, to children's homes in Northern Ireland. Of the babies who were placed in Nazareth House in Portadown, 4 were adopted in the Republic of Ireland. One baby, born in 1954, moved to St. Joseph's Belfast and had an adoption order recorded in Dublin in 1959. One baby who was placed in the Coneywarren Welfare Authority Children's home in Omagh in August 1959 was adopted in Dublin in June 1960. Finally, there are also records of 21 Marianvale babies being adopted in the Republic of Ireland where the involvement of any agencies or institutions is not recorded in the records. It is possible that these as were private adoptions or an adoption agency may have been involved but this information is not recorded.[247]

There is one discussion in the Marianvale records about the issues relating to cross-border adoptions. A letter from the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland (CPRSI), in 1972, raised concerns about Marianvale placing a child in Dundalk. The letter's author advised one of the Marianvale nuns 'while I would like to say to you to take this baby for the couple in Dundalk, I am afraid I have to advise you against this. As a private individual (not an Adoption Society) outside the twenty-six counties, I think you would be breaking the laws by placing a child in Dundalk'.[248] The adoption worker for CPRSI advised that if the baby's mother 'might indeed be prepared to bring it down herself or if you might have some suggestion about getting it down, perhaps you could arrange for somebody to take the baby down to us'.[249] The CPRSI official was clearly working on the assumption that if the baby's mother transported her child that this would resolve any legal issues.

245 Case notes Marianvale, 1970.

246 Dáil Éireann debate, 1 June 2017.

247 St. Peter's and St. Paul's, Bessbrook, Baptismal Register.

248 Marianvale correspondence, 1972.

249 Marianvale correspondence, 1972.

There is also evidence of Northern Irish welfare authorities placing babies from Marianvale in the Republic of Ireland; in Fahan. In 1968, 'X and her baby were taken by … Derry Welfare … the baby was placed in Nazareth Home Fahan'.[250] The Child Care Advisor for the Sister of Nazareth Adoption Society, in Fahan, was also actively involved in taking at least 20 babies from Newry to Fahan throughout the 1970s and 1980s, 'with a view to adoption' or 'pending adoption'.[251] In their oral testimony, both Sister 1 and Sister 2 recalled that social workers from Social Services escorted Marianvale babies to Fahan. As stated above, without access to the relevant adoption files and the records of baby homes, such as Fahan, many issues remain only partially explored.

Adoptions in the USA

The baptismal records at St. Peter's and St. Paul's Parish, in Bessbrook, hold information for a large number of Marianvale babies. They also contain further data about many individuals and provide details of seven children who were adopted in America via the Republic of Ireland. One baby boy who was moved to the Fahan baby home in County Donegal in 1967 was subsequently adopted by a couple in New York. A baby boy, born in 1960 and moved to St. Patrick's Guild in Dublin, was adopted by a family in Illinois, in 1963. The highest number of transatlantic adoptions of Marianvale babies involved a short stay for the babies at Stamullen in County Meath on route to the USA. They included; a baby boy, born in 1961, adopted by a couple in New Jersey in 1963; a baby girl, born in 1963, adopted by a Massachusetts family in 1966; a baby boy, born in 1965, adopted by a family in Louisiana; another adoption by the same family of a baby girl born in 1966; and the adoption of a baby girl, born in 1968, by a couple from Texas. As the testimony from KO indicates (see **Chapter 4**), she was a Marianvale baby who was adopted by a couple from the USA, in the late 1960s, having first been taken over the border to the Republic of Ireland. In her case, she has three different birth certificates; one issued in Northern Ireland, another in the Republic of Ireland, and final one from the USA.252 KO has a copy of the consent form that her mother (who was from Northern Ireland) signed when giving her daughter up to the adoption society connected with the Stamullen home. Her birth mother signed a consent form, witnessed by a notary in the Republic of Ireland, which indicated she 'relinquish all claim forever to my said child' The document explained that the baby was to be surrendered to a named nun, who would 'make my child available for adoption to any person she deems fit and proper, inside or outside the State.' The birth mother undertook 'never to attempt to see, interfere with or make any claim to the said child at any future date.' The form also included the wording 'I agree to the issue of a Passport to enable my child to travel to the United States of America for adoption.' KO has never contacted her birth mother and has not heard her perspective on these events.

Without access to the records of the baby home and adoption agency at Stamullen, it is not possible to conclude if those cited above are the only children born in Marianvale who were adopted by families in the USA or what legal formalities were followed. Nor is it possible to understand fully the relationship between mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland and Stamullen. Stamullen and the St Clare's adoption society have appeared in the contemporary and more recent debates

250 Case notes Marianvale, 1968.

251 Case notes Marianvale, 1970s-1980s.

252 Interview with KO, conducted by Olivia Dee, 8 February 2019

about transatlantic adoption.[253] In 1973, a priest based in County Louth vehemently protested when the former Mother Superior of the Poor Clare's home in Stamullen was involved in a planned new mother and baby home in his parish. His attack focused on her involvement in transatlantic adoptions.[254]

Between the 1940s and 1970s, 'hundreds if not thousands' of children from the Republic of Ireland, 'mostly illegitimate were sent to the United States in illegal adoptions organised by Catholic agencies'.[255] Adoption was not legalised in the Republic of Ireland until 1952, due to pressure from, amongst others, the Catholic hierarchy. The latter had longstanding anxieties about babies born to Catholic mothers being adopted by Protestants, including those in Northern Ireland. Historian Sarah-Anne Buckley explains that the legislation enacted in 1952 established legal adoption in the Republic of Ireland, but did not prohibit sending illegitimate children abroad and was 'more concerned with keeping Irish babies out of the hands of Protestant couples'.[256] It would appear that this legislation facilitated the adoption of a number of Marianvale babies by American couples.

Adoption Choice

The 1959 report into Child Welfare in Northern Ireland recognised the pressure placed on unmarried mothers during the first two years of an illegitimate child's life when 'the greatest pressure is brought to bear by the mother or her relatives to have the child placed in care' and that often the only solution is seen as 'placing the child in a home, and the return of the mother to the community without the social handicap of an illegitimate baby'.[257] This pressure continued to be evident in the 1970s. Case notes in 1972 describe how a mother and the father of a baby wanted to get married but her parents asked her to wait until after the birth in the hope that the woman would decide to have the baby adopted. The notes record that 'on admission X was very anxious to keep the baby but as the weeks passed and correspondence with the putative father dwindled she changed her mind and favoured placing the baby for adoption' Her parents were pleased with this but after she gave birth 'poor X was again all mixed up' Her parents at first were understanding but then 'her father adopted a fiercer stand and showed how disappointed he was which brought X to favour adoption as the final decision!!'[258]

By 1978, there was clearly more of an understanding of the pressure women felt. A social worker writing about a woman who at present 'feels that she wants to place the baby for adoption' noted that 'this decision may be her own but it may also have been dictated by home circumstances and pressure from her doctor' The social worker felt 'that the relaxed atmosphere of a Mother and Baby Home may be conducive to a well-based decision about the child's future'.[259]

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253 See for example, Irish Times, 28 Jun. 2014; Paul Redmond, The Adoption Machine: The Dark History of Ireland's Mother and Baby Homes and the Inside Story of How Tuam 800 Became a Global Scandal (Dublin, 2018), chp. 6.

254 Belfast Telegraph, 18 Jan. 1973.

255 Buckley, The cruelty man, p. 32. For more on illegal foreign adoptions see, Maguire, 'Foreign adoption'; Milotte, Banished babies; Mary Burke,'"Disremembrance": Joyce and Irish Protestant Institutions.

256 Buckley, The cruelty man, p. 35.

257 Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, 1959.

258 Case notes Marianvale, 1972.

259 Marianvale correspondence, 1978.

There were clearly different attitudes towards what would be best for babies, depending on the mother's situation. Case notes for a woman in 1972 record that she was given 'every encouragement to keep the baby as she and P.F. definitely plan to marry. She was offered a foster home or nursery but she was adamant adoption was her decision'.[260]

Oral testimony provided a great deal more insight into this issue of informed consent and that is discussed in **Chapter 4** which features testimony from those individuals who came forward to provide details about their experiences in both Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland.

Conclusion

Conclusions on both Good Shepherd mother and baby homes are offered at the end of **Chapter 4**.

260 Case notes Marianvale, 1972.

Chapter 3:

Marianville

The Marianville mother and baby home opened in 1950, at which point it utilised two Nissen huts built during World War Two, as its accommodation. In 1963, it relocated to purpose-built accommodation with capacity for eighteen women. It was located on the Good Shepherd Sisters convent at the top of the Ormeau Road in Belfast, with a separate entrance on Carolan Road. The home closed in 1990. Over the period of operation there were 2,278 admissions. The girls and women who entered the home exhibited a similar profile to that of Marianvale. There was a peak in the 1960s, with 726 admissions across the decade. Thereafter, numbers fell to 583 in the 1970s and then 391 in the 1980s. In its final year of operation, only 22 females were referred to Marianville. Its 1960s spike was experienced slightly later than of Marianvale: with 95 admissions in 1967, 88 in 1968, 96 in 1969 and 92 in 1970, before numbers gradually continued to fall from 1971 onwards.

Profile of Women Entering Marianville

The age profile of women, whose age was recorded on entering Marianville, was exactly the same as for Marianvale: 38% were under nineteen; 51% were between twenty and twenty-nine; and 11% were aged over thirty. The youngest female entering Marianville was twelve.

The majority of women had home addresses in Northern Ireland, with 208 from the Republic of Ireland and 20 from Britain. Two women were from South Africa, and there was one from each of Lebanon, New Zealand, Spain and the USA.

Occupations are sometimes mentioned within the case notes, but this data was not officially recorded. A variety of occupations are mentioned. Domestic service was still a significant employer of female labour in the 1950s and a number of entrants worked in that sector. Other occupations included shop worker, hairdresser, nurse, factory worker, secretary and student. The latter category rose in number as the years moved on, reflecting the expansion of higher education and indicating that the mother and baby homes received young women from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. There were clearly a range of social classes represented and, no doubt linked to this, in some individual case notes observations were made about the 'respectability' of the young woman's family. The majority of women who entered Marianville were Catholic but there were also some Protestant women, including one whose parents were described as 'respectable Baptists'.[261]

A number of women admitted to Marianville were categorised as having learning difficulties. In 1974, one 20 year-old woman, who had spent time in the Good Shepherd Convent in Derry/Londonderry while a teenager, was described as 'very childish. Doesn't realise her condition at all'.[262] Another

261 Case notes, Marianville, 1965.

262 Ibid., 1974.

woman, who entered during 1967, was described as 'a bit backward'.[263] A number of women admitted in the 1980s were registered as Special Care cases. One woman, who arrived in 1988, had 'attended a special school and was illiterate' The following year, another entrant was described as 'unable to read or write and needed much supervision and support' and, also in 1989, another woman was registered as having Educational Special Needs and 'required support, guidance and supervision with the care of her baby'.[264]

Marianville, like Marianvale, had a preference for taking first-time unmarried mothers, but there were a number of women who returned several times. 63 females entered Marianville more than once, with one woman entering five times. For some, the fact they had been pregnant before was something they tried to hide; case notes for a woman who arrived in 1969 state that 'this is not her first child even though she has denied it'.[265]

There were also small numbers of women who were married. In some cases, the notes do not explain why they had been admitted to Marianville, in others, the individual was separated from her husband. It was often evident in these cases that the baby's father was not their husband.

Entering Marianville

The majority of women (91%), entered before giving birth. The most common period of residency was no more than three months, 60% leaving by this end point and a further 24% stayed between three and six months.

Of those cases where details on their referral was recorded, 32% were referred by priests; 22% by welfare authorities; 15% by their GP or a hospital; 14% by family and friends; 2% were referred from the courts or probation and one percent from other parts of the UK. Another 14% were referred by Catholic organisations, which included diocesan welfare officers, the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland and various religious orders. From the late 1970s CURA, the Catholic Church crisis pregnancy agency, also referred twenty-two women (1%) to Marianville. A number of examples were found of women who had spent time in institutions operated by other religious orders before entering Marianville. One woman, who entered in December 1958, had been in 'the Good Shepherd in Waterford' (presumably St. Dominic's Industrial School) between the ages of 2 and 15, before her mother, who was described as 'a bad influence', took her out of school. Another woman had been in the Good Shepherd convent in Waterford for fifteen years and had been 'out working for two years' when she became pregnant and was sent to Marianville.[266] The records do not indicate why this woman was sent to Belfast rather than a closer mother and baby home and this raises questions about why it was felt necessary to send her so far away. As is seen in the oral testimony on the Good Shepherd homes, there is a similar case of young pregnant girl sent north by the Good Shepherd Sisters. In this case, the Sisters had placed the girl in a family home and the man of the house was

263 Ibid., 1967.

264 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1988 and 1989, Monitoring Statement, p. 2.

265 Case notes, Marianville, 1969.

266 Case notes, Marianville, 1953.

responsible for her pregnancy. The decision to move the pregnant teenager north of the border, in these circumstances, hid the pregnancy and the roles of all those involved in its occurrence.

The large number (666) of referrals by priests is of note, and a number of the case notes record how priests arranged entry to Marianville and also made arrangements for the baby afterwards. In one case, in 1962, a priest is recorded as 'sending the girl' and also that 'he will take the baby' after the birth.[267] One priest from County Tyrone brought a woman to Marianville in 1960 along with £17 towards her support from the putative father.[268] The employment of networks amongst the clergy, in order to maximise secrecy and discretion in the case of a pregnant unmarried Catholic, was demonstrated by another case where a woman was 'sent' by her parish priest in England to Marianville while another priest, in Northern Ireland, was getting 'the baby settled up'.[269] This issue is also addressed in **Chapter 4**, which examines the oral testimony on the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes.

Reasons for Entering

Marianville records reveal the same level of shame attached to illegitimacy as was the case for the girls and woman who were compelled to enter other mother and baby homes. The descriptions used about the unmarried mothers reveal how pregnancy outside marriage was viewed. Various euphemisms for becoming pregnant were used, for example the 1961 case notes relating to a 14 year-old girl stated, 'young boy of 14 responsible for her'.[270] A woman who entered in 1957 had been living in London and 'met her guilt with an Irish Protestant there'.[271] The fact that the father of the baby was Protestant represented an additional element of transgression of Catholic moral codes and, in many cases, presented a firm barrier to the prospect of marriage. One woman in 1957, 'went wrong with a married man – a Protestant' and another putative father was identified in case notes in 1961 as a married Presbyterian with six children.[272]

As this last example indicates, the marital status of the putative father was another factor that could lead a pregnant woman into the mother and baby home. One unfortunate 42 year-old woman discovered she was pregnant and gave notice to leave her work to marry the putative father, only to then find out he had been married for fifteen years.[273] In another case in 1971, a 20 year-old woman initially said she did not know the father of her child and had only met him once. However, she later revealed he was a married work colleague for whom she had babysat and who she was 'still keen on'.[274] Her mother did not know about this and, clearly in terms of the hierarchy of wrongdoing, it was preferable to suggest a one-off sexual interaction than confess to an affair with a married man. Parents of unmarried mothers were often hopeful that marriages would take place after the baby was born. An example from 1976 reveals how one woman's family were 'anxious for him to marry

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267 Case notes, Marianville, 1962.

268 Ibid., 1960.

269 Ibid., 1980.

270 Ibid., 1961.

271 Ibid., 1957.

272 Ibid., 1957; 1961.

273 Ibid., 1967.

274 Case notes, Marianville, 1971.

her, but his family object. She is still keen on him'.[275] Case notes for a woman admitted in 1969 record how she hoped to marry the father of her child and how her 'parents agree to his visits'.[276] This is an example of the influence of parents and suggests that visits could be restricted if there was not parental agreement. Indeed, in many cases an illegitimate pregnancy could mean that a marriage was ruled out because one set of parents or other concluded that their prospective son-in-law or daughter-in-law did not make for a good Catholic spouse. A number of the records included statements like 'marriage out of the question now' and 'no hope of marriage now'.[277]

There are very few references to women being engaged in sex work. However, a woman who entered Marianville in May 1960 was recorded as a widow and 'leading a bad life' She had previously had a stillborn baby, which was not disclosed 'until the day she was leaving here' As the aim was generally to accommodate first-time unmarried mothers, this woman may have felt this previous pregnancy had to be kept a secret to secure admittance to Marianville.[278] Another woman was recorded as having 'led a rather fast life. Indulged in drink'.[279]

Secrecy was as important in Marianville as it was in the other mother and baby homes. A 13 year-old, admitted in 1959, was to 'have no one to see her but her mother' and was then recorded as returning to a convent school in County Down.[280] Case notes about another individual, from 1968, stated 'this case is very private, no priests know' and that all fees were being paid privately.[281] One woman was recorded as entering under an assumed name, having been referred by the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland in 1961.[282] The same society referred another woman, under an assumed name, to Marianville in 1972.[283] In several cases, notes record how the women involved gave an assumed name before subsequently revealing their true identity. Examples such as this indicate the desire to keep identity a secret even within Marianville.[284]

As with the other mother and baby homes, the Marianville records reveal that pregnancies were often kept secret from parents. They also indicate that this continued even into the 1980s, despite what is considered to have been the more liberal social thinking at that time. A woman who was from Northern Ireland originally but was living in England had her admission arranged by a priest, from Nottingham, in 1954. The Good Shepherd Sisters noted that her parents knew 'nothing about her trouble'.[285] In 1962, a woman was admitted from Dublin and 'none of her family know she is here'.[286] As late as 1988, in the cases of five women who entered Marianville that year their 'parents were

275 Case notes, Marianville, 1976.
276 Ibid., 1969.
277 Ibid., 1990.
278 Ibid., 1960.
279 Ibid., 1971.
280 Ibid., 1959.
281 Case notes, Marianville, 1968.
282 Ibid., 1961.
283 Ibid., 1972.
284 Ibid., 1960; 1962.
285 Ibid., 1954.
286 Ibid., 1962.

unaware of their daughters' pregnancies on admission'.[287] The following year a 21 year-old university student was admitted whose 'parents and family were unaware of her pregnancy'.[288] In common with other mother and baby homes, case notes reveal that, in a number of instances, a female relative knew about the pregnancy while the pregnant woman's parents did not. Case notes for one resident, from 1964, record that 'parents do not know about her trouble, her aunt does'.[289] In another case from 1967, the Good Shepherd Sisters recorded that 'mother knows, father doesn't'.[290]

An insight on one factor lying behind some of this secrecy is revealed by analysis of cases that illustrate the anger displayed by some parents when they discovered their daughter's pregnancy. In 1988, a DHSS Inspection Report on Marianville noted that 'one girl is homeless. She was put out of home by her parents on discovery of her pregnancy'.[291] The 1989 Monitoring Statement, prepared by the DHSS, recorded the case of a 24 year-old whose 'pregnancy was a cause of great distress and she had to leave home for confidential reasons … and needed much support and counselling due to her mother's unacceptance and anger over the pregnancy'.[292] The DHSS inspector in 1984 recognised that some women entered Marianville 'to spare themselves and their families the embarrassment of living at home'.[293]

The case notes often record the Sister in charge's personal impressions about the women and many were described as 'nice girls' One 39 year-old woman, who arrived in 1952, was still designated as a 'nice girl' even though it was also noted that 'this is this girl's second offence'; meaning it was her second illegitimate pregnancy.[294] Referring to the women who entered as 'girls' was common across the mother and baby homes, even when the women were of an age clearly past what could be considered girlhood. A 19 year-old who was admitted in 1957, was described as a 'little girl' who might 'become a Magdalene one day. She is a beautiful embroiderer and cook'.[295] As discussed in the chapters on the Good Shepherd Sisters' St Mary's homes, a Magdalene was a woman who made a lifelong commitment to remain within the convent. Case notes from 1958 described another woman as 'a splendid girl – so trustworthy and helpful'.[296] There were also those who were considered to be 'a precocious type' or a 'rather worldly type'.[297] In the 1980s, the case notes began to refer to the personality of the women and also their IQ. For example, case notes in 1987 refer to a 20 year-old as 'very nice girl … very high IQ' and to another woman as having a 'pleasant personality. IQ average'.[298]

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287 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, January 1988. Monitoring Statement, p. 3.

288 Ibid., p. 5.

289 Case notes, Marianville, 1964.

290 Ibid., 1967.

291 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, January 1988. Monitoring Statement, p. 2.

292 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1989, Monitoring Statement, p. 4.

293 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1984

294 Case notes, Marianville, 1952.

295 Ibid., 1957.

296 Ibid., 1958.

297 Case notes, Marianville, 1965; 1966.

298 Ibid., 1987.

The Marianville case notes, like those for other mother and baby homes, include examples of cases of incest, sexual abuse and rape. In some instances, records specifically refer to incest. In one case, in 1952, the notes state, 'Father of the baby was Y's brother' In this case, the baby was taken to Nazareth House in Fahan where she died tragically. It is recorded in the case notes that the mother of the unmarried 15 year-old girl, at the centre of this case, was, 'willing to have her confined to the laundry for some time'.[299] This suggests that the girl was being punished for the pregnancy. Arguably, it may have been to ensure she did not return home, to protect her from her brother. However, the use of the word 'confined' suggests otherwise. A similar case, a decade later in 1962, recorded 'baby's father was X's brother aged 16' Again, in this case the baby was sent to Nazareth House in Fahan and the girl was 'treated in hospital before being sent to the laundry'.[300] These cases underline observations made in the chapters on the Good Shepherd St Mary's Homes about the inappropriateness of their role as a destination for teenage victims of incest. The HIAI Report also observed that it was unacceptable for 'children under school leaving age to be in an institution of this type' [the St Mary's home/laundry].[301]

By the 1980s, the greater engagement of social services in cases of incest is evident from the files. A 1989 inspection report referred to a 15 year-old who had been 'admitted under a Place of Safety Order' having disclosed an incestuous relationship with her 14 year-old brother.[302] This report also described a 15 year-old ward of court who 'was sexually abused by her mother's cohabitee'.[303]

Living Conditions

Prior to the building of purpose built accommodation, there appears to have been dormitory accommodation at Marianville. The records explain that in the 1950s some women paid an extra £2.1s for the privacy afforded by a cubicle. A new building was opened in 1963 and the accommodation for women was described, in a 1984 inspection report, as '14 cubicles of approximately 60 sq. feet with a gap of about 18 inches between the top of the wall and the roof' This was raised as an issue by the report's author due to a lack of privacy and it was recommended that the cubicles were replaced by separate bedrooms.[304] However, the 1985 report recorded that interviews with Marianville's residents indicated that they were 'unanimous on the view that they preferred to sleep in cubicles' It was suggested that if they went into early labour or were ill in the night 'you felt more secure in that the other residents were more likely to hear you and respond'.[305] The size of the rooms and cubicles was smaller than the minimum standards set for children's homes, but the 1985 inspection report felt that it was unlikely 'that all 14 cubicles will ever be required again at the one time' Similarly, the 1987-88 monitoring statement stated that, 'while not meeting the requirements in the Standards Guide, the physical accommodation continues to be bright and homely. All the girls were very satisfied with the cubicles for sleeping arrangements,

299 Ibid., 1952.

300 Ibid., 1962

301 Ibid., Column 152.

302 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1989, Monitoring Statement, p. 2

303 Ibid., p. 3.

304 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, Nov. 1985, p. 7.

305 Ibid., p. 11

and would not wish any alterations to be made'.[306] There were also three bedrooms for mothers with babies, which were also thought to be 'rather small' but it was felt that 'little could be done to alleviate this shortcoming without major changes to the building'.[307]

The 1984 inspection also drew attention to the fact that as Marianville was registered as a Voluntary Children's Home under the Children and Young Persons (Voluntary Homes) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1975 the home had failed to submit monthly reports by a designated visitor. This was identified in the HIAI Reports as a systemic failing by the Good Shepherd Sisters, the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Social Work Advisory Group (SWAG).[308] This requirement was adhered to after the 1984 inspection with the Mother Superior of the Good Shepherd Convent nominated as visitor.[309] On carrying out these visits she based herself in a 'quiet room where she is available to any of the residents who might wish to have her advice or to lodge a complaint'.[310] The fact that the visitor was a member of the same religious order made her independent observer status rather ambiguous and raises questions as to whether a resident in Marianvale would have viewed the Mother Superior as a visitor from outside the institution. The 1975 Order instructed the Visitor to report to the 'administering authority' for the home.[311] This is not an insignificant factor in light of some of the serious issues raised by those interviewees who offered testimony on the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes (see **Chapter 4**).

The inspection reports from the 1980s contained a timetable described as 'flexible ... to meet the needs of most residents'

Breakfast:	Monday to Friday Saturday Sunday	8.45 - 9.15 am 10.00 am 8.45 am (flexible)
Tea Break:	Daily	10.30 - 10.45 am
Lunch:	Daily	12.00 noon
Afternoon Tea:	Daily	3.00 pm
Evening Meal:	Daily	6.00 pm
Night Drink:	Daily	9.00 pm

After breakfast – household duties and tidy bedrooms.[312]

306 Elements to be Addressed in the 1987-88 Monitoring Statement, Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, Nov. 1989, Appendix C.

307 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1984, p. 6.

308 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, Module 12, Column 153.

309 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, Nov. 1984, p. 19.

310 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1985, p. 6.

311 https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/1975/293/made.

312 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1986.

It continued, explaining that:

> Monday to Friday from 10-12 residents engage in some kind of occupational work, for example, knitting crochet, study, art etc. Then on Monday 1.30-2 they have a parent craft class, Wednesday 1.30-3.30 art and craft class, Saturday morning there is preparation for Sunday liturgy and a weekly meeting. Tuesday and Thursday from 4-5pm they have occupational work except for girls preparing the evening meal. Visitors and telephone calls are allowed at any time. Residents are expected to be in the hostel every night by 10pm.[313]

The last point suggests a more liberal regime than the one described by most of those who were in the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in the years before this report was written, in 1986. Further information on this issue appears in the **Chapter 4**, which deals with the oral testimony on these homes.

The inspection reports for Marianville between 1984 and 1990 are very positive about the running of the home and the service it provided. In 1988, Marianville was described as continuing to provide 'a warm comfortable environment in which the needs of the residents and their babies is paramount. The residents are well cared for both physically and emotionally and the part time social worker is available for counselling and support before during and after the birth. Residents get such a good service that they maintain contact, many for several years'.[314] Some support for this last point emerged during the collection of oral testimony when it became clear that a number of birth mothers have kept in touch with the Sisters and had few, if any complaints, about them. However, others described very different experiences and emotions.

Birth Experience

Before the 1980s, the majority of babies born to Marianville mothers were delivered in the Jubilee Maternity Hospital, Templemore Hospital, and a variety of private nursing homes. By the 1980s, the majority of births were at Belfast City Hospital. Antenatal care was carried out by a local GP and women were seen at a fortnightly antenatal clinic by the GP 'and more frequently if necessary'.[315] One of the Sisters in Marianville was a trained midwife and in 1990 the DHSS inspector met with residents who said that the nursing experience of this Sister, 'was very reassuring and the fact that she was a midwife and could go through the birth process with them was very reassuring'.[316]

For the period before 1980, there is no explanation in the records as to why a private nursing home as opposed to a maternity hospital was chosen for a number of births. In some cases, this may have been related to costs and the fact that women from the Republic of Ireland were unable to access NHS hospitals; making it necessary for them to pay for a private nursing home. Also, nursing homes may have been chosen for reasons of anonymity. Whereas a larger hospital environment provided more opportunity for a woman to be identified, a smaller, private nursing home ensured greater privacy. This point seems borne out by the case involving a pregnant nurse who was resident in

313 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, Jan. 1988, pp. 3-4.

314 Ibid., p. 12.

315 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1986.

316 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1990, p. 4.

Marianville. Her selection of a private nursing home in which to give birth may well have been a very pragmatic one given the increased likelihood of her being recognised in the local NHS hospital. However, other aspects of the case indicate that for some reason there was a heightened element of discretion in this particular case. The surviving records on this woman note that her baby was 'adopted straight' from the nursing home and was 'to be baptised in the name of the adopter'.[317]

Parental influence was frequently strongly felt in terms of what was to happen to a baby but also decisions about what was 'best' for their daughter. Case notes refer to one example where a father did not want his daughter to see the baby, but 'she is unsure' It was recorded that she subsequently did spend time nursing her baby who then appears to have been adopted.[318]

Infant Mortality

As mothers and babies only stayed for relatively short periods of time in Northern Irish mother and baby homes, the infant mortality figures for babies born in Marianvale (and other mother and baby homes) will not be identifiable unless there is an interrogation of the records of baby homes to which the majority of babies were sent a few weeks after birth. These homes were not on the list of institutions that the researchers were asked to examine. However, **Chapter 17** includes discussion of these homes and the additional research required to fully meet terms of reference for the research and the public interest in this particular area of research.

Based on information from the Good Shepherd Sisters and an examination of the surviving records for Marianville, there were 14 stillbirths associated with the home between 1950 and 1990. In addition, 27 babies died shortly after birth and 2 died within their first year of life. In addition, case notes remark on a further 10 babies who died after entering a baby home (such as St. Joseph's in Belfast, Nazareth House in Portadown, or Fahan in Donegal). Only one baby is recorded, by the Good Shepherd Sisters, as having died in Marianville itself; in 1966. The coroner certified the cause of death as intestinal pneumonia. The baby is buried in a baby plot in Milltown Cemetery.[319] This child is one of 18 Marianville babies for whom the Good Shepherd Sisters have records of burial: across the period from 1963 to 1985. Of the other deceased babies, 4 are recorded as having been interred in family graves, 2 were buried by the hospital authorities, and 11 were laid to rest in a variety of plots bought by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Milltown Cemetery, Belfast. One further deceased infant was cremated.[320] As discussed elsewhere, the Good Shepherd Sisters were very concerned to protect the privacy and confidentiality of those women who spent time in their institutions. For this reason, the researchers were provided with a list of burial details, not the names of the children concerned or the exact date of death. Therefore, it was not possible to source death certificates in these cases.

317 Case notes, Marianville, 1962.

318 Ibid., 1971.

319 DoH Research project – Mother & Baby Homes. Statement No.1 – Good Shepherd Sisters – Preliminary and Generic Background Information.

320 DoH Research project – Mother & Baby Homes. Statement No.1 – Good Shepherd Sisters – Preliminary and Generic Background Information.

A report written after an inspection of Marianville was carried out in 1986, by the Department of Health Social Services Inspectorate, recorded how when 'occasionally a baby is still born or dies shortly after birth … the procedures … were followed – the Department and relevant Boards being notified'.[321] As noted in the chapter on Marianvale (**Chapter 2**), the Department of Health attempted to trace the relevant hospital protocols in relation to baby deaths/stillbirths in NHS hospitals that operated during the 1950s to the 1980s but none were located. It would have been useful to have scrutinised any relevant protocols in order to be assured that the remains of deceased babies and those stillborn were treated appropriately.

Financial Records

The financial records that are available for Marianville are limited in scale and scope. They offer more insight on the final decade of the home but evidence about financial issues can also be found in items of correspondence sent to and from the Good Shepherd Sisters in earlier decades.

In cases involving women from Northern Ireland who entered Marianville, benefits and payments were claimed from the relevant welfare authority. However, as in other mother and baby homes, some accounts were paid privately which ensured there was no welfare authority involvement in the case of those women. Presumably, this was because the women involved, or their families, wanted to maintain their anonymity. Women from the Republic of Ireland could pay privately, as was the case for a 21 year-old from Kilkenny who entered Marianville in September 1950 and agreed to pay £1 a week. This sum, along with a fee linked to the adoption of her child (for which £100 was paid to the Sisters of Charity in Dublin) was funded by her uncle.[322] Alternatively, the Good Shepherd Sisters had a financial arrangement with their Sister convent in Dunboyne, County Meath, who claimed the benefits for women from the Republic of Ireland who entered Marianvale/Marianville and then forwarded these payments to the Good Shepherd Sisters in Northern Ireland. The Marianville case notes also reveal that a number of women from the Republic of Ireland used a friend's address to 'get into Belfast City Hospital' to give birth before spending time in Marianville in advance of their return journey across the border.[323] In another case, a woman had 'a sister living in Fermanagh so she gave her name in the hospital so as to save paying as she is from Éire'.[324]

The same welfare/social service rates were paid for women in Marianvale and Marianville. By 1985 the per capita rate for mothers was £109.30 per week, less supplementary/ maternity/sickness benefit.[325] Pocket money was to be provided at the Board rate/ supplementary benefit rate, and arrangements were to be made for 'adequate maternity or ordinary clothing'.[326] By this point, Marianville was operating at a deficit. In 1988 its income was £57,071, expenditure was £60,952 and the deficit was £3,881.[327] By the end of the following year, the deficit was £6,295 and Marianville received a grant of £13,500 from the Eastern Health and Social Services Board that year to buttress

321 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1986.

322 Admission Book, Marianville.

323 Case notes, Marianville, 1959.

324 Ibid., 1958.

325 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1985, p. 16.

326 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1989, Monitoring Statement, p. 2.

327 Ibid., p. 15.

its finances.[328] The viability of Marianville had been in question for some time mainly due to declining numbers of pregnant girls and women coming through its doors and the impact this had on financial viability. The final report on Marianville by the Department of Health Social Services Inspectorate, written in 1990, suggested that there was an 'increased social acceptance of illegitimacy, more family support and acceptance that the girl may remain at home, increased availability of suitable accommodation provided by the Housing Executive and housing associations all of which had led to fewer admissions'.[329] It went on to say that all four Health and Social Service Boards felt they could not support Marianville in the future. They felt 'it has provided a worthwhile support to unmarried mothers over the years but ... will not have sufficient referrals in the future. Therefore, it was the unanimous opinion that Marianville will not be viable at present and is unlikely to be so in the future'.[330]

Exit Routes

On leaving Marianville, the majority of women (63%) returned to their family homes or previous address. However, only 19% of babies returned home with their mothers. There was, however, change over time and by the 1980s most women kept their babies. The numbers who did so each year rose from 20% in 1965 to 76% in 1982, reflecting the changing social attitudes towards unmarried mothers and greater welfare provision. Other destinations for women leaving Marianville included, 7% to employment with named individuals, presumably involving domestic service jobs. Some 2% of women went to hospital and 3% to hostels. In 18% of cases no information was recorded.

A further 7% left Marianville for other religious institutions and these included the St Mary's home and its laundry on the same site in Belfast. For some, this was presented by the Good Shepherd Sisters as a positive outcome; as in the case of a woman in 1959 who was recorded as 'a very good girl and entered the Magdalene's'.[331] Becoming a 'Magdalene' was the highest status that a 'penitent' entering the Good Shepherd Convent could attain. More often women were recorded as entering the laundry or the 'class' or the 'penitents' class' From the 'penitents class' it was possible to become a 'consecrated' penitent, often acting as an auxiliary helper to the nuns, and then a 'Magdalene' Women who became consecrates and Magdalenes often lived out their lives in the convent.[332] More often Marianville women were sent to 'the class' for shorter periods. An unusual case, in 1952, involved a Protestant woman who wanted her baby to be brought up Catholic. The baby was placed, by Armagh Social Services, in a Catholic home and the woman went to the 'Penitent's Class and was instructed in the Catholic faith'.[333] Another woman who entered Marianville in 1950 and had previously been in the Good Shepherd convent in Cork, left Marianville to spend two years with her

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328 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1990

329 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1990.

330 Ibid.

331 Case notes, Marianville, 1959.

332 Peter Hughes, '"Cleanliness and Godliness": a sociological study of the Good Shepherd refuges for the social reformation and Christian conversion of prostitutes and convicted women in nineteenth century Britain' (unpublished PhD thesis, Brunel University, 1985), chapter 8.

333 Case notes, Marianville, 1952.

baby in a Bon Secours convent in England, before the baby was adopted via the Sisters of Mercy in Cork, and she 'ended up in the penitents' class in Belfast'.[334]

Another case, this time from 1958, offers evidence of links between the state authorities and the Good Shepherd institutions. This involved a 16 year-old girl who was escorted to Marianville by a police woman and a probation officer in 1958. Once she had her baby, it was planned 'to send her to the class.'[335] For one woman the agreement that she would enter the St Mary's home after leaving Marianville was not fulfilled. In 1952, she had secured the Good Shepherd Sisters' agreement to admission to Marianville by making a commitment to go to 'the Class' She subsequently left 'without permission' having refused to go to 'the Class' She again refused to go to 'the Class' following an additional pregnancy, two years later, despite signing 'a written agreement to do so'.[336] This is an interesting example in a number of ways. The language used in the case notes suggests that the Sisters expected to be asked for 'permission' for the young woman to leave Marianville. At the same time, the written agreement and the woman's reneging on it, indicate that some residents did exert their own agency in decision making.

Another religious institution to which some Marianville women went following departure was the Legion of Mary Mater Dei home. There was a close relationship between the two homes. In a number of cases, where the Good Shepherd Sisters took issue with a woman's behaviour, she was sent to Mater Dei. For example, in 1956, a 19 year-old, who had been in Middletown Reformatory, stole clothes while in Marianville and went to Derry/Londonderry to 'live with a man' It was recorded that 'in order to get the police to take her from his company I [Sister in Marianville] had to have her convicted of theft' She was sentenced to three weeks in Armagh Jail and was then sent to Mater Dei.[337] In another case, a 19 year-old who was admitted to Marianville in 1957 was recorded as being a thief and the Sisters felt they 'could not keep her and sent her on to Mater Dei'.[338] Bad behaviour could also result in someone being sent home from Marianville, as happened to one woman in 1962 described as 'troublesome and [was] discontent. We had to send her home'.[339]

For those under 18 years old there was the possibility of being sent to another institution having given birth. A 14 year-old admitted to Marianville in 1954 was sent to Middletown training school six weeks after giving birth.[340] This suggests she had previously been committed to Middletown prior to her pregnancy. The movement between institutions stretched outside of Ireland as well. One woman who left Marianville in 1954 was sent to the Good Shepherd home for unmarried mothers in Dalkeith in Scotland. This move was financed by St. Vincent de Paul.[341]

As in other mother and baby homes, the largest percentage of babies left Marianville for other institutions. For the babies for whom this information is recorded, 46% were placed in institutional care and 29% percent were either adopted or fostered. The real total here is very likely to have

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334 Case notes, Marianville, 1950.

335 Ibid., 1958.

336 Ibid., 1952; 1954.

337 Ibid., 1959.

338 Ibid., 1957.

339 Ibid., 1962.

340 Ibid., 1954.

341 Ibid.

been higher, as many of the children placed in baby homes such as St. Joseph's in Belfast were adopted later from those institutions. There were 564 babies for whom no information was recorded on their destination following departure from Marianville. In 1959 the Child Welfare Council for Northern Ireland expressed concern about the high numbers of children being placed in voluntary homes directly from mother and baby homes. The report indicated that welfare authorities were aware of the pressure that was placed on unmarried mothers to put their children in baby homes in the immediate aftermath of giving birth. There was also a recognition of the role and influence of Catholic clergy in placing children in Catholic run voluntary homes.[342] This involvement is clearly seen in the Marianville case notes, in terms of both the placement of children in institutions and in arranging adoptions. Case notes for one 1950 Marianville resident and her child record how a Catholic priest 'has made all the arrangements re adoption of the baby via Fahan' Three years later another pregnant woman was sent by a priest who was also 'arranging for the baby to go to Fahan'.[343] In 1954, a Catholic priest from Armagh is recorded as 'seeing to' a baby, which 'went to a beautiful home' and was 'legally adopted'.[344]

The highest proportion (69%) of those Marianville babies who were placed in institutions went to St. Joseph's baby home in Belfast. This is not unusual given its close proximity to Marianville. St. Joseph's was located on the Nazareth Sisters' site which was directly across the road from the Good Shepherd Sisters convent. Other institutions to which Marianville babies were sent included Nazareth House in Portadown, Fahan in County Donegal, Stamullen baby home in County Meath and a number of institutions in Dublin including St. Patrick's Guild, the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland and Holy Faith Convent, Eccles Street, Dublin.

While some babies were placed in institutions with a view to adoption, others were placed there for short periods with other longer term intentions. For example, case notes from 1960 record how one woman had 'got married to the man [father of her child] and hopes to take the baby out of Stamullen'.[345]

Adoption

Many children born to unmarried mothers were absorbed into the wider family and brought up by other family members. In some cases, this was formalised in adoption. One example of this is seen in the Marianville case notes, where a woman's nephew adopted her baby. He had himself been born before his own mother had married and was brought up by an aunt, demonstrating the flexibility of arrangements within families.[346] In another case, notes prepared about a woman who entered Marianville when pregnant for a second time indicated that her mother had adopted the first baby.[347] In 1977, a Marianville baby was adopted by its maternal grandmother.[348] Case notes also illustrate that numerous women changed their minds about adoption after the birth of their

342 Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, 1959.

343 Case notes, Marianville, 1953.

344 Ibid., 1954.

345 Case notes, Marianville, 1960.

346 Ibid., 1966.

347 Ibid., 1965.

348 Ibid., 1977.

baby. For example, in 1972 a university student who intended to place her baby for adoption decided ultimately against this course of action and migrated to England with the child.[349]

Other material in the Marianville records reveal the long term emotional and familial turbulence that surrounded adoption decisions. For instance, many women who had a child did not reveal this to their future husbands and subsequent children. One woman sent a letter to Marianville about her son, who was born in 1969, explaining that she did not want to be contacted about this life event. Her husband was unaware of her son's existence and that there would be 'serious trouble if he found out'.[350] This is an issue that is dealt with in much greater detail via the oral testimony that features in **Chapter 4**.

Adoption to Britain

The Marianville records indicate that a number of babies were adopted in England and, in several cases, these arrangements were facilitated through the Mater Dei home working together with the Mater Misericordiae Adoption Society. For example, case notes record a baby 'sent to Mater Dei for an adoption in England' in 1951.[351] However, without access to the relevant adoption files, it is not possible to confirm formally that the process complied with appropriate legal requirements under the Adoption of Children (Northern Ireland) Act 1950.

Cross-border Adoption

The records for Marianville do not provide as much information about adoptions as those for Marianvale. However, it is evident that babies born in Northern Ireland were adopted in the Republic of Ireland and in Britain. It must be observed that without access to adoption files and associated records, across all relevant jurisdictions, it is not possible to confirm whether these adoptions were carried in compliance with the relevant legislation. These legal issues are discussed in **Appendix 1**, which includes an overview of the legislation relating to adoption and Northern Ireland. There were 171 Marianville babies recorded as placed in baby homes in the Republic of Ireland, including: the Poor Clare's Home in Stamullen; Nazareth House in Fahan; and smaller numbers with Temple Hill, St. Patrick's Guild baby home, Dublin; the Catholic Protection and Rescue Society of Ireland; and the Holy Faith Convent, Eccles Street, Dublin.

As with babies moved from Marianvale to the Republic of Ireland, it is argued that the use of Nazareth House in Fahan was due to the fact that it was the recognised baby home for the Catholic Diocese of Derry. However, if the purpose of moving a baby to Fahan was to facilitate an adoption there was a requirement to comply with the appropriate legislation in operation on both sides of the border and undergo any necessary oversight. **Appendix 1** (on the evolution of adoption legislation) offers legal consideration of how legislation and oversight was applied in different historical periods. An explanation for the placement of Marianville babies in the home at Stamullen, in County Meath, is

349 Ibid., 1972.

350 Ibid., 1969.

351 Case notes, Marianville, 1951.

more difficult to find.[352] It was the case that babies taken across the border were adopted from these baby homes and others. Case notes in 1953 and 1954 refer to babies being taken by the Catholic Rescue and Protection Society of Ireland (CRPSI) to Dublin and 'subsequently adopted' In another case in 1970, an arrangement was made directly with the CRPSI to have a 'baby placed for adoption in Dublin'.[353] The case records of many of the babies sent to Fahan explicitly state that they were sent there for the purpose of adoption.[354] On some occasions the Marianville birth mothers took their baby themselves to Fahan and, in other cases, the parents of a birth mother are also described as arranging adoptions (of their grandchildren) with the Nazareth nuns in Fahan.[355] The involvement of priests in cross-border adoptions is also evident in several instances. In 1952, one Derry/Londonderry based priest was reported to be 'seeing to the adoption of the baby from Fahan'.[356] Other priests were also named as making arrangements through Fahan for adoptions.[357] Adoptions were also recorded as taking place from Stamullen. Case notes, from 1964, on one young mother and her baby record that 'arrangements for adoption went through Stamullen' In another case, four years later, a nun from Stamullen travelled to Marianville and took a baby back with her 'to be placed for adoption'.[358] Final assessment of these adoptions and their compliance with legal and procedural requirements will only be possible if individual adoption case files are assessed. Any conclusion may be dependent on the interpretation of particular clauses of the 1950 and 1967 legislation relating to issues such as who was involved in the movement of the babies concerned, whether they were adopted by relatives and whether applications were made for licences or provisional adoption orders (see **Appendix 1** for legal discussion of these factors).

Private arrangements were also made for cross-border adoptions. The case notes for a woman who had given birth in a private nursing home in Belfast, during 1954, record how a 'lady from Dublin came and adopted the infant'.[359] In 1967, a Marianville baby was adopted by a couple living in Dublin. The following year, another Marianville baby was 'adopted in Sligo'.[360] The surviving paperwork on these cases offers no indication of what legal processes were involved. Once again, examination of the individual adoption files, held in Northern Ireland and/or the Republic of Ireland, is necessary before any judgement can be made on compliance with legal and procedural requirements in these adoptions and others like them in connection with babies born to mothers from Marianville.

Adoption Choice

There are some references in the Marianville files to women planning to keep their children or to place them in a baby home while they decided what to do. In a number of cases, the only prospect a mother had of keeping her baby was to marry the baby's father. In one such case, in 1968, a baby was placed in Stamullen 'pending a decision' This birth mother had been sent north on the advice of

352 For further discussion of Stamullen see Chapter 2 on Marianvale in this report.

353 Ibid., 1953; 1954; 1970.

354 For example, Case notes, Marianville, 1963; 1967.

355 Case notes, Marianville, 1958.

356 Ibid., 1952.

357 Ibid., 1958.

358 Ibid., 1964; 1965; 1968.

359 Ibid., 1954.

360 Ibid., 1968.

a Mother Prioress at one of the Good Shepherd convents. Her 'parents do not know of her trouble' but one of her sisters was aware. It was also observed that she had a brother who was 'prominent in public life.' The final decision was on hold because the young woman hoped to marry the child's father recorded as 'South African (white) aged 46.' When it became clear that no marriage would take place, she signed consent forms and the baby was adopted by a couple in Dublin.[361] For another birth mother, in 1988, the decision was the reverse of this; when her baby had been in foster care for six weeks she changed her mind about adoption and returned to Marianville to seek help in caring for her baby.[362]

The written evidence held in the surviving files from Marianville do not enable any degree of quantification about the important issue of the discussions around adoption (and other options) that took place between the birth mothers and others, such as social workers, family members and Good Shepherd Sisters. The oral testimony related in **Chapter 4** provides much more detail on this element of the history of Marianville and other mother and baby homes.

Conclusion

As with conclusions related to Marianvale, those for Marianville are to be found as part of overall conclusions, offered on the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes, at the end of **Chapter 4**.

361 Ibid., 1964.

362 Department Health and Social Service Inspectorate, Marianville Inspection Report, 1989, Monitoring Statement, p. 2.

Chapter 4:

Oral Testimony on Marianvale and Marianville

A separate chapter on oral testimony in relation to the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes is necessary for a number of reasons. The first reason is the sheer quantity of the recordings collected on this these institutions and the range of perspectives that they offered. All these perspectives deserve consideration and should be made available to readers of the report, to alert them to the multiplicity of viewpoints on, and experiences of, Marianvale and Marianville. It is also intended that this evidence is presented in such a way that those who demonstrated great personal courage in coming forward to offer their testimonies feel that their contribution is reflected in the report. Other officially commissioned reports on similar themes, such as the McAleese Report, have met with criticism for offering insufficient priority to the oral testimony they recorded. Providing space to consider the oral testimony at length also creates the opportunity to discuss it in all its complex detail. While the oral testimony provides the rich resource that lies at the heart of this chapter, where appropriate, the analysis also draws on material from other sources that enrich it.

The Good Shepherd homes have been the subject of the majority of media attention in Northern Ireland in relation the issue of mother and baby homes. The campaign group Birth Mothers and their Children for Justice NI (BMTCFJ) is made up largely of women (and their children) who were residents in either Marianvale or Marianville and a number of individuals associated with the group came forward to offer oral testimony as part of this research. Others from the victims and survivors community chose not to do so and at least one individual informed the researchers that they had discouraged numerous others from offering oral interviews. It is not known how many more (if any) voices could have been recorded, by the researchers, if this was not the case. More generally, people had suspicions about the nature of the project itself or apprehensions about opening up intimate details of their personal history to unfamiliar researchers. Any oral history project depends on trust between interviewer and research participants, but that was an even more important factor in this case due to the traumatic nature of the testimony offered in most of the narratives. Given this difficult research terrain, the numbers of testimonies recorded during this project is far from insignificant. See the Introduction to this report for a lengthy discussion of this and other aspects of the oral history research.

In this chapter, testimonies from those associated with victims and survivors groups are collected in one section, together with oral history from others who did not identify as members of these groups but who also, in one form or another, were critical of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. A separate section presents the insights of a significant number of birth mothers who came forward because they wanted to offer a different perspective than the one they had encountered in the media. This group of birth mothers were drawn from those who have maintained a relationship with the Good Shepherd Sisters in the years since they were resident in either Marianvale or Marianville. This did not mean that their testimony was without criticism of mother and baby homes as institutions. They all regretted the fact that a system had developed that shamed and stigmatised women because of issues of sexuality and reproduction. Although these respondents do not aim their anger at the Good Shepherd Sisters, many of them provided testimony featuring equal levels of trauma and sadness as that featured in testimonies that were more critical of the nuns.

Taken together these richly detailed accounts are explored to establish important evidence about Marianville and Marianvale.

Two health professionals provided testimony which involved their experiences with birth mothers from one of the Good Shepherd homes and their evidence is considered here.
Three social workers also offered their perspectives on the issue of mother and baby homes and adoption. Much of this related to the Good Shepherd homes and their testimony also offers insight on the complex historical experiences of social workers and the birth mothers with whom they worked. The chapter also discusses the testimony of two Good Shepherd Sisters and one priest who each offered detailed evidence about the workings of the mother and baby homes. The analysis begins with their contribution to the research. Further discussion of their interviews and of all the testimonies is available in **Appendix 2** on Oral Testimonies and in **Table 1: Information on Informants in the Introduction**.

Sister 1 (S1)

S1 is a Good Shepherd Sister with extensive experience of working in the Order's convents in Northern Ireland.[363] She arrived in Northern Ireland in the 1960s. Among the topics she discussed was the burial of stillborn babies. S1 believes that these were dealt with by the hospital authorities rather than the Good Shepherd mother and baby home. She also explained how, in a small number of cases, the remains of stillborn babies were laid to rest in a Good Shepherd plot at a local cemetery. In one of these plots two babies are named on the large grave, but S1 explained that 'there was about six or seven babies there I think.' She maintained that the names of the other babies in this particular grave are not on a headstone because this was the wish of the birth mother in each case. In these instances, the stigma and secrecy attached to the unmarried mothers appears to have reached as far as their babies' anonymous resting place.

S1 discussed the higher education training that prepared her for aspects of the work in mother and baby homes. Many of the Good Shepherd Sisters undertook social work and related qualifications during the 1960s and 1970s; other Sisters were trained as midwives. S1 described the emotional dynamics that led to young women being placed in one of the homes:

> *Parents wouldn't have them when they were pregnant and I remember going to the parlour one day and this mother came up to see her daughter and she said to me straight away "Sister what do you think of the terrible girl I have? Terrible girl … look at her! What has she done?"*

Speaking privately to S1 shortly after this, the mother added "Oh sister I couldn't go to mass … I go to mass but I keep my head down I'm so embarrassed and shame … full of shame."

In S1's opinion, the fact that parents felt this way about their daughters' predicament meant that the young mothers-to-be were 'thrilled' to enter the home: 'It's the truth, because when they came in you could see the change so quickly afterwards when they got over the first few days. And they could go through the pregnancy in a relaxed atmosphere. It was very therapeutic for them really.'
The process of referral to the home began with a welcome. Then 'every girl got a booklet' and was

363 Interview with Sister 1, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 8 December 2018.

shown to 'her little cubicle in the room and it was tidied up and she was delighted, it was kind of a student's room, some of them said to me.' They each had 'a washing basin and a bed and a chair and they were comfortable.' S1 revealed the trauma the young women went through, remarking that 'they could hear each other crying alright ... which some of them didn't like.' S1 described the structured daily routine, which she felt was good for the residents. This included 'a bit of knitting and I used to ... well the Sister in charge used to encourage them to knit something for the baby, teach them how to crochet.' The home had a 'beautiful ... music box' and there was a TV. Some of the residents received visits from parents, but by no means all of them. A significant number, S1 remembered, were referred by agencies like the NSPCC or Social Services and did not have functioning family networks.

In S1's opinion, in the early 1970s, 'Social Services got their act in order and ... they supported the girls really and they came to visit them every month ... it was a stipulation. And ... they looked after the adoption then as well, which was great.' Social workers were more frequent visitors to the home by this point. The local GP and Health Visitor also called regularly. Social Services arranged for some antenatal classes as well as sending in 'somebody, like with arts and crafts specialism, and they used to take the girls to classes in relation to sewing and doing more fancy things.'

S1 remembered that a significant minority of residents were from the Republic of Ireland and that this was often arranged by St Patrick's Adoption Society: 'they would send her North to us because she wouldn't know anybody in the North and she'd be more at ease. But they'd take their baby back South, as well, they'd take the mother and baby back.' On the topic of adoption, S1 insisted that the Sisters 'let the social worker do all that once the social worker came on board. We referred them always back to our social worker really, and the social worker made the decision with them.' She outlined the legal requirements for adoption, the involvement of a Justice of the Peace and the principle of consent that was the JP's responsibility to uphold. S1 recalled that mothers considering giving up their child for adoption 'got an explanatory memorandum explaining what adoption meant, and she was taken over it, and I might take them over it if they wanted me, but like the social worker took them over it and they signed ... at the bottom of that form, they have read it and they understand it.' Thereafter, it could take a year before an adoption order was finalised and there were opportunities in that time for the birth mother to reconsider 'if she wished to lodge an objection.'

In discussing options with the home's residents, S1 explained that 'I used to have two bits of paper' and could 'say all the advantages of keeping a baby, all the disadvantages.' She would then ask the young woman 'and what do you want, you know, yourself?' The birth mother would often be talking to her own mother about this also. S1 reflected on accommodation options available, from the 1970s, via the Housing Executive and Ulidia Housing Association, but felt that the prospect of independent living 'was too lonely for them really, and they were scared going alone.'

The Good Shepherd mother and baby homes had no long stay accommodation for taking care of babies whilst adoptions were being arranged. Instead, babies went to children's homes in Northern Ireland. However, in some cases, 'some of the girls chose to go on to Stamullen with their babies because that was a registered adoption society ... And they knew their babies were going for adoption and they could get away more quickly.' When asked about the legal issues around crossing the border with a baby in these circumstances, S1 replied that 'if the mother took the baby herself, it was her own business.' She was not certain if that was generally how this occurred because 'it was before my time. See. But I certainly think somebody arranged, somebody went with the baby on their behalf. But it wasn't the Sisters. They were family I think.' In the case of those babies that crossed

the border to Fahan, S1 felt that 'Social Services social workers brought them up. I'm not quite sure... That's only hazarding a guess too.'

S1 was asked about the formalities involved in the process for handing over a baby, whether it be to a social worker or perhaps a grandparent: 'I think it was quite flexible in those days if the parents took the child. Oh no, I don't think we had any paperwork about that. Oh no. Social work ... you see if the baby was born in the hospital, sometimes the babies didn't come back to us at all, they went straight to a children's home or a foster home or wherever.'

Discussing a Radio Four documentary about the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland and allegations the programme contained about forced and illegal adoptions, S1 concluded that 'there's nothing to it.' However, she did reflect on things that could have been handled better in the past: 'certainly there could be more care for the pregnant girls and more ... society could be more caring and supportive rather than getting her off side and her family feeling shame and guilt and all that. And help the mother to make a ... a decision that would be right for her rather than be influenced by society and all that baggage, you know?' Asked if she thought the mother and baby home staff could have done anything differently, S1 suggested that it would have been difficult to go against a family's wishes: 'families would go daft if you rang Social Services without them, without their permission, and they wouldn't give permission. So our hands were tied to. So ... what else could you do? So if the girls came in and they were referred by a doctor or a priest, oh no way Social Services were to be involved. So what to do?' S1 felt that the women 'were all helped at their time of need', but if there had been 'more support and more openness about adoption and about pregnancy there would be half the stress. We were only ... we were only kind of responding to what was happening. It was sent in to us and we had to ... to comfort and support them. Care for them, love them really too.'

Sister 2 (S2)

S2 moved from the Republic to work in Good Shepherd convents in Northern Ireland.[364] She began by discussing her experience of working in one of the mother and baby homes during the 1970s. Earlier in her career, S2 gained professional qualifications that were useful to her in this role. Like S1, she reflected that the training that many Sisters undertook in the 1950s and 1960s was part of a broader strategy mapped out by 'the leadership of the Province [of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Ireland]. Prior to heading to Northern Ireland, S2 worked in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the Republic. She compared the two homes: 'it was much the same except you're dealing with Northern people and I had to get used to their accent and all that kind of thing. But as regards the working environment or how we were with the women, that was our charism. That's how we were. So it was much the same.' One big difference she noted in the Northern mother and baby home was that:

364 Interview with Sister 2, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 15 December 2018.

> *all you had to do was ring *name of hospital redacted* and say "There's a girl in labour" and the ambulances would be out. Now that was one big difference, you know? You didn't have to have the ... I suppose, the stress or anxiety of ... of having to bring the girl in if she didn't tell you at the early stage if she was in labour.*

Later in her testimony, S2 recalled another difference, this time in the process of handing over a baby for adoption. In the Northern Ireland mother and baby homes 'the social worker would have taken, very often, would have taken the baby when it was going to be adopted or whatever situation it was, and then the parents or family or friend or boyfriend or somebody would come and take the girl, or the woman, you know?' In her experience of the home in the Republic, S2 remembers 'often bringing the girl in to the Catholic Protection Rescue Society, who were the adoption agency that we worked a lot with, and others as well, and bringing the mother and the baby in, and she handing over the baby. That was very sad you know. Very difficult.'

S2 described the traumatic first encounters with young mothers-to-be in a similar fashion to S1:

> *Regarding the mother and the single girl and her understanding of her pregnancy and meeting her family, it was the very same as the South, that part of it. Mother distressed, and never knew about this and "Oh where did I go wrong?" And all this kind of ... you know, that the parents would say or whether it was the social worker that said them or their parish priest brought them - whatever. It was much the same as regards the situation regarding the mother you know?*

S1 narrated an emotional conversation from her time in the home in the Republic during which a professional woman in her thirties arrived at the home and revealed that she had considered suicide when she discovered her pregnancy; 'I'll never forget that, no. She was going to throw herself into the river. And I just said, 'my God that could have been me as well you know?' So it gave you an insight into the terrible trauma that these girls went through.'

S2 argued that understanding their context is critical when reviewing the mother and baby homes and their history. In doing so, she gave an example of the way in which the Sisters themselves became drawn into secrecy and deception:

> *We have to look at what was the culture, what was the thinking. You know, why did parents send their daughter away, why were they so ashamed, I mean there's a whole load of reasons for it, you know? And ... so I think that influenced ... it influenced us all. We were, we were being as compassionate and as caring as we possibly could, because sometimes they never told their family. I mean I myself had an uncle in England, and I asked him could his address be used for post for people to send their letters.*

In cases where parents were aware of their daughter's condition and visited the home, S2 recalled the dilemmas they wrestled with: 'I remember one lady telling me "I would love to keep her at home, I hate that she has to come away, but ... I couldn't have her around with the rest of the children ... How would I explain it to them?" She was the eldest of ... I don't know how many children.'

S2 considered herself to be engaged in 'a very special ministry, at the time, very special because everybody that came in was in distress.' The most difficult examples of this included a couple of cases where incest was involved. One of which involved a young girl who was brought from the Republic of Ireland. Issues such as this placed discretion very much at the heart of the mother and

baby homes. S2 was first based in a Good Shepherd convent in Northern Ireland during the early 1960s and at this time she was not involved in that area of the work. The mother and baby home on the site was very separate. There were 'just the two Sisters that were there and the local superior at the time would have met the girl coming there, or the woman. But the rest of us in the community would have had nothing at all to do with them. That was how it was and it was very much respected.'

S2 explained the process involved in welcoming a young woman to the home:

> *I'd go up and I'd meet them and you know, mother and father would be in tears. So we'd bring them down then and show them, you know, look this is where your daughter will be living now, show them the whole place and ... and there was a certain kind of, I suppose maybe, a certain kind of relief on the behalf of the parents, you know?*

This was not necessary if the young woman arrived with a social worker as they 'would know the set-up.' On other occasions 'the priest might bring them; their mother had gone to their local parish priest and he would bring the girl along' or 'a boyfriend occasionally, not very often, but occasionally.' S2 felt it was 'it was very important ... to try and welcome her and tell her she would be alright. Everything would be done for her, and she won't have to worry.'

In these opening encounters S2 recalled that if the parents raised the issue of the baby, she would generally say "Look we're dealing with the mother now for the moment anyhow [later] ...we'll talk about what the future [is] going to be and what she wants to do and what you want to do." S2 felt these 'were very sacred moments ... to be dealing with a family in a situation like that. You couldn't have imagined it, you know, the pain of the parents.' Thereafter, the parents 'were welcome to visit, there was no restriction on visiting really, they could come whenever they wanted to visit the daughter. And then some others never had a visit from anybody, and that was their choice.' The mothers-to-be then began to fit into the routine of the home, which began with a visit from the local GP and antenatal classes at a local hospital.

In contrast with some of the descriptions of work offered by birth mothers who gave testimony on Marianvale and Marianville (see below), S2 described a benevolent regime. The daily routine in the home involved breakfast at 'around half-eight', then 'they got on to make their bedrooms.' Everyone had 'a little chore in the house, you know like two or three would keep the dormitories clean, two or three would look after the dining room, two or three would look after the sitting room. The corridor, the bathrooms. So they all had a little, kind of, a chore.' If they had given birth then 'immediately after breakfast they went on and looked after the baby, and bathed it and fed it.' She recalled that during her time based at the home they took in Irish dancing costumes that the women did further needlework on: 'we'd get the dancing costume in and they'd do the stitching. They just loved doing it, loved to see the result of their work, you know? But there was no obligation. If anyone would like to do that they could do it.' Lunch was at 'one o'clock or quarter to one or sometime like that and the meals were prepared up in the Convent.' Then the women had 'their siesta time and I think that was until three o'clock.' They were then given a cup of tea, and then allowed to watch television 'or they'd go back to their little bit of knitting and that kind of thing.' The evening meal was at 'around six.' In the evening 'we used to play games, we'd play cards. Or Monopoly' or 'on the brighter nights they'd walk lovely ... there was lovely grounds they'd go out and walk around. And some of them loved to do a bit of gardening.'

In S2's view there was 'no, kind of, strict regime or anything like that.' She claimed that it was free: 'As I said they walked around. I think occasionally they went out, if they wanted to go out and do a bit of shopping or something they went out on their own. There was no restrictions … as long as we knew they were going like … there was no such thing as "you can't go", or anything like that, unless the lady was near her end of term or something like that.'

As was the case with S1, S2 explained her belief that the Sisters had minimal involvement in decisions regarding adoption:

> *I would have several private conversations with the girls, they'd come and … and she'd just say what she had to say and then sometimes she'd bring up the baby. "I don't know what to do, I'd love to keep the baby and … but I can't". And … then you see if there was a social worker involved, I always would say then, "Listen, when the social worker comes the next time you can have a chat with her about that".*

However, S2 did discuss conversations she had with the unmarried mothers. She recalled saying: "Your decision, I suppose, is you can take the baby … if you can't take the baby home [to their parental home] how would you manage?" S2 explained that 'one little saying I used to have was "You want to do the best for your baby. So, like what do you think is the best thing to do now?" S2 recalled that she would talk about this to a mother-to-be 'as much as she wanted. I was always available for them, you know? And obviously it became much more relevant when the baby was born, you know?' In explaining this, S2 was detailing the influential position that mother and baby home staff occupied simply because of the amount of time they spent with the birth mothers. Not everyone shared S2's view that the staff of mother and baby homes were without influence on mothers-to-be and their decision-making. One letter, written in 1973, from the Catholic Rescue and Protection Society of Ireland to Marianvale discussed how the parents of one young woman were 'naturally upset' about their daughter 'particularly as they feel that the boy who is the father of the baby would not be suitable for her.' Her father was hoping fervently that "somebody" in Newry will be able to talk sense to *name redacted*.' The letter's author had assured him that 'you [the Good Shepherd Sister] are the essence of common sense, sympathy kindness.'

S2 also discussed how, occasionally, families found a way of adopting within the family and had 'an Aunt that will take the baby or… cousin.' She reiterated the evidence discovered in the Marianvale and Marianville files about the important role of parents in a young mother's decision: 'if the family couldn't take the baby she had no choice. There was no help for her to keep the baby, there was no welfare assistance and all that.' If a birth mother's parents made it clear they did not want their grandchild brought home S2 'would never interfere with the decision of the parents … I would, I would never, kind of say, "Maybe you should think" … That was totally the family decision between them.'

S2 described the process of a baby being given up by its birth mother. 'The social worker would generally come', in advance of which the mother would:

> *buy the best for the baby and dress it up and the social worker would take it, if it was going for adoption. I mean we had nothing at all to do with that process really, we kind of just stayed with the girl. And then when the baby was gone, the mother generally went the same day. And either, as I said, maybe her parents would come for or maybe her boyfriend or a friend. Very seldom they would have left on their own. Very seldom now.*

In cases where the baby was sent to homes, such as Fahan or Stamullen in the Republic of Ireland, S2 maintained that 'certainly we never took them anywhere, that's one thing … I'm very certain of that. That we never took them. So obviously it was, maybe family? Maybe a social worker?' She thought that in these cases this happened 'because the girl could not make up her mind. That was generally the reason: "There's no way I could let that child go". And maybe circumstances will change, that they will be able to take the baby home. That would have been their thinking.' Furthermore, S2 told the researchers that she did not know where Fahan was until sometime after she had left her role in the mother and baby home in which she worked. In terms of Stamullen, S2 explained 'I don't think very many [babies] went, in my time, to Stamullen … it wasn't done on a regular basis anyway.'

S2 held the view that those birth mothers who were themselves raised in a children's home and had no functioning family support network were unlikely to raise their own babies independently. If they 'were landed with a child … very often that child would have been sent to a nursery.' S2's testimony included her experience of some birth mothers who did not want to see their baby, and would tell her "Sister I don't want to see it." The hospital 'made facilities for that … we wouldn't stop them if that's what they wanted, you know?' However, as was the case with the retired social workers interviewed for this research (see below), S2 was concerned about this practice. She wondered if 'later on would they have regrets that they hadn't seen the child? But I don't know really.' In her experience 'the vast majority would have come back with their baby.' When this happened, a Good Shepherd Sister trained in nursery care 'looked after the baby and watched the supervision of the mothers.' In S2's opinion, having trained staff like this (and social workers and midwives) among the Good Shepherd Sisters meant that 'thanks be to God we never had any, what would I say? Mishaps.'

A number of women from the mother and baby home in which S2 worked had their babies in a private hospital rather than an NHS institution, but S2 was unable to explain why: 'I honestly, now I really can't answer that question. Truthfully, because I don't want to be speculating.' On the occasions where one of the women at the home had a stillbirth when she went to hospital, S2 recalls that the baby's remains were not returned to the home: 'And I don't ever, ever remember having a funeral service or a mass for a baby or anything like that, so it was done kind of, maybe, probably with the family and then if the girl didn't have family the hospital would have said "we'll look after the baby."' She explains that it was the 'culture at the time' for the hospital to deal with the babies' remains. S1 said 'I'm sorry I don't know what happened to the babies on the whole, I don't know.' Based on her experience in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the Republic of Ireland, S1 thought that the hospital dealt with burial of stillbirths.

Reflecting back on mother and baby home system, S2 said 'When I look back on it now … when you're in the system I think you were focused on … I must speak for myself … in hindsight now of course this is, how you were focused on the care of the mother and the baby and that but later on I suppose I began to think how on earth did you part with your children?' As evidence of the good work she felt the Good Shepherd Sisters had done, S2 pointed to the fact that 'I think almost everybody that was ever with us would always write back, you know [to offer thanks].' She discussed her concerns about those birth mothers who gave up their child for adoption and who wanted no possibility of future contact. Changes in legislation since the 1960s and 1970s make origin tracing more straightforward for their children and she is concerned about their privacy.

S2 was asked about accusations that Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland had been the scene of forced adoptions. Her view was that 'we couldn't have forced anybody. I mean

that's not on...They might have been forced through family, or whatever but we didn't … we certainly didn't force them to give up their babies, why would we like?' She recognised that birth mothers were 'disturbed and upset' when these adoptions were agreed.

Priest 2

Priest 2 (P2) was ordained in the 1960s, after which time he found himself serving in a number of parishes in Northern Ireland.[365] He discussed the options available to a young unmarried mother-to-be: 'the girl went away, had her baby, and came back and nothing was ever mentioned' or she 'went away and had her baby, and it was reared as the youngest child in the family and she never knew that her eldest sister was her mother.'

He recalled that when he was a young priest one young pregnant woman who was 'sent to the Good Shepherd home.' He remembers the shroud of secrecy around this. He had cause to visit this home and remembers that the Good Shepherd Sisters 'made absolutely sure that I did not see her or hear about her and I certainly didn't ask.' Even when he subsequently visited this young woman's family home, 'it just wasn't spoken about. They went away and it was never spoken about.'

P2 described the elaborate cover stories and methods that were called upon to conceal pregnancies from the wider community or even from a young woman's own family. The Catholic friend of a young Presbyterian woman approached him, asking for help, because the latter was pregnant and wanted to avoid using a mother and baby home in Northern Ireland. Working with the Legion of Mary, P2 found her accommodation in a home in London and he recalls that 'I certainly would have gone over to see her over there.' This young pregnant woman was one of many that 'left home and did not tell their parents where they were.' He recollected another case where a young woman in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home led her parents to believe that she was working in the Republic. She received a shock when her father announced he was coming for a visit and then invented a story about a new job overseas that she had to take up immediately. P2 recalled giving her family an address to write to in country where they believed their daughter was working and letters came back and forth from there with the assistance of a third party.

P2 had experience of one particular Good Shepherd Convent which he visited to offer pastoral care to both the expectant mothers and to the women who had been placed in the adjacent laundry. He recalled quite a number of the women there came from the Republic of Ireland: 'some were referred to, referred to the home by other convents in the South of Ireland, but some were referred to the home by their families.' In many of these cases, 'their families made it very clear to them that they needed to go away and they were not to bring the baby back.' On occasions, P2 was asked to mediate between parents and a young woman who was desperate to keep her baby. One was a young woman from a rural area in the Republic whose father was a widower with a number of other children. P2 visited the father to intercede on the issue: 'I still remember it and it's so many years ago. He was fixing an alarm clock and he didn't want to talk to me at all, but he made it very clear that he did not want his daughter to … she was out in the car, she couldn't come in.' Eventually the father told him: 'under no circumstances!' and the young mother returned home without her baby. On another occasion, he had a similar conversation with the parents of a young woman at the

365 Interview with Priest 2, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 13 February 2019.

maternity hospital when they came to see their grandchild. Initially, they insisted that their daughter place the baby in a home but after what must have been an emotional evening 'they brought it home the next day. But to this day she [the birth mother] feels very hurt that this child was away in a baby home overnight.' This woman is one of a number who have remained in contact with P2 over the years.

P2 addressed the issue of babies crossing the border to the Fahan baby home: 'the only baby home facility they had in Derry [Diocese] at the time was in Fahan, which is across the border and I know could lend itself to misinterpretation of taking babies out of the jurisdiction and all, but … that, I gather, was the only facility they had.' Discussing adoption, P2 reflected that many women gave up their babies without significant sign of dissent because they 'realised it was going to be extremely difficult to bring a child up.' He gave several examples, including one woman who worked in a professional occupation who journeyed up from the Republic of Ireland to 'have her baby and … she wanted to let the baby be adopted and move on.'

P2 maintained that during his visits to the Convent the women had opportunities to speak privately with him and could have made a complaint of any kind about life in the mother and baby home. There were incidents over the years in which he did become involved. One involved two of the expectant mothers who 'went down the town even though they were pregnant, they got a few drinks more than they should have had and finished up with so-called friends.' P2 claimed that 'they met and rang me at four in the morning to say: "Look, we're here". I said: "Right. I will go out and get you".' P2 maintained that their return was 'purely voluntary … they knew they had to come back because their babies were, you know, due.' He recalled a number of occasions when 'one or two disappeared and went off and when we found them then I would go – usually someone would come with me – and we'd go and bring them back.' They had usually gone back to their home town. When asked why they ran away, P2, explained 'basically, some of them didn't want to be there. But the vast majority of them realised that in Ireland at that time there wasn't much option, because living at home with … expecting a baby was not an easy experience.' The run-aways were traced via 'some of the other girls, and the Sisters. And they would try and find them and they'd [the run-away women] ring up because they'd know they had no option but to go back and have their baby and come home again.'

P2 felt that the relationship between the residents and the two Sisters in the mother and baby home with which he was familiar was a good one. One Sister was 'the boss and responsible' whilst the other 'was the soft, human touch' and the unmarried mothers 'would lean on her.' In P2's view, no one put pressure on the young expectant mothers to persuade them to have their children adopted: 'I honestly never met anyone that were pressurised or forced to sign what was going to happen to their baby. And certainly, it was the social workers who looked after that aspect of things… I don't think the Sisters were that much involved in the actual adoption at all. They were looked after by social workers.'

Reflecting on the age profile of the expectant mothers, he recorded that the 'age range would have been in their late teens/early twenties …and then there were a few people with special needs who became pregnant and they tended to be older.' Asked about cases where pregnancy was the result of rape, P2 recalled that such matters 'had all been dealt with back where she was before she came.' The authorities in the woman's local district 'would've dealt with that.' He framed this in the context of the Good Shepherd Sisters' role in dealing with 'girls … from very difficult circumstances … and you know the Sisters accepted that. I mean there were certainly no questions asked. There were no … we certainly didn't want to know the why or the wherefore of it – we just didn't ask questions.' The

Sisters 'wouldn't have gone into their background in any – I mean, apart altogether from what they were given by the social worker, and they worked on that.'

Asked to reflect on anything he felt the Good Shepherd Sisters could have handled in a better fashion in the mother and baby home, P2 maintained that he could not think of anything that might have been improved: 'Off hand, I honestly don't know what they could have done.'

P2 described the conditions for the mother and baby home women once they reached the maternity hospital. Staff were 'exceptionally good to them and gave them single rooms.' It is interesting to contrast this view with that of some of the birth mothers who viewed being segregated as a sign of discrimination or shunning rather than of compassion. In his view, this was for privacy and he recalled an occasion when some local women who knew him began asking questions about the identity of the young mother he had visited.

P2 also explained that over the years a number of babies had died at birth and occasionally, in later years, birth mothers approached him to ask "Where is my baby buried?" In these instances, 'we certainly meet them and we bring them out and show them. The last two people that came, they wanted a little plaque to their baby with the baby's name on it and the date of birth.' P2 explained that as well as those for whom the plaque has been placed there are a small number of other babies in the grave that were the offspring of women who stayed in the mother and baby home. They had died in one of the local maternity hospitals.

At the end of his interview, P2 explained the two reasons why he wanted to offer his testimony. He felt that the media stories about the mother and baby home he had visited as part of his pastoral duties were inaccurate. P2 argued that 'they did a lot of good work, and I don't think that has been acknowledged at all by some of the media reporting.' He had also been asked by one of the Good Shepherd Sisters to consider offering testimony and indicated that he did so willingly.

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Midwife 1 (MW1)

MW1 worked in a number of hospitals from the early 1970s.[366] She discussed working in a side ward that was used for unmarried mothers. MW1 explains that the nursing staff were professional in their treatment of these women but admits that they were 'perhaps cold' towards them. MW1 put this down to the training received at the time:

> *You were told by the senior staff not to engage in personal conversation with them, and that's what you did, you didn't even know what part of the country they came from … it was the time, we were in it. It was the advice you were given. It was … well if you were talking to them on a personal level you could be seen as, you know, interfering in their personal life … I was conscious when you were told about, you know, about unmarried mothers coming in *name of mother*

366 Interview with Midwife 1, conducted Ida Milne, 1 June 2018.

and baby home redacted and other homes, not to be, get into conversation with them much or you could be seen as, you know, nosy or prying into their business or whatever. We were told that and we just abided by those rules.*

This attitude was corroborated in some of the birth mother testimonies (see below). MW1 now wonders whether the women wanted to talk, and whether the experience of giving birth in that environment, with no family support, was harder than it should have been for them. She realises they must have been scared and isolated by the process and that the hospital did not offer emotional support:

And some of these girls were in their teens, and you know you, OK you were caring for them, you were doing your job as a midwife, but you weren't communicating with them, and … because you didn't have the skills. That was just the bottom line. And you went by what you were told by senior colleagues that you didn't ask anything with their personal lives or their circumstances or anything like that … but you know looking back, I mean that could also say that we had fear and anxiety just looking at them, you'd know that they were full of fear, full of anxiety and maybe some of them needed to talk, others maybe didn't. But you didn't go down that road, you just … you didn't have the skills yourself.

MW1 explained that the patient's records sometimes included a short note stating 'adoption', 'does not want to see baby' etc. In those cases, 'you brought the baby from the labour ward then down to the nursery and it was placed in the nursery and then, as I say, staff looked after the nursery.' In a number of these cases, she recalls the women sobbing and regrets that it was difficult, due to the instructions she had been given, to engage with them beyond offering medication for pain relief. This suggests that hospital protocols were not equipped to deal with the emotional distress of this particular group of young mothers.

MW1 also recalled discovering a number of the women, whose babies were to be adopted, 'hovering' around the nursery trying to catch a glimpse of their child:

And often, you know, we would remark, the midwives, amongst themselves, that you would often see the girls hovering around the nursery. Wanting to see the baby after a day or two. And then if you asked them 'could you help' they'd say I'd like to see my baby in which case you accommodated their needs. Usually, on the third day two social workers would come and the baby then was removed from the nursery and staff were told they were for foster care. But you know you didn't question that because these were other health professionals and obviously they knew more than us about the circumstances.

Testimony from Sister 2 and from the retired social workers indicate there was concern and debate about allowing birth mothers (or their families) the option of having a baby taken away from its mother immediately following birth. Birth mothers and a General Practitioner (see below) have corroborated that this was not practical and that many women left their bed to try and visit their babies in these circumstances.

MW1 recalled the reaction of mothers once their baby was removed by social workers: 'you'd go round and you'd check how they were and they'd be sobbing and you knew fine and well … in your heart why they were sobbing. And well you were, you'd offer them pain relief or whatever, but you knew that wasn't the reason, you know.' She intimated that 'they had pain yes, that's right but you,

you, like that communication was very poor, very, very poor and you sometimes you think well, was that the right approach? Because when you think of midwifery today, well I'm not in midwifery anymore, but you know, patients like to get to know you, and [ask] 'do you have any children yourself?' You know and da-de-da-de-dah, you would engage in conversation with them.' MW1 explained that birth mothers usually arrived unaccompanied and remained alone during labour.

MW1's testimony was very reflective and open and offered an insight into why many women who passed through the mother and baby homes had negative memories about their birthing experiences. This testimony reveals that nursing staff were instructed to follow protocols that were based around offering straightforward medical professionalism rather than tending to the broader emotional and psychological needs of the isolated and vulnerable young women who arrived in the maternity units. Moreover, the practice of placing these women in side wards added to their isolation, even if was done with the good intention of keeping them away from prying eyes and judgemental comments. The decision that isolation, silence and secrecy was the best medicine for these young women appears to have been misjudged, but it was a strategy that was employed across all the mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland.

General Practitioner 1 (GP1)

The second medical professional interviewed was GP1.[367] Between the late 1960s and the 1980s this doctor offered antenatal care at one of the mother and baby homes operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters. He took on this role because he was the local GP and became medical officer for the mother and baby home. GP1 also had a role in delivering babies at one of the maternity units to which mothers were sent. He came forward to offer testimony following a request from one of the Good Shepherd Sisters and agreed to do so because he wanted to counter what he believed was the critical tone offered by the Radio Four documentary The Lost Children of Marianvale. This documentary included allegations that birth mothers had been coerced into placing their babies for adoption and, moreover, that there had been illegal trafficking of some infants across the border into the Republic of Ireland.

GP1's testimony echoed aspects of MW1's account. He also remembered some women who had asked not see their baby, because he/she was to be given up for adoption, subsequently trying to catch a glimpse of their new born child in the maternity unit. GP1 described the private and secluded nature of the Good Shepherd mother and baby home. He did not recall any of the mothers-to-be expressing dissatisfaction about the home. Nor did they discuss their future plans for the baby with him. GP1 did not take any role in discussions about potential adoptions and did not play a role in the psychological health of the expectant women. GP1 recalled that he did not discuss detailed matters about labour with the expectant mothers. He left this to the two nuns in the home who were, respectively, trained as a nurse and a midwife: 'I would think any of those questions apropos labour, childbirth, would have been put to Sister *name redacted*.' GP1 did not recall encountering any fear or apprehension amongst the pregnant women and it does appear that his role in the mother and baby home was narrowly defined around the physical health of the mother and unborn child. The women attended his antenatal classes once a fortnight and he carried out 'routine antenatal care. They would come in, I would examine them. Comment on the size of the baby or you know,

367 Interview with GP1, conducted by Olivia Dee, 17 December 2018.

whatever.' There was 'very little' discussion about what could be expected during labour. GP1 did not feel that women from the mother and baby home were treated any differently from other mothers at the maternity hospital. He did not use side wards for their labour, for example.

GP1 reported no unusual health issues within the mother and baby home during his time as the nominated medical officer. GP1 also recalled no stillbirths, or baby or mother mortalities, during his spell as medical officer at the mother and baby home. He described the nuns who ran the mother and baby home as 'very, very caring.' He felt that there was 'a very good atmosphere in the place … No problems at all. And they had basically, they had a very good relationship with the two nuns.'

Social Worker 1 (SW1)

SW1 began her career in the late 1960s and continued her work in a number of senior posts for several decades, before retiring almost a decade ago.[368] She had extensive experience in adoption work ranging from involvement in the initial placement of children through to assisting birth mothers and their children reunite in what is known as 'origin work.'

SW1 couched her testimony in the context of the great stigma that society placed on unmarried mothers until at least the 1970s: 'this generation has forgotten about the stigma of it, which was enormous. And … there were no facilities for them … if their parents didn't support them, and allow them home … where were they going to live? And how, I mean, what were they going to do?' She recalled a lot of unmarried mothers from rural areas who relocated to one of the Belfast mother and baby homes to 'hide' because 'ostensibly, you could be working or something.'

By the early 1970s, a new arrival to a mother and baby home was assigned a social worker, except in those homes that had a designated liaison officer. When asked if the social worker would then discuss the options available to the unmarried woman, she answered 'ad nauseam … and I mean some of them did … people tried to come to a decision, not wanting, possibly, to come to a decision that they were coming to … Hoping, maybe, that their parent was going to, their parents were going to relent.' She recalled social workers who themselves became distressed handling cases where a birth mother's family were 'just saying "absolutely not"' when their distraught daughter pleaded with them to let her keep her baby. As a rule of thumb, if the grandparents' resistance to their daughter keeping the baby did not weaken when the child was born the birth mother was unlikely to keep her baby. A small number of birth mothers requested not to see their baby after birth and SW1 recalled writing notes to this effect for nursing staff in the maternity unit. However, SW1 echoed the views of GP1 in noting that even when a birth mother said she did not want to see her baby 'invariably they would.'

SW1 was dismissive of allegations that social workers or nuns had taken babies against the will of their birth mothers, pointing out that since the Adoption of Children Act (1929) the final decision about this 'was taken by the court. Right? Not by a nun, not by a social worker. The final decision was taken by a court … every case, a court of law has to determine whether agreement is freely given, and if it isn't freely given, to dispense with it.' Later in the interview she provided an example of a woman many years later who told her 'I gave her [the baby] to the nun', and reflected that is how she

368 Interview with SW1, conducted by Olivia Dee, 28 March 2019.

'felt about it.' SW1 intimated that handing over her baby to a nun had been frozen in the woman's imagination, leaving the figure of the nun as the active agent in the process. In the several decades in which she worked in adoption, SW1 recalled no one telling her 'that the nuns had done terrible things to them' or that, in terms of an adoption consent form, 'a nun made me sign.'

SW1 explained the oversight role of the adoption case committee where the social worker 'would literally have been cross-examined, and I mean it, as to how this decision had been reached.' In her opinion, social workers had no motivation to press for adoption: 'there was no kudos in a child being adopted.' Even if somebody did have a personal preference for pushing for adoptions, SW1 believed that they could not achieve this 'because they were so harangued as to what they were doing' and were questioned, by an adoption placement committee or – after 1989 – by an Adoption Panel, on whether 'all implications [had] been considered.' Their duty was to examine if adoption was 'in the best interests of the child.' Whilst this process was ongoing, the baby would usually be placed with a foster family. At that point, the baby went through a matching process with families on the adoption waiting lists.

SW1 outlined the paperwork and legal processes that were entailed in adoption. She was at pains to explain that every formal adoption was scrutinised by the courts with a Guardian ad Litem assigned in each case. The application for adoption was made by the prospective adoptive parents and had to be accompanied by written consent from the birth mother. SW1 recalled the occasions when she had taken a birth mother to a Justice of the Peace (JP) to sign such an agreement and maintained that the JP always explained the context and implication of signing the documentation. At this point 'the social worker didn't intervene, all the social worker did is, possibly, take them there.' SW1 acknowledged that this formal process 'could be an upsetting scenario for the mother.' Indeed, she noted it was upsetting enough for herself and was usually a very tearful process.

SW1 explained her view that it was not possible for someone resident in the Republic of Ireland to adopt a child from Northern Ireland. She recalled that due to the role she performed she 'had a lot of enquiries from people from the South', asking her 'could they adopt?' Her reply was 'no' and SW1 reflected that elements of the legal situation was 'actually rather ridiculous, you might have found somebody approved just over the border, they might have been very good, but they could not adopt, full stop.' When asked if it was possible to place a child born in Northern Ireland in a children's home in the Republic, SW replied that it was not. However, she then acknowledged that in the 'west of the Province', in particular, this happened sometimes. This was a reference to the use of Fahan baby home in Donegal. Once placed there, any such baby could not be adopted by someone from the Republic, in SW1's opinion, because they [the babies] were British subjects.[369]

Social Worker 2 (SW2)

SW2 recalled that in the 1950s and 1960s many women self-referred to the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes (or were referred by their family or a parish priest), but by the 1970s it was a new agency formed by the local Catholic diocese that made many referrals.[370] The statutory authorities also referred women increasingly. As a social worker, SW2 encountered 'all sorts of circumstances

369 See the extensive discussion of the legislation on this in the Appendix on Adoption Legislation.

370 Interview with SW2, conducted by Olivia Dee, 3 April 2018.

from people who wanted to keep their baby but weren't getting any family support, or ones where we would maybe engage with the family, and then they would get, you know, support to take the baby to its home.' Like SW1, she made clear the difficult circumstances that these young women found themselves in: '[w]e were still living in an era where, to have a baby out of wedlock was, you know, there was a lot of shame attached to it and there wasn't support.'

SW2 felt that social workers 'always had to work at the client's pace. I mean, being professional, we couldn't impose our views.' She discussed the issue of those birth mothers who did not want to see their baby after birth because they intended giving it up. SW2 always encouraged contact: 'you tried to say, in future life, you would maybe want to have some memories.' In her view, the Good Shepherd Sisters also adopted this perspective. However, she did note that the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes operated as institutions with 'their routine.' There was 'an element of retraining going on…helping them to sew and knit and prepare for their baby.' Some of the nuns exhibited a 'carryover from the past institutions' when calling the young women 'pupils.' SW2 felt that the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes operated with 'no money forthcoming except voluntary [contributions].' This was an apparent misunderstanding as they were in receipt of welfare authority payments for a large proportion of residents.

SW2 described the obstacles facing those birth mothers contemplating keeping their baby. Securing accommodation from the statutory authorities meant overcoming 'a degree of negativity' from administrators who asked why they should give a home to 'a girl with her baby when there's a family doesn't have a house.' She noted, however, that sometimes family or friends provided financial assistance to pay for accommodation.

When asked whether she generally favoured birth mothers keeping their baby or giving up a child up for adoption, SW2 replied that 'our priority was that they would make a decision they could live with and that was good for the child.' She did recall occasions 'when girls would have taken a baby home, maybe even gone out on their own, and they weren't able to care for them. They didn't, they just couldn't do it, and we had to maybe involve social services then.'

If a birth mother wanted to take time to consider her options, there was a small supply of foster carers, specialising in taking babies, who had been built by bodies such as the Down and Conor Family Welfare and Adoption Society and the regional health boards. This would afford the birth mother time to reflect on her decision. Alternatively, the child was placed in a designated baby home. The new mothers could visit these homes and SW2 'would work with them. We were always trying, you know, to offer facilities, but we had to always keep alerting them to the fact that you can't put a child into deep freeze … there needs to be a permanent arrangement made as soon as humanly possible.' This perspective throws light on the pressure that young mothers must have been under to make a decision about adoption. The six-week period in the adoption legislation, before which a woman could not sign adoption consent forms, was designed to give breathing space between birth and the decision about an adoption. It could also serve to enable a bond to be established between mother and child or, as was just as important in many cases, between child and grandparents who might shift from disapproval of their daughter's predicament to attachment to the new baby. It eased pressure to make a decision at a time when a birth mother was psychologically vulnerable. However, it also served as a date on which all involved in the process focused their attention, building pressure on the young mothers in particular.

SW2 explained that in cases where a decision was yet to be made about adoption, social workers 'were encouraging them to keep contact with the child. Now there were all sorts of variations on that, but that was our clear professional way of working.' It was 'quite traumatic, in those days, very traumatic for people' to have a child in those circumstances. SW2 explained that they tried to give birth mothers 'time and space to see if a relationship was formed with the child.' Practical issues, including financial ones, were often a factor. In one case, concerning a young mother who wanted to keep her baby and planned to take a degree at a university outside Northern Ireland, SW2's team 'wracked our brains to see where we'd get a sum of money that would support her, at least for the first year at university.' They were successful. At the other end of the spectrum, many birth mother's families were struggling financially: 'parents just didn't, you know, the big families and all of that in those days, just couldn't take on another child.' In the cases where a birth mother (or her family) had decided that she was not to see the baby following the birth, SW2 did not write notes advising nursing staff that the mother was not to see the child.

SW2 had great experience of the adoption panels set up to oversee the process. It was made up of 'a representative group of people.' Their role was to approve people who were 'suitable to adopt, ratifying the decision that a child was eligible for adoption, and then the third component was ensuring what child would go to what family.' SW2 also explained that there was no adoption from Northern Ireland into the Republic of Ireland: 'there was no cross-border adoption … because there was different legislation. But we would've had, we would've had people in the south of Ireland who would've wanted their babies brought up here to, for adoption.' She believed this was connected to the legal situation in the Republic of Ireland where a married woman who was separated from her husband had no legal rights over her children. SW2 believed that 'it was legal for the child to be adopted here [in Northern Ireland] but not in the South.' On the issue of babies born in Northern Ireland being sent across the border to the baby home at Fahan, SW2 knew of none that were then adopted in the Republic of Ireland. She acknowledged that this was a complicated issue and discussed the matter of mothers crossing the border to give birth: 'sometimes, you see, what would happen, girls, even from Northern Ireland, would go to Dublin, to the mother and baby homes there. And then they would want to come, bring their baby up north to be adopted. I'm sure there were some who had their baby adopted in the South.'

SW2 speculated about some of the concerns that have been raised about adoption practices, particularly about the years before the sector was reorganised after the 1967 legislation:

> *I've no doubt that people were acting in the way they thought was the right thing to do at the time. And, you know, if you had thirty babies and you'd ten more queueing up to come in … and you had, there was no social work support … You would have taken, and you'd have taken shortcuts to get the situation resolved. Oh yes, I've no doubt, you know, there was. I mean, in the context of today there was things that should never have happened.*

She recalled that some of the older nuns in particular children's home had told her that in the past 'they literally went round doors to ask people would they foster the children? Because they didn't have enough space for them' SW2 felt that when some of the nuns gained social work qualifications in the 1960s and 1970s, it 'improved things quite a bit.' She also believed that the increasing financial involvement of the state improved the operation of the voluntary homes.

SW2 remembers the nuns talking about the St. Joseph's Baby Home that was opened in the 1950s and how modern it was:

> *One of the reasons for building that home was that the other place across the road, Nazareth Lodge ... Where there would've been anything, maybe forty or fifty babies at a time. And they would be under pressure to make, to get the babies out, get them somewhere, because they couldn't contain the numbers, and they had what they called a topping and tail system. They had literally buckets of water outside the windows to take the nappies ... no washing machines, no nothing. And there was no, there was no financial support from the state ... they were dependent on paltry donations all the time.*

In the later stages of her interview, SW2 reflected on origin work and the ethical issues involved in dealing with three sets of individuals. SW2 memorably described adoption as 'a psychological transplant' and explained that one had to be aware of the consequences of 'tampering with it.' She explained that there was no legal requirement to pursue origin work and there was flexibility about how to approach and facilitate reunions.

Social Worker 3 (SW3)

SW3 began her career in the mid-1970s, working with one of the Health Trusts before moving later to an adoption agency.[371] In the latter role, SW3 also worked on adoption origin cases. SW3 believed that, overall her role 'wasn't to engage with any sort of therapy ... it was just trying to support a mum in what she wanted.'

SW3 explained that even in the 1980s 'pregnancy outside marriage would have been culturally frowned upon. And I suppose the way we dealt with many sensitive issues then were to have them out of sight and out of mind, because I don't think people had the sort of emotional language to manage a situation.' She did recall, however, 'in certain ways, a difference of attitudes, for example, in rural areas and Belfast, where it wasn't such an issue.' SW3 described how these pregnant women appeared on her case load:

> *It varied a lot. Some women would have very much had a concealed pregnancy where they didn't admit, either to themselves or anyone else, that they were pregnant. We got referrals, maybe, through a clergyman or a GP. Some of the clients would have stayed in mother and baby homes and others would have lived at home. But for those who wanted anonymity, a lot of them would have gone there. So really it could have been at any stage. We also got referrals from the ante-natal clinics because ... we'd a specialism for working with mums and counselling them on options.*

SW3's philosophy was that 'the best place for a child is with his or her parents, or mum. If that isn't going to work then what you have to do is find the best alternative.' However, she acknowledged that there were not a lot of options for unmarried mothers and for 'a schoolgirl or a student or a young woman who, at that stage, wasn't independent, family support would have been crucial.' Many families did not want to discuss options: 'the assumption would've been adoption, to maybe the parents or the family. There wouldn't have been an option in it.' Whereas 'obviously to a mother it's a different thing entirely.' She noted, however, that if the birth mother was over eighteen, SW3 did not automatically work with the family but 'if she wanted to keep her child, and it was obvious she was

371 Interview with SW3, conducted by Olivia Dee, 25 March 2018.

going to need her family, then we could become involved to see if there was any way that we could assist or work with them.'

Like the other retired social workers, SW3 offered a detailed description of the process of adoption. She outlined the role of the adoption panel and of the matching process. SW3 made a number of interesting observations based on her experience with origin casework. Her experience had differed from that of SW1 in a key respect. Having worked with birth mothers attempting to contact their adopted child, SW3 found that 'often the perception was that they had been forced to give up their baby when, in fact, they had signed consent. But often, then, there wasn't counselling involved, there wasn't real support, so in their eyes and experience they had no option at all. So it sort of was a forced consent even though, legally it wouldn't have been seen like that.' SW3 did not feel that there was always 'evidence of the fact that a mum knew what she was doing. So it's about protection first. And mums were often so isolated.'

SW3 empathised with those young women who had to make such a life defining decision when enveloped by emotions: 'the trauma. The fear. The pain. The uncertainty. And I would've often thought a feeling of being completely isolated. Nobody on their side, as it were. Because, again, there was very much a culture of presumption, that if you had a baby outside marriage then the baby should go to – quote – "a good home" – unquote.' SW3 remarked on the research that has demonstrated the mental health issues that arose for women who had to give up their baby. This was a very important point that would certainly be supported by very many, if not all, of the birth mothers who offered testimony on their child's adoption.

There was, she believes, a 'simplistic expectation that … if you had a baby outside of marriage you didn't feel the same, it wasn't the same.' At one point this had been reinforced by protocols around births: 'I mean even in hospitals, probably before my time, mums were encouraged not to see their babies … Because there was a fear they would have this emotional tie which was, in any other case, seen as what you would want.' SW3 was very critical of this approach: 'experience of pregnancy, experiencing a birth, and then not seeing what's at the end of that is totally abnormal. It's like when women used to give birth to a stillborn and they didn't want her to see her child, you've no closure at all.' Her approach was the reverse:

> *We would always encourage a mum to see her baby, because if she was going to make a choice for her child she needed to work through her emotional process about that and to really understand what she was doing. So we would have taken photographs, we would have encouraged them to write letters … we would have encouraged her to see her child, to name her child … Sometimes she had things she wanted to give her child, or a letter she wanted to send to the adopters. But that first six weeks, in particular, would be quite intense.*

SW3 felt that this type of information could be used when the adoptive child looked for their birth mother years later. It was an approach informed by individuals who had been adopted in the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s, who had told SW3 and her colleagues '"I've no photographs of myself, no baby pictures. I don't know when I got my first tooth. I don't know when I smiled first. I don't know what I weighed when I was born." Stuff that you took for granted when you have access to information.' SW3 explained that before the change of tack in approach there was 'so much emphasis on secrecy.' SW3 encountered, for example, a lot of individuals 'who weren't aware that their mother – as they perceived her – was actually their granny, and that their older sister was their mum.'

SW3's origin work also made her familiar with legal and ethical challenges around aspects of the adoption experience. This included occasions where a parish priest was approached by an individual about their baptismal records and where the priest discovered that the baptismal record had been altered to enter the adoptive parent's surname. SW3 recalled that this was 'always an ethically strange thing' and the cleric would ask her for assistance in dealing with the individual. It was a difficult matter because 'agencies, legally were entitled to the information, individuals weren't.' On these occasions, SW3 could try and arrange a meeting with the birth mother.

Describing one of the mother and baby homes run by the Good Shepherd Sisters, SW3 said 'there was emphasis at the start about how you didn't tell anybody your real name. Because this whole secrecy thing was overpowering.' She added that 'I can truthfully say I didn't ever work with anybody who hated it. I mean there was routine. It was very different. The Sisters in charge, typically, were kind … I think some of them [birth mothers] probably felt isolated in it.' SW3 acknowledged that it was 'a strange, artificial place. I think, particularly, for women who didn't have a lot of contact with home.' In some cases, a young mother-to-be had not told her family she was there and enlisted friends to post letters to their family from England as part of a complex subterfuge. SW3 offered reflection on the homes:

> *[I never] saw any unkindness there, I have to say. Sometimes some of the Sisters, I mean they weren't trained, so you're dependent on goodness and empathy and everything … I mean they're there because they wanted to, and it was the same with children's homes really. Because, and we all know what has come out of that and all, but churches, in those days, were the only institutions who really provided any kind of care, albeit it wasn't always the most appropriate.*

SW3 discussed the process of adoption, explaining the six-week period of reflection that was enforced by legislation. Thereafter, it would take at least three months before a court hearing. In the meantime, the state would appoint a Guardian ad Litem to ensure that the birth mother had been advised on the process. SW3 explained her understanding that whereas a birth mother could take her new-born child across the border into the Republic of Ireland, no one else could do that if it was for the purpose of adoption. Her adoption agency, for example, could not take a baby to a home in the Republic.

In conclusion, SW3 reflected on whether or not social workers had an agenda: did they, for example, sometimes feel that a baby would be better off in a 'good home' than with its birth mother?

> *I think we're all, I think we all have to be aware of own agendas, be they hidden or, you know, and a lot of people in that time, in that culture, would have thought, look, this woman's … and also you have to think way back to the early days. Women who had babies were considered not quite right. You know, like I'm going back to the thirties, forties like. In other words they, they weren't fit to be out, as it were. You know, so there's always been, its … culture changes a lot, and our culture has changed a lot.*

She felt that in the past social workers often 'made a judgement for a mother: "Look, you're better off, that's how it is … And sure, look, the baby's going to a lovely home and they'll be very well to do."' She explained that 'there was a perception that adopters were always very well to do. Which was not the case. But again, it's a fantasy. So we often lived in a bit of a fantasy world. We're the adults here and we're telling you you're better off.'

TESTIMONY FROM BIRTH MOTHERS THAT IS CRITICAL OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD SISTERS' MOTHER AND BABY HOMES

This chapter now turns to testimony from birth mothers (or their family members) who are critical of Marianvale or Marianville. It includes serious allegations against one individual who is now deceased. The allegations are consistent and from a number of individuals who were in the same mother and baby home at different times. This is just one element of traumatic testimony that surfaced in these accounts. As SW3 indicated in her interview, the experience of having a baby adopted is detrimental to the mental health of birth mothers and there was abundant evidence of that in these interviews.

Other critical testimony focuses on issues such as inappropriate physical labour for heavily pregnant women; judgemental and dismissive attitudes held towards the unmarried mothers; lack of psychological support (including for victims of sexual abuse); limited antenatal information; an authoritarian and cold regime. There is also a critique of one of the children's homes, to which babies were sent from the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. Significantly this latter point chimes with an account offered by one of the birth mothers whose general tone towards the Good Shepherd Sisters is a favourable one.

SS

SS was a resident in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the mid-1970s.[372] Her testimony included some very traumatic accounts of her experience. She lived in an area that was heavily impacted by the Troubles. She explained that there was very little sex education either at school or home. Her mother's chosen method was simply to terrify her daughter by telling her that 'if girls did bad things they were taken into a room in the hospital and suffocated between two mattresses.'

After leaving school, she had a relationship with a man in his thirties and became pregnant. The man tried to arrange an abortion for SS but she eventually explained to her father that she was pregnant. She explained how upset she was by her mother's reaction, which was to speedily place her in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. Her first impressions of the home were of locked doors and 'the corridor, and how dark it was, and how high, highly polished it was, and how the wood was dark, and the place looked … scary.' The paperwork was filled out to arrange for her welfare payments to go the Good Shepherd Sisters and then she was shown upstairs to her bedroom with 'a wardrobe, and a bed, and a dressing table, and plain … it would have reminded you of cubicles going to the loo, that way, only a bit bigger.'

SS has few positive memories of her time in the home. Watching TV, including the Eurovision Song Contest, was a rare highlight and she remembered that the food 'was wholesome … you were not starved. There was … It was homemade jam, homemade marmalade, whatever fruit, vegetables was in season, we got it.' Her negative memories were much more lengthy and substantial. SS recalled that after having a bath 'you had to leave it sparkling clean, and I can remember that there was shouts and screams if this was not done.' The expectant mothers sat in the dining room and 'made dolls, sewing clothes on Irish Cailín dolls, and I hate the sight of them.' Meanwhile other residents

372 Interview with SS, conducted by Ida Milne, 6 July 2018.

were 'hand embroidering, eh, hankies with the shamrock, and these were all sold, on. I eh ... and that is what you done, all day long. You went and said your rosary, you said your morning prayers, your rosary.'

SS felt that the nuns were 'very rough. And nothing was explained to you.' She was particularly upset by one experience with a nun, now deceased, who is anonymised within this report as Sister Z (because she will feature again in other testimony):

> *One nun who must have been a midwife, I would have said, she examined me a couple of times, but she was very rough, because I can remember being very, very sore afterwards, and it was like, when I went "Oooh!" When I cried out in pain, she said, "Well maybe if you'd kept your legs closed, this wouldn't have happened to you."*

SS spoke of two separate occasions where after psychical examination by Sister Z she 'felt humiliated, and violated, and scared ... on both times, I wanted to say, "No, get away from me!" And both times I just said nothing, so both times they just said "Well you deserved what you got." And the whole time I was waiting for people to come and take me away, and put me between two mattresses and suffocate me': a reference to the ominous old wives' tale through which her mother had cryptically warned her against sex. SS also maintained that she had been asked by the same Sister to scrub the floor of the home even though even though she was close to giving birth. This only stopped when a second nun saw her and intervened, saying "Get up off your knees, and don't be doing that. What are you doing that for? Go down and get a cup of tea and get your feet up, and I'll make you a wee bit of toast. And phone for the ambulance."

SS remembers that the nuns did not discuss a potential adoption with her as 'the social worker did all that.' It was the social worker's view that she was not mature enough to cope. The issue of adoption resurfaced at the end of her stay in the hospital, when SS received a visit from an official who told her she was being discharged and was going home but that her daughter was scheduled to go to a baby home. SS disputed this and was confused about who had signed the appropriate consent for this. Although she did recall that 'my mummy says to me "Sign that, you have to sign that", and I signed it.' Unfortunately, what was signed on this occasion was not clarified. She reflected her reading ability at that point was 'not very good', although it is better now because she went back in to education in later years.

SS accompanied her child to the baby home and was shocked to hand the infant over 'to this ... wee girl that was no more older than I was.' SS returned to the home to see her daughter on a number of occasions, although she was not allowed to nurse her. On one such occasion she was alarmed by the sight of her daughter being sick and then having her feeding bottle pushed into her mouth by the young woman assigned to nurse her. She then observed a nappy change and noted that her daughter's bottom was 'red raw ... Her wee nappy was soaking, and her bum was raw ... And I couldn't do a thing. I couldn't lift her, I couldn't love her.' With her emotions racing SS returned home where she found her father and convinced him that the baby should come home. She retraced her steps back to the baby home:

> *[I] passed everybody, went up, lifted her, changed her. Took, stripped everything off her, nothing belonging to them, and I dressed my baby girl, and I wrapped her up and I kissed her, and I loved her, and I kissed her, and kissed her and said you will never leave me again, and I walked out and they says to me "You can't do that!" And I says to them, "She is my daughter!"*

SS took her baby to the hospital where staff were concerned that the baby girl had gained only two pounds in weight since her birth. Her family received a visit from Social Services and the police as the result of SS's actions. She recalls that 'my mommy sent them away with a flea in their ear. I think it was maybe adrenaline , I don't know what, or maybe it was she seen me so sad.' Afterwards the authorities 'kept a check, the health visitor would have kept a check to see how I was coping and all the rest of it, but because I was with my mommy and daddy and they had the responsibility, they didn't take too much, you know, like, they just did the normal checks.' SS remained in the family home until her daughter was a teenager at which point she established her own home.

GT

GT was interviewed in a venue close to her home.[373] She is a birth mother who was placed in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home when she became pregnant at the age of 17 during the 1970s. Her journey to the home began when her family took her to see the parish priest after her condition became known.

GT was another interviewee whose narrative made clear the trauma that she experienced. She described how her 'mind just went numb' as she listened to the priest 'rambling on about … you know it was a sin and what … And I really didn't get a word in to say to him exactly what had happened … He was really just dictating.' GT explained the priest 'really, really made me feel that … it was like I committed murder.'

A GP was then called to examine GT to confirm her pregnancy. She was uncertain about what was going on as she 'knew very little about sex or anything at that time … A child of eleven nowadays would know more.' Again, her trauma was conveyed in GT's description of the events; 'my mind was starting to shut down at this stage … I was kind of semi-conscious, you know? And he had told me to, to lie down on the bed. I was sitting on the side of the bed and he told me to lie down on the bed, and he kind of pushed my legs up on the bed. And what happened after that, I just found myself like a … as if I was on a piece of, you know, floating on water.'

Following this, GT spent most of her time at home until Social Services arranged for her to enter a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. Recalling the journey to the home, in a social worker's car, GT said:

> *It's quite a distance from here to *location of mother and baby home*. I suppose it's about seventy miles. And that seventy miles was like a thousand. I didn't know how long it was going to take, how long I was going to be there for. Nobody explained to me how long I was going be there for. Absolutely nothing. Nothing was explained to me. So the journey, going up, was very lonely. Because there was not much conversation, there was no conversation at all … I was very emotional inside. And I couldn't [talk] to anybody because I felt everybody was my enemy. You know, everybody was totally against me. And there was just nobody. There was absolutely nobody for me.*

373 Interview with GT, conducted by Olivia Dee (with Sean O'Connell), 8 May 2019.

She recalls that the social worker gave a welfare payment book to the Sister in charge who then began to read the 'rules of the house.' This included not using her full name and not revealing personal details to the other pregnant women in the home. In addition, GT explained that:

> *I was to keep everything to myself, completely everything to myself. I wasn't allowed to have much conversation with, with the girls, and there was rules of cleaning, and times for getting up, and you had to obey … So, basically everything was stripped. Everything was stripped from you whenever you went in. So I, I had to do that. And again that was another knockback for me. That kind of knocked me back another, into a further, I suppose another further piece of trance that I was already in.*

GT remembers early morning starts because the women and girls 'had to go to mass.' The women 'sat at the back of the chapel every morning and the nuns sat at the front.' After this, there was breakfast 'which consisted, probably, if we were lucky, a boiled egg and, and a slice of bread.' She did not remember much else about the food but did recall that 'I went in there and I was, I suppose I was about, maybe I would have been about ten stone, ten and a half stone at the time … And when I came out of it I'd lost about three stone.' Chores included washing, scrubbing and cleaning as well as some work in the garden. GT explained that 'even like later on, whenever, you know, it was, the girls were heavily pregnant; they were still doing that heavy work.'

GT spent a several months in the home before her child's birth, which was a very traumatic episode that involved a C-section. She does not recall signing any consent for this or being told that it was to be performed. GT was sedated during the operation. On awakening, the baby was nowhere to be seen and she explained that 'I didn't even know what sex the baby was for a couple of days after'; at which point, a nurse said "Do you know you had a baby boy?"

GT is upset that she had no chance to see the baby and feels that inaccurate statements were included in her hospital notes, which advised nursing staff that she did not want to her son following his birth. She also feels she had very poor post-natal care and the invasive nature of the surgery has had a long-term impact on her health and wellbeing. Moreover, she recalls that physical chores continued when she returned to the mother and baby home even though she had had a C-section. Her view was that 'they didn't care if you were, if you were, two legs were missing. You know? And you were only a piece of meat. What they wanted was, was gone, you know? The baby was gone.'

Within the mother and baby home itself, GT explained that she had experienced abusive behaviour. She told the researchers that this included being prodded or being 'pulled by our ears.' Most upsetting for GT was one particular episode:

> *One of the nuns had called me out, and I could see her, sometimes, that she would have been, maybe it was because I was so quiet, and again, she may have taken other ones out. I don't know. And she asked me to come to the showers with her. I thought I was, I was going actually to clean the showers again, you know? And she told me to take off my clothes and take a shower. And she watched me taking that shower. And she just walked out … No explanation. There was nothing. I mean, and you daren't ask. She just took me in, told me to take a shower, and she left. She watched me taking the shower. She'd ask me to turn round, and she just looked at me and left. And I was, at this stage, about six months pregnant, and left. Whether she got a high in it or what, I don't know, but I was totally degraded after that.*

GT explained that she was afraid of this particular nun and this was related to 'the control they had over you, you know?' She explained that this feeling was deepened by her isolation in the home: 'I didn't trust anybody that I could have talked to … nobody wanted to know how I was feeling.' Family members did make 'a couple of visits' but GT recalled that these were 'mostly supervised.'

Reflecting further on these events, GT offered further evidence of their traumatic impact: 'I actually sometimes feel that the light inside me has gone. I used to cry. I used to cry, and then I got very angry. And then I cried again. It was like a, a circle. That I was going round and round and I just couldn't get off that hobbyhorse.'

On leaving the mother and baby home, GT recalls being told 'just never to talk about it … The nuns had told me that I was never to breathe a word of what happened in the home.' Eventually she met her child when her son came to find her. She explained that 'we're friends, you know, but it's like walking on eggshells.' GT vividly relayed the emotional difficulties she faced in this encounter and in the events that created it:

> *This person came and met me, you know, this young man. But my baby was gone. And to this day, my baby is gone. Like, we're never going to have a bond, ever. Like with your mother and child bond. It doesn't matter what I tell, what I say, I can never be even, I'm not even grandmother to the children. And I don't, I'm not prepared to tell children lies, so therefore I find it hard to go down and even visit, because they don't know who I am. I'm another secret. You're just wondering where, when is this ever going to end for me? You know? Just for having a baby my life has been a mental health issue from the day I went in there. And before I went in there I was a normal person, and I came out there with a mental health issue which was driven into me. It was driven into me. The nightmares that I have, that I waken up with every day, it's like a maze trying to find my way out. And I just really wonder who's going to actually take us seriously? Who's actually going to sit down and say "These women have been through enough?" It affects your whole body. It affects your mind. It affects your concentration and everything you go to do. But I don't think we're being taken seriously. It's like a root that has grew inside me. It's a nasty root that has come from my toes right up to my head, and it has branched out even to my fingers. It has caused pain in every joint in my body, and that pain doesn't stop. In fact I, you know, the experience that I, I go to bed and think is this a nightmare? This is a nightmare. This is just a complete dream. This is something like, you know, I feel like I'm still sleeping and I'm going to waken up. It, it's hard to believe that you actually went through something like that. No, these things actually happened in Northern Ireland.*

GT believes that she was offered no options other than adoption by the Sisters or social workers. She explained that the Good Shepherd Sisters' attitude was that 'what you've done is a sin and you'll have to repent for what you've done.' GT recalls being told that her baby was better of going to 'a good Catholic home.' This, she views as 'brainwashing you into, like making you feel that, you know, that you weren't worthy to raise your child.'

GT maintains that she did not sign any form consenting to the adoption of her son. An adoption form does exist and would have been overseen by social workers and the courts and GT has seen it. However, she told the researchers "I have evidence that's not my signature [on the form].' GT argued that her case is not an isolated one: 'I say, this is only the top of the iceberg. There's a hell of a lot more evidence out there, and deeper stuff.' Alluding to some of the media stories that have emerged about mother and baby homes in recent years, she observed that there is 'no difference in Northern

Ireland than that in the Republic of Ireland. It mightn't be on such a, as big a scale, but like, I can only tell you about what happened, mostly what happened in *location of Good Shepherd mother and baby home redacted*.'

GT observed that the secrecy instilled in everyone in the homes was designed to ensure that families did not know the full reality of life within them. If they did, they would not have put their daughters 'into the fire.' GT feels that families were misled when they were informed that 'we were going to be looked after. The picture was painted that, you know, and things were going to be okay. We'll handle this, you know, we'll take care of it. They handled it alright, in their way. Everything was taken out of your hands.'

Towards the end of her testimony, GT said 'there has to be some kind of an investigation. I want, I want justice ... I want Northern Ireland to be told the truth about what happened. You know, I want people to go "Oh my god!" You know, well people out there don't know.' However, she is not confident that a public inquiry will be the outcome and is suspicious of the authorities and institutions.

HS

HS became pregnant in the 1980s at the age of 19.[374] Initially she faced 'the fear of being pregnant in the first place, having to hide it for six months.' She confided eventually in a family member who told HS's mother and she found herself sitting about waiting for her father to arrive home from work, at which point she would learn her fate. Was she to be allowed to remain in the family home?

> *That's what my mother said to me. She come into work and says to me "Is it true? Well you'll have to stay here. Don't come home till I have a word with your father and see what your father says." So I'm sitting in work till eight o'clock at night waiting to see if I have a home to go to.*

Very shortly after this, HS was taken to her GP for a check-up and it was he who explained two options had been arranged for. This involved either, going to stay with a family in Dublin, or into a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in Northern Ireland. HS explained that this was taken out of her hands by her parents: 'At no stage did anybody discuss that I could actually keep my son. The main intention of sending me there was that the baby was to be born and it would be taken away, and that was it. And that was the last I would ever see of him.' Her parents never discussed the option of keeping the baby then or at any time thereafter. Nor did the nuns, although HS believed 'they were obviously having this discussion with my parents or somebody. Nobody was having the conversations with me at all. I was just the carrier of a baby that somebody was going to take away and do whatever they wanted with.'

Having chosen the second option reluctantly, HS was driven to the mother and baby home by her parents and was greeted by a nun who explained a basic set of rules with a strong focus on not discussing personal details with other residents.

374 Interview with HS, conducted by Oliva Dee, 29 October 2018.

Describing the daily routine, HS recalled getting up around 7 am. She thinks she had to tidy her cubicle at this stage and then come down for breakfast. Later there were cleaning duties and HS has strong memories of cleaning a big marble hall 'with like a nail brush that size, very heavily pregnant.' She felt this was to help her 'repent for your sins' basically. HS remarked that cleaning floors' would have been OK with a mop bucket and a mop. But when you're down on your flipping hands and knees doing it with a nail brush and a ******* cloth, it's a different story like.'

She also recalled that on Sunday morning they went to church in the local chapel but 'had to wait till kind of Mass was nearly starting … We were never allowed to sit down in the chapel. We always had to stand at the back door… because again, everybody would know where you were from and you were sinners and you were unmarried mothers.'

HS provides a sense of the traumatised disconnection that she experienced: 'I think I met my social worker twice, but again even that was … it was just, it's almost like a blur, it's like a blur. It's about six months of your life that you just went through the motions of something that somebody else wanted [you] to do.'

HS recalls that the meals 'weren't great, but it was food.' The pregnant women were allowed to leave the home at pre-arranged times, but only in pairs and 'you were limited as where you were allowed to go to.' At other points, HS observed that 'all doors, all everything was locked down.' A regular destination was the local post office to cash their welfare allowance, out of which the women were given pocket money 'to get your toiletries and if you wanted a few treats … [or] to get yourself the fresh fruit and veg that you're supposed to be eating.'

HS explained that she did not feel able to challenge any rules and regulations because of the 'fear that you were going to be put out on the street' have 'nowhere to go.' She felt 'totally vulnerable, totally powerless to do anything.' She felt 'very isolated.' HS feels that the mother and baby home offered the opportunity for her pregnancy 'to be brushed under the carpet' and to 'take away the sin', with the promise that HS could 'just go home and live a normal life.' However, her experience was that in reality 'it doesn't happen like that. Like life's just not like that, you know.' She is angry that there was never any emotional help or assistance offered in the home: 'You were never sat down and asked, you know, how you felt. You know, you were never told there was another option. You know, options weren't discussed … It's as if you were kidnapped in the middle of the night, dumped in a home for a period of time till a baby was born.'

After her baby was born, HS found herself sitting with no baby, 'on a ward with four other women and they all had babies.' She was approached by a nurse who asked said "Would you like to see the baby?" HS 'didn't know if I was allowed to, I didn't know. I still didn't know what I was doing. No idea what I was doing.' However, she replied "Yes, I'd love to see him" and then went down to the nursery for five minutes. HS thinks that her mother was there at this point but that, again, there was no discussion about what was planned.

However, the day after seeing her son for the first time, HS summoned up the courage to phone her parents, having borrowed some coins, for the phone box, from the woman in the next bed. She told her parents "Look, I'm taking this baby home, whether you like it or you don't." Although she feels her parents were unhappy with her decision, she did return to the family home with her child. She also returned to the workplace where she was based before the pregnancy. Her supportive employer said 'Look, we know your situation or whatever. You go and do, you know, whatever you need to do

and whenever you're ready to come back to work the job's still here for you.' This was the 1980s and the attitudes, at least in some quarters, were changing. HS struggled financially to support her son. It was also a struggle socially and culturally given the horrible attitudes of some individuals. She often hesitated before taking up an invitation to go out for an evening with friends 'because you're always frightened of somebody coming up and calling you a slag.' She ruefully compared this with the fact that the unmarried father could 'walk away scot-free.'

HS reported her upset about friends who 'sort of drift off too because they don't want to be associated with you. Do you know, it's like oh God we can't be seen with her type thing.' Factors such as this obviously led to the degree of 'humiliation' that is a legacy of these events for HS that has impacted her self-confidence and her trust in others at moments in her life. This element of her testimony appeared in many of the testimonies. The damage to relationships with parents (who let their daughters go through the trauma of entering the mother and baby homes – whether Catholic, Protestant or operated by the state) was a particular trigger for feelings like those described by HS.

Reflecting on her pathway to the mother and baby home, HS offered up a complex range of factors. She felt her 'parents could have given me a choice' but acknowledged that behind their thinking was 'the religion, the religion played a big part in it and I think it was the fear of the Catholic Church that made so many Catholic families push their daughters in that direction.' HS also noted the role of 'the state institutions, the government, everybody else was involved. Everybody is answerable in some measure to the situation.' At the very basic level of her child's conception, HS reflected 'I have to take responsibility for the fact that I got pregnant in the first place. I have to take responsibility for that. But it happens. The other person who was involved with me also has to take responsibility for that. That didn't happen.'

The existence of the research is, for HS, 'a bit of a relief' and she also had a practical suggestion for Northern Ireland's politicians.

> *You see the whole carry on with Stormont and all the rest, whatever's going on, there are people out there that genuinely need help to get over this … there's women out there that are really struggling with this. And if the financial help is there to help them with psychologists or whatever help can be offered, give it to them. That's the least you could do. You know, you can't take back thirty-odd years. You can't change it. It's there, but make the best of whatever's left.*

BC

BC entered a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the mid-1970s while still a schoolgirl.[375] Tragically, she had been 'groomed and raped by an older man', leading to her pregnancy. Unfortunately, her parents 'were absolutely horrified because they thought obviously, I was a promiscuous child … There was assumption, there was assumption that it was my fault.' As far as she is aware her mother then 'contacted the church, the priest, it was all organised.' BC remembers 'a lot of talking behind closed doors, it never ever included me.'

375 Interview with BC, conducted by Ida Milne, 1 October 2018.

BC recalled the 'strict routine' in the mother and baby home. After breakfast, much of the time was passed on domestic duties: 'there was no cleaners in the place, you had to do everything. It was all on rota. And there were dining rooms. They were obviously very highly polished floors … highly polished tables, silverware.' As was the case with so many of the birth mothers from across the different mother and baby homes, BC remembers cleaning while down on her hands and knees. BC sensed that 'easier jobs were given to people who behaved properly, who didn't step out of line and then more difficult jobs would be given to people who didn't … who didn't behave properly. So there was certainly a rewards system by less work.'

BC recalled an older woman who was 'very cheeky with the nuns. And I say cheeky I mean, she stood up for herself, and they really gave her a hard time.' This was represented 'psychologically not physically.' She reflected on the broad class differences between her teenage self and the social worker who was 'really, really very posh', indicating the social hierarchy that existed within the system, particularly in the case of very young women.

BC described the cubicles in which the pregnant women slept as being like 'horses' stalls.' Part of her testimony was the recollection of Sunday visits to the home by her older sister and, less frequently, by her mother. Striking imagery was conjured up to describe how she felt about her time in the home. It again invoked the sense of trauma, represented by being frozen and powerless, that was a feature of so many of the testimonies. For BC, the experience was:

> *Horrendous … it's like suspended animation, it's like something that you would see in The Matrix … you're there and life doesn't exist outside of it, and you're in this place and you have no power and you have no self-determination. You know, you can't choose what you do, you can't choose what you think, you just go in there and you're a robot and you do what's told and whatever.*

BC described herself as 'a very fair person' and for that reason reflecting on the nun in charge of the home she said 'I don't think she was, at heart, a bad person, but she just didn't have any empathy or love or concern in her.' However, like SS, BC offered testimony on the nature of gynaecological examinations she received whilst in the home from Sister Z (now deceased):

> *It depended on what mood … and it wouldn't always be everyone … and she would call you to a particular room and people would come down and say "Sister Z needs to see you." And it was always in the evenings. And you would go up and she would say "I need to do an internal examination to see how much you're dilated and whether everything's healthy up there." And she did that on the regular would-be basis, to not all of us, most of us. And … I blanked … I've blanked out … I remember the examinations and I remember feeling really uncomfortable during them and they seemed to go on a long time. But anyway I didn't realise at the time what it was because I had no notion of sex abuse or anything like that.*

BC reflected on this experience in the mother and baby home over a decade later when she was having her second baby. She recalled that 'this very slow realisation started to come, and I was thinking God they've completely changed how they look after pregnant women. And I remember thinking at the time, oh obviously that was very intrusive, what had happened in the mother and baby home. Looking back now, BC concludes 'I realise it was abuse … sexual abuse … I remember thinking to myself … this is when I was pregnant with *name of second child redacted* "God,

that was very intrusive what they did, those internal examinations they give us twice a week."' BC concluded that the person involved in the examinations on her (and others, too, she believes) 'used … us young girls for sexual gratification.'

BC gave birth alone and experienced one of 'the most cruel regimes I've ever come across in terms of the nurses' at the maternity ward. She overhead one nurse talking to another unmarried mother who was screaming out with labour pains telling her "You'll just have to behave yourself. When you conceived this baby it wasn't sore going in!"

BC had a baby boy and explained that 'I never was given an option other than give him up for adoption, and that was done through social services and the Catholic Adoption Society.' She recalls a process that reflects the one that the social workers' testimonies described. She had an 'interview after it had all been done and dusted because they weren't sure whether I should have the child adopted' and that 'I had to sit on a panel of some kind.' The details are vague and like a lot of traumatised individuals, BC realises that 'I think I've blocked a lot of that.' She traced the origins of this psychological defence mechanism to the moment where she last saw her son, in the hospital to which she was taken for treatment in the wake of the labour process. After he was taken away she remembers thinking:

> *'This is too painful.' So I just shut. And I literally, I went to the other side of the bed, and I was gone. Every … I just literally put a shutter on it. Now that's not to say that I haven't cried about it since, but I literally, psychologically put a shutter down on it. Only way to function. It was the only way I was going to survive.*

BC described the long-term impact upon her of these events. She reflected that this was something that 'your own family did to you, your community did to you, your own church did to you … because of Catholic shame.' She felt the Catholic Church had failed to respond adequately to the needs of a girl 'who had been raped, and was left almost comatose, not speaking, in a place … taken out her family home and put in this place.' BC concluded sadly that all this 'has damaged me irreparably' and she explained the problems she has had fighting depression and in some of her relationships, whilst also relating details of her own successful career and those of her children.

Like a number of interviewees, BC reported encountering unnecessary difficulties when trying to trace her son. She feels that her trauma was exacerbated by this. The process was 'like a puzzle' and she felt that the Catholic Adoption Agency 'ran me a merry tune because I didn't actually realise and still don't know if I have any rights in terms of … of freedom of information of getting my file now.' BC found it such a difficult process, that she gave up on it and is upset that despite the fact that 'obviously I'm very damaged by what happened, you know, psychologically … they didn't give any support whatsoever and … just made life very difficult for me.'

ID

This woman from the Republic of Ireland had experienced spells in two different mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland during the early 1960s.[376] Her recollection is that in both homes she was the only resident who came from the Republic of Ireland. On the second occasion, her stay was extended via a period of time spent in the laundry that was part of the Good Shepherd convent complex. Her first pregnancy occurred when ID was still at school with the second pregnancy five years later.

Her first experience of mother and baby homes began when, from her boarding school, ID wrote a letter to her mother in which she remarked that she had missed a period. Her mother's immediate response was to have her examined, revealing the pregnancy. Her parents then sent ID on the journey north to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. As a girl educated at a convent school some aspect of her experience in the home 'were quite normal because it was so similar to boarding school.' ID observed that 'there were no problems of any sort while I was there' and is of the opinion that the other residents were also 'satisfied with their conditions and their treatment.' However, ID did observe that she might have received 'special treatment' because she was from 'down South' and her stay was not financed by the state. She assumes that 'my parents may have had to pay something which is why I got the special treatment.' This included being placed in a single room rather than a dormitory. Her room had a wash-hand basin, so although she 'went to the bathroom for my shower or my bath' ID recalled that 'I could wash myself in my room.' To take a bath, the women had to sign up on the rota that allotted them one per week. ID also remembers that there was a woman working in this home that would go out and buy things for her if she needed them. Her mother had given her some money and she remembers asking for pepper, with which to season her food.

ID also recalls having a private room at the local maternity hospital and remembers that 'they brought a menu around every day. And I was so impressed with this, I wanted to stay there.' ID had a baby girl and was 'very pleased as someone told me it was easier to have girls adopted than boys, particularly in America.'

During her stay at the home there was 'certainly no counselling … no talk of what happens next. We were told on X day your family will come and you will go home so be packed and prepared and ready.' Twelve days after her first baby was born, ID and her mother drove to Dublin and the child was placed in the care of an adoption society that ran its own infant hospital. She also signed a number of legal forms at this point at her mother's urging. ID became emotional recalling this information as it reminded her of the lack of 'control' that she had during this seminal period in her life. Faced with a series of legal documents during the meeting, ID read the first of them, which dealt with an insurance policy for her baby and brought her face to face with the reality of the situation. She could not bring herself to read any more of the documents and, feeling numb, signed them all. ID's account is probably fairly typical of the nature of 'consent' that was given by many birth mothers who gave up a child for adoption.

Five years later, when she was in her early twenties, ID became pregnant for a second time and she was sent north again. This was 'to get me as far away possible as I could from county *name

376 Interview with ID, conducted by Ida Milne, 30 May 2018.

of county redacted*' and ensure her anonymity. The second mother and baby home was 'not as nice' as the first, 'but it was perfectly fine … The building was older, the conditions were a little bit rougher. There was more dormitories, less single rooms. But, it was adequate for the job it was doing.' Reflecting on her time in the mother and baby homes, ID said 'we did jobs but apart from cleaning our room there was not an awful lot of jobs that we did.' She remembered that 'we knitted for our own babies and we knitted for other babies, and we sewed for them.' ID viewed this as 'an occupational therapy' rather than work. Chores included cleaning the rooms and kitchen 'as one would any place that one lived.' Having experienced the regimented discipline of a Catholic girls' boarding school, ID did not 'remember any of the nuns being worse than any of the ones in boarding school.'

However, her education meant 'I had all the guilt that the nuns put on you' and this fed her belief that the situation she was in 'was my own fault and this was my punishment. And I deserved it.' At the time, ID compared herself with her sister who was 'a virgin when she was married, and so you know, she was entitled to the good things of life, and I wasn't. God, those nuns did a good job didn't they?' In discussing the various nuns she encountered in the two Good Shepherd Convents in Northern Ireland in which she was placed, ID cited two who were 'nice' and others who she categorised as 'petty nasty' rather than 'nasty, nasty'… they weren't cruel, not deliberately cruel. They were not pleasant, far from it.' One example of petty nastiness, remembered by ID came when a nun in the second mother and baby home made the other residents aware that she was having her second 'illegitimate' baby. This marked her out as 'a more fallen woman than the rest of them.'

ID was not overly excited by the culinary element of her experience, describing the food as 'stodgy and bland.' However, she felt that the pregnant women 'were not underfed.' The facilities for education and entertainment were poor: 'you had no library. That might give you notions above your station. Ah, you had no entertainment, and yet you were not allowed to talk about yourself. You know, I never saw anybody play ball, or, or … I never swam, there was no such thing as chess or draughts, or Ludo, or packets of cards.' ID does not remember either of the mother and baby homes having a television, although one had a radio.

ID offered an interesting reflection on the requirement that the young expectant mothers not discuss their family background:

> *At the time we were told that was because later on, in later years, when we met outside, that we would not be able to identify each other, but I think it was more of a control thing, that they were taking as much as they could away from us. No, you don't talk about your family, you don't talk about your home, you don't talk about your friends, you don't talk about anything that, that has happened to you up to today. It is only from today on that you may discuss, so you can discuss what you are going to have for your lunch today but you can't discuss what your mother used to give you when you were a child.*

Following the birth of her second baby she travelled, by train, to the Republic of Ireland to hand over her child at a baby home. On this occasion, as with her first child's adoption, ID understands that her parents paid a weekly maintenance fee to the respective baby homes until the adoption was finalised. The sum involved was £2 a week. Following this journey ID returned to the Good Shepherd convent and was placed in its St Mary's Home/Laundry.

LP

LP's testimony could have been placed in the section below from those who offered essentially positive comments on their experience of the Good Shepherd Sisters.[377] Like them, LP spoke with some warmth about individual nuns but there was a darker element to her memories focused upon a number of incidents and the overarching nature of the mother and baby home system. LP was a university student when she became pregnant in the early 1980s. As was the case with a lot of birth mothers who offered their testimony, LP had received little sex education: 'I wasn't sure whether it was pregnancy or it was a tumour? Because I was very naïve. I mean, nobody had ever explained the facts of life to me, apart from what you'd done at school, you know?'

LP went to see a Catholic priest in a parish close to her university. This 'didn't feel comforting' but she suspected that there 'were places for these, you know, unmarried mothers to go' and that 'he would practically be able to help me.' She knew for certain that her parents 'wouldn't want the child. But I also thought that I would be ostracised as well.' By the time that LP revealed her pregnancy to them, she had already arranged to go into a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. In a piece of information that evidences the common practice of illegitimate babies being raised by their grandparents as their own 'late arrival', LP's parents 'told me they were too old to take on a child.'

LP described herself at 'self-sufficient. I think I thought I knew what I was doing.' She decided that the baby was to be adopted and reflected on that decision during her testimony: 'It was definitely the easiest solution for everyone. It was the one that caused least disruption to everyone. It was the one that kept everything secret and quiet and caused them the least embarrassment.'

LP described her interaction with the social worker who took on her case and felt that there was a conflict of interest for the social worker because 'the people that were offering you advice actually worked for the adoption agency – the church-funded, led, whatever – adoption agency.' She suspected conflict of interest might have motivated the opinion that 'this baby ought to go to a good, loving Catholic home – but not mine.'

Asked if this statement meant she felt pressured into consenting to adoption, LP commented:

> *I'm trying to be fair, here, because … It's easy in hindsight to think certain things, but … I mean her mission was to get babies for … Catholic parents. To get Catholic children for Catholic couples that couldn't have children of their own, you know? I probably gave her the impression that that's what I wanted, because it was – as we said before – it was the easiest thing to do.*

Discussing the mother and baby home, LP's first impression was that it 'was very austere. It was a very clinical place with dormitories and old-fashioned bathrooms and things.' However, she said of the two nuns who managed the home 'couldn't fault either of them. They never did anything hurtful or anything to me.' In her view it 'was the system that was wrong. They were servants of the system.' LP's testimony at this point reflected that of Sister 1. She said 'I felt that I was safe now because I was somewhere where I would be safely with my pregnancy and it could be resolved.'

377 Interview with LP, conducted by Olivia Dee, 4 January 2018.

However, not everything was perfect during her time in the home. The GP was not 'particularly nice.' However, of more concern to her was the behaviour of one priest, who LP could not identity, who heard the pregnant women's confessions at one point. LP recalled being asked to:

> *confess all my sins about what an awful girl I was, and … And I remember at the time him – which I thought was really odd – this man of God who's supposed to be celibate, asking me what I had … where I'd had sex and whether I'd masturbated or anything like that, which I thought was really … really odd. Yeah. To divulge all my, all my awful, awfulness so that he could forgive me … He might have been a funny old boy, you know? There's a few of them about, I'm afraid, in the Catholic Church … but anyway, I found it very odd and I felt very … upset by it.*

LP also reported that her chores included 'scrubbing floors, cleaning loos' even when she was heavily pregnant. However, her reflection about this was somewhat conflicted by the contrasting emotions she was going through both at [the] time and when narrating her testimony to the interviewer. LP did not consider this to be tough because she was such a young woman and reasoned that 'pregnancy's not an illness, it's just a process.' In one way 'cleaning their toilets wasn't a big thing, really, because look what they were doing for me?' However, she also reasoned that 'looking back on it, it was very oppressive. Looking back on it, there was lots of girls that … their self-esteem was so low … [who] were treated badly by having to do those things … Cleaning somebody else's toilet is sort of, you know, it's indicative of what your position in life is – or what your position in their society is.'

LP described a diverse group of other women in the home.' One was 'a twelve-year-old girl there who'd been raped by her father – who was probably still sitting in the front row of the church that weekend.'

In the final stages of her interview LP outlined how she was given no option but to sign the consent papers and how this damaged her relationship with her parents. Moreover, 'their Catholicism was so ingrained they just couldn't get over it. They couldn't see beyond it.' The adoption has also impacted on her mental health over the years and a particular sad aspect, for LP, is that her son has not come forward to seek her out. She articulated the thoughts of many of the birth mothers encountered during the research:

> *But there's always this feeling that you don't deserve to be in his life … That you don't deserve to be known to him, or … that you don't deserve a lot of stuff in life. And I mean that's really what I've battled with for thirty-odd years, is that it has had a flavour through all of my life.*

Despite a good marriage and family and career, LP still feels like a piece of the puzzle is missing:

> *I don't think I've coped with it, ever, very well. It's always been there every single day. Where is he? What's he doing? Is he married? Have I got grandchildren that I don't know about? But do I have the right? Do I have the right to upset his life by trying to find him? And the answer has always been, no. You don't, because you gave him away. You weren't strong enough to stand up to them. You didn't say to them at the time: "Hold on a minute. Why is this the best thing to do? Who says this is the best thing to do?" But they did, obviously, because they wanted my child.*

As stated at the outset of the summary of LP's testimony, a decision could have been taken to place this with the testimonies that was more overtly positive about the Good Shepherd mother and baby home. After all, one of LP's concluding remarks was about the nuns: 'The nuns I couldn't fault. I mean

I couldn't. They showed me love and care – they showed me far more than my parents did.' However, her testimony still revealed a lot of hard-hitting criticism of the homes, even if the she valued her relationship with the individual nuns she encountered.

SC

SC was raised in a children's home and never met her parents.[378] She described some traumatic personal experiences that took place during her time as a child both within the children's home and outside it. These left their mark on SC. She suffers from depression and found it difficult to structure her testimony. This was exacerbated by the fact that her childhood and teens were spent in a series of institutional homes. At the age of sixteen, in the mid-1970s, she found herself working in one of the Good Shepherd laundries after running away from a children's home. The part of her testimony is dealt with elsewhere in this report.

At seventeen, SC became pregnant and, with no family, fell back on the support of the Good Shepherd Sisters: 'I was totally alone, so I had no … I have never met my family. So I had no support as such, you know what I mean.' She regrets having had absolutely no sex education growing up in the Catholic children's home, which was operated by another Order of nuns, and believes she was extremely naïve about pregnancy.

SC's testimony also covered the work tasks that the pregnant women performed. They included 'cleaning floors and doing normal housework stuff, setting the tables and that and you know. You washed your own clothes, stuff like that, you know. They used to have some of us sitting doing, teaching us how to crochet and they'd sell the stuff, you know. That was where I learned how to crochet.' She was also asked to look after the baby of a 15-year-old girl who left the home immediately after giving birth at the local hospital.

After SC had given birth, she does not recall being offered any bed-rest, even though she had had an episiotomy, stitches, and experienced the ordeal of a forceps delivery. She wonders if the lack of opportunity to recover caused the heavy blood clots that she experienced subsequently. SC described the two nuns who worked in the mother and baby home during her time there as being nice. However, she is generally very critical of the system of institutional care which she felt let her down in her childhood. The impression that she left on the interviewer was of a young woman who was so institutionalised by the time that she gave birth that she was incapable of challenging the view that she should not keep her son. He was, therefore, taken into care. This was particularly heart breaking for SC because her own experience of abuse told her how the system could let down children in care.

378 Interview with SC, conducted by Olivia Dee, 17 November 2018.

JP

At the age of seventeen, in the mid-1970s, JP discovered she was pregnant by her fiancée.[379] They separated shortly afterwards and she was ejected from the family home when her father discovered the news, a moment she described very vividly:

> *All hell broke loose in the house. He went mad, called me all the names under the sun, tramps, and everything, "you've let yourself down, you've brought disgrace to our family, what have you done, oh you've destroyed your life" but the roaring and shouting … he says, "get out" - excuse the language please – "get the eff out that door and don't come back, you've brought nothing but bloody shame and disgrace."*

JP turned to the nearest Good Shepherd convent where she had spent time working as a paid employee in the laundry. A nun answered JP's knock on the door and JP recalls saying 'I've walked here and I'm in a bit of trouble, do you think you can help me?' JP describes herself as being naïve, partly because she had no mother from whom to seek counsel. Her mother had left the family home some years earlier. Despite her recent work in the laundry, JP noted no recognition of that factor from the nun's demeanour. Instead she felt like 'I was a bit of dirt … I was treated as if I'd committed a crime', due to what she felt was a callous and cold reception. JP remembers being taken into the convent by the nun and being placed in a dormitory where there was an older woman who was there to take refuge from a violent partner: 'I was just took in, walked down a corridor and the door closed on me … nobody ever said "Are you alright?" Nor does she recall any medical check by a doctor or anyone else being made at this point. JP recalls being in the home for a very short period; a matter of days. During this time, JP alleges that one of the nuns repeatedly put her under psychological pressure to give up her child for adoption. She recalls the Sister in charge telling her that "You've nothing of financial service to give this child, you've no security to give this child, you've nothing to give this child … best thing is if you go to [the] social worker and if you talk to the social worker, we can make arrangements for your child to be adopted."

JP agreed to go and see a social worker 'but not to give my child up. No. Because once I was out that door I wasn't going to go back.' Fortunately, she a saw social worker who was able to arrange Housing Executive accommodation for JP rapidly. However, it would not be ready until the following day and JP maintained that she was fearful that she might be forced to return to the Good Shepherd Convent: 'well I knew it had happened prior to other girls who went, maybe escaped, the police always brought them back.' However, a neighbour took her in for the night before, the next day, JP received the keys to an unfurnished flat and began to plan a new life, which included giving birth to a daughter who has had a successful life of her own. JP feels that she was 'one of the lucky ones' because she got to keep her baby.

379 Interview with JP, conducted by Olivia Dee, 18 September 2018.

IA

IA is the daughter of a woman who was placed in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the early 1960s.[380] She learned the details of this when she became an adult, having been raised by her grandparents as their child. She grew up thinking her birth mother, who is now deceased, was her sister. IA was moved to Fahan as a baby and she speculates that there was a possibility that she be adopted from there by a couple from the USA. However, when her grandfather discovered where she was he went to claim her back and she repeated family folklore suggesting that he may have paid money for this to happen.

IA has a lot of unanswered questions because there are irregularities in the documentation she has in relation to her early life. For example, she has been notified of one recorded birth date in December and another in April. IA is also angry at further inaccuracies she believes exist in her files. For instance, they incorrectly record her grandmother as an unmarried mother and state that an aunt has a mental illness.

A good deal of her birth mother's experience in the mother and baby home is known to IA through another woman who acted as her godmother when she was baptised at the home. It was common practice for another of the home's residents to stand as a godparent for the new-born babies. Her godfather was a priest based locally to the home.

In explaining how her birth mother came to be in the mother and baby home, at the age of nineteen, IA related her belief that her grandparents 'wouldn't have threw her out, rung the priest, or stuff like that. They would have kept things private between themselves.' However, IA has discovered that when her birth mother came home and told them that she was pregnant, her grandmother said "Don't worry, we will sort it out". IA's mother then went to work and confided her news to her supervisor:

> *So her supervisor rung the priest ... and it was the priest then that come out and started to dictate to my grandparents that she would have to do this, and do that, and do the other. So, I suppose that in that day and age they probably thought that there was nothing else they could do. So, she went in there.*

IA's godmother has told her that she was taken from the mother and baby home to Fahan but that her birth mother did not know she was there. She understands that it was a local priest who made her grandfather aware that she was in Fahan. Her grandfather travelled to Donegal to retrieve his new granddaughter. One of his daughters, who travelled to Fahan with him, remembers that this was not achieved without him 'causing a scene' and by him handing 'them a substantial amount of money. I don't know how much, but it was a lot of money.' IA speculated that a court order of some kind would have been necessary to take her across the border to Fahan. However, as the previous chapters on a number of the baby homes demonstrate this does not appear to have been the case in the very many cases where babies travelled from either Mater Dei, Marianvale or Marianville to Fahan. Her enquires with the Family Care Adoption Society have not produced any evidence that satisfies her on this point.

380 Interview with IA, conducted by Ida Milne, 10 July 2018.

IA also maintains that her birth mother did not sign any adoption consent. IA had never discussed this with her birth mother but she offered quite a strong argument on this issue:

> *Even if I had seen the signed consent, I think because of what my godmother told me, and a lot of other mothers what was in there, you know, you were brain washed and forced to sign papers, do you know what I mean? I know, like because, the way I look at it is right, it doesn't add up. If my mother signed something to give me away, my grandfather and grandmother are not going to come and look for me and take me back, do you understand?*

IA's aunt told her that her grandfather made some sort of financial contribution or payment to remove her from Fahan and from this she has speculated that the home 'had me set up to be adopted by an American couple, which I have worked out myself because they charged my grandfather that much money, this American couple must have paid them for me, so I suppose they had to be refunded some way.' She is very unsettled by the thought that she might have been 'bought' and is angry about anyone who may have taken part in any such process. IA feels that young people who are now becoming priests or nuns 'shouldn't have to carry the stigma of all, of their predecessors, you know, it's not fair on them, they didn't do anything wrong. But the people who did do wrong, why don't they just come out and tell the truth. You know, why don't they clear their conscience?'

IA's testimony is similar to elements that appear in many others collected during the research project, she has been forced to speculate on what really happened in her case because of what she feels are gaps in the information about her birth and early life. Many individuals have experienced a similar sense of dissatisfaction about their quest for information about their birth mother, which has increased rather than decreased their anxieties. In some cases, this may well be because full and frank records really do not exist. More generally, a combination of legal restrictions on access to particular forms of data and the continuing responsibility to protect the confidentiality of birth mothers have also exacerbated the frustrations of many individuals seeking the truth about their origins.

KF

KF is another individual whose search for their birth origins were hampered by the problems just discussed (IA).[381] KF is also the daughter of a woman who was sent to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. In this case it was the late 1970s. KF traced and met her birth mother about ten years ago and unearthed some of the details surrounding her pregnancy. KF discussed the emotional issues that both she and her birth mother have faced around revealing each other's existence to other family members, including KF's adoptive mother. Like a lot of people in her position, KF feels guilty about searching for her birth mother when she was raised by a loving woman who she has always called her mum.

KF's birth mother is from the Republic of Ireland and spent her childhood in institutional care. When she was sixteen the nuns who ran the home where she lived found her work as a child minder. The man of the house, KF explained, 'took advantage of her ... You would probably call it rape now.'

381 Interview with KF, conducted by Olivia Dee, 12 October 2018.

Pregnant as a result, they arranged for her to travel the long distance to the Good Shepherd mother and baby home in Northern Ireland where she awaited the arrival of her daughter. This case has parallels with another one that was featured in **Chapter 2** on Marianvale. In that instance another young girl who was made pregnant by an adult male, after the nuns in her industrial school had found her employment in his home, was also sent north to have her baby. In both cases it might be asked whose embarrassment and privacy was protected in such circumstances: the young women or their abusers?

KF's birth mother was 'very, very scared' in her new surroundings and this may have prompted her to run away from the mother and baby home, an escapade that ended rapidly after she was apparently returned by the police. She explained to KF that she remembers working in the mother and baby home and also that the nuns there were nicer than the ones she had experienced in the children's home in the Republic of Ireland. KF does not know if that is a good thing or not, because the ones in Northern Ireland 'were not particularly good to her.'

KF's mother was left on her own, on the maternity ward, for much of the labour process. She was 'basically in a wee room on her own … until it was time that they couldn't leave her any longer.' She contrasts this with a much better experience when having her next child, following her marriage. Then she had 'people coming in and out and checking she was alright.' KF's birth mother signed the adoption consent although initially she did not want to give her up her daughter. But with no family and feeling that there was no adequate benefits system to support them both in the Republic of Ireland she relented. Moreover, 'she says the one thing she didn't want to happen, was for me to have ended up in care the way she had.' Adoption offered a way to avoid that.

On the subject of tracing her birth mother KF was not happy with the way that information was supplied to her once she started making enquiries about her mother. Initially, she was told her birth mother could not be traced but ten years later was told that apparently at her first meeting with a social worker, 'when I was twenty-one … apparently I came across as a bit bitter, apparently … and that was … so they didn't search for her then.' KF is resentful that because of this decision she lost another ten years during which she could have got to know her birth mother. It is notable that this testimony can be cross-referenced with that from the social workers we interviewed who explained to us how they approached 'origins work' and their concerns about the powerful emotions that revolve around family reunions of this kind. However, for KF that approach seemed cruel and controlling, rather than logical and cautious.

KF feels that the Catholic Church owes a lot of apologies to birth mothers. With an element of dark humour, she commented on allegations of trafficking suggesting that in her own case 'as opposed to a baby being sent across the border. The whole package was sent across the border!' KF noted that her distrust in the Catholic Church caused her to mull over a further uncomfortable question:

> *[what] I would like to know out of this too and this sounds awful because I had a lovely childhood and I love my parents, was did my parents have to pay for me? As in, a donation to the church? I would love to know that. And I know it sounds terrible saying 'pay for' you know?*

PN

PN was born in the late 1960s and is the daughter of a woman who had been placed in a Good Shepherd Mother and Baby Home after becoming pregnant to a married man after baby-sitting for his family.[382] She was in her early twenties at this point. PN believes her mother was 'pressurised into going into the home … her brother had took her up there. Because Granny didn't want her because of, obviously, the shame that was brought on … obviously Granny was a very holy person, she worked in the chapel for years. And I suppose whenever mum announced that she was pregnant it was "Take her, get her out of here!"' Moreover, PN's mother visited the local parish priest and he 'advised her to leave the village because she had brought shame.' In this instance, PN's mother faced a perfect storm of moral indignation from two sources that might have been expected to offer comfort rather than condemnation: her mother and her priest.

Under this pressure PN's mother accepted that adoption would happen and the baby was placed with foster parents. Shortly after, however, PN's mother met a new partner and got married. At this point, PN's mother began writing to Social Services to inform them that she would be returning to take her daughter to her new family home. PN has seen a form which does have her mother's 'signature' on it and argues that this is forged. It used a form of her mother's name that she never used. Moreover, having examined the signature, PN is adamant that it 'was not my mum's signature.' She feels that she may have been adopted in those months when she was in foster care if it were not for the fact that she had to have an operation shortly after birth, which she believed delayed the process. Having read her case files, PN feels that her mother had to put up 'a bit of a fight to get me back', because she was being told "Oh you definitely have to be married first … you can't have this child without being married."

PN discussed the trauma that her mother experienced as a result of this process. She feels that it led to her mother embarking on a series of relationships that were not very successful. PN explained to us that this motivated her to offer her testimony, to make it clear that her mum 'didn't do anything wrong. PN is often told "Oh, isn't that lovely that she got you back?", but feels that 'she shouldn't have had to get me back in the first place. It's the fact that she was placed in that home, and them homes should never have ever have been started up at all.' She feels that the Catholic Church was hypocritical 'because they didn't allow the pill or any kinds of contraception in [and] you weren't allowed to have an abortion, but then if the baby was born, stillborn, they wouldn't allow the baby to be buried in consecrated ground.'

TR

TR provided some of the most difficult testimony because it contained allegations that his mother was the victim of a serious sexual assault by three unnamed men who TR was told had access to the Good Shepherd convent in which she was resident.[383] His mother was from the Republic of Ireland and lived there until her mid-thirties. At this point, in the early 1970s, TR believes that his mother's husband had an affair, an outcome of which was that his mother was sent to a Good Shepherd

382 Interview with PN, conducted by Olivia Dee (with Sean O'Connell), 8 May 2019.

383 Interview with TR, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 18 October 2018.

convent in Northern Ireland: 'She turned to her family for help and they sent, they got her sent' to the convent. TR understands that they 'more or less didn't want her.'

At this point in time, she was the mother of three children and they accompanied her. Two of TR's older siblings were adopted but his mother retained her then youngest child (TR was born later). TR's understanding is that his mother experienced ill-treatment whilst in the convent: 'She was kicked herself, whilst cleaning the floors. Kicked and punched, and dragged by the hair. By a nun.' TR explained that 'as a child, you know, growing up ... she used to cry and sit and tell me all this.' Asked if his mother had ever made an official complaint about sexual assault, TR responded 'I don't think so ... No she never made any complaints, but she was telling me a lot of bad things that happened in the place.' However, his own knowledge of this is limited as he was born after his mother left the convent and because she rarely offered any detailed account of her time there. He reflected that 'I don't think it's the sort of thing you would talk about ... when she spoke about it, she was always crying. But if you sort of, spoke about it ... she wouldn't talk.' This factor meant that TR was not clear on how long his mother had spent within the convent or how she came to leave it. Moreover, his older sister was only four at this point and unable to offer any further clarity or detail. Ultimately, this is an allegation that it is impossible to verify.

KO

KO's story is an important one because she is one of the babies born to a birth mother in one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland who ended up being adopted by a couple from the USA.[384] The circumstances in which this took place appear to indicate that it was almost certainly illegal under Northern Ireland law.

KO's mother entered the home prior to giving birth to her in the late 1960s. The baby was born in a private nursing home operated by a different order of nuns. KO's birth mother was from Northern Ireland and perfectly entitled to use the services of a regular NHS hospital and the choice of a private one was not common practice. A few days afterward her birth, KO was moved across the border into the Republic of Ireland. KO received the appropriate birth certificate in Northern Ireland, which correctly recorded her place of birth and parent. However, another birth certificate was generated for her; this one in the Republic. It recorded her birth parents as being the American couple who were soon to adopt her and relocate her to the USA. It also changed her date and place of birth.

Following the death of her adoptive parents, when KO was in her teens, she became curious about her early life. She cannot recall if she approached the Good Shepherd convent or the adoption society/baby home in the Republic of Ireland that was involved in handling her adoption. However, her recollection is that the response was that there were no records related to her case. In 2012, an aunt produced some other paperwork related to her adoption. This included the second (false) birth certificate issued in the Republic of Ireland amongst other items. KO 'was really astounded by the whole ... the documents that seemed to suggest there was movement of me from, over, across borders' This confusing and complex personal documentary evidence led KO to speculate that 'this was probably not a unique case. That the convent and the orphanage were probably doing this with a lot of babies.' KO has firmer knowledge of the role her adoptive family took in moving her

384 Interview with KO, conducted (by phone) by Olivia Dee, 8 February 2019.

across the border for adoption. An American aunt and uncle explained to KO that they were taking a vacation in Ireland at the time of her birth and they offered to 'drive up to Northern Ireland and take me back to my grandmother's house, which is what they did. But that was all they did, they didn't know anything about the paperwork or anything, so they couldn't tell me anything more about that.'

KO's birth mother signed a consent form, witnessed by a notary in the Republic of Ireland, which indicated she 'relinquish all claim forever to my said child.' The document explained that the baby was to be surrendered to a nun representing an adoption society who would 'make my child available for adoption to any person she deems fit and proper, inside or outside the State.' The birth mother undertook 'never to attempt to see, interfere with or make any claim to the said child at any future date.' The form also included the wording 'I agree to the issue of a Passport to enable my child to travel to the United States of America for adoption.' [385]

KO explained that this was 'signed sixteen days after my birth, and then I think a day after there was the Republic of Ireland birth certificate.' She is aware that her adoptive parents 'already had a name for me. I mean, they seemed to have known, they seemed to have had a specific birth date in mind.' KO has copies of the character references, written on her parents' behalf, which were sent to the adoption society attached to a baby home in the Republic of Ireland. KO understands that the process of moving her to the USA was not straightforward. As a baby she was sent to live with her adoptive mother's sister in the Dublin area and it took fourteen months to find a way of removing KO to America. KO concludes that if the adoption society/baby home 'had done this before, that is, get babies over to America, they hadn't set up any sort of process for her [KO's adoptive mother] to do so easily.' KO's adoptive mother attempted to fake a pregnancy in order to claim KO as her own flesh and blood but the American Embassy 'said they wanted to give her a medical exam to prove that, so she went away.' However, she then 'found a doctor who was willing to sign a document saying that she had given birth to me in Ireland. And that's when they were able to issue me the passport.'

KO has no evidence that any of the staff at the two baby homes involved in her case, on either side of the Irish border, had of any knowledge of the subterfuge involving her eventual adoption. As KO acknowledged, none of the religious orders concerned with her case had planned out a means by which she was to be transported to the USA. However, citing family folklore, KO speculated that there was a cash payment in respect of her adoption: 'I mean, at least some sort of, you know, like, a donation to the orphanage perhaps. Or, yeah, a donation to the convent. But there is no sort of paperwork that has any sort of numbers on it.' Drawing on the media coverage of recent controversial events in the Republic of Ireland, KO stated her hope that this research 'will bring some attention to the mistreatment of women and the transportation, the human trafficking that's been going on, and that has been engaged in, apparently, by governments and by the Catholic Church.' When asked whether trafficking was the correct term, KO replied: 'yeah, I was moved across, you know. From Northern Ireland to Ireland and, yeah, and then to America, and I have three birth certificates. I mean, obviously something's going on, so.'

385 Copy of document provided to the researchers by KO.

CS

CS suggested that her birth mother travelled north to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home to be as far away from home as possible, plus 'it was another country. That's probably why ... she didn't use any of the mother and baby homes in the South ... And probably because she knew she would definitely, definitely not be, not be, not be known.' [386] CS's birth mother had become pregnant during the mid-1960s in particularly scandalous circumstances; CS is certain that her birth father was a priest. In a Catholic culture that stigmatised unmarried mothers as a dominant norm, often labelling them as morally loose, this particular pregnancy had the potential to cause untold scandal if news had leaked out in the local community.

Moreover, CS's birth mother had only just married into a respected family with a successful business. CS believes that her birth mother (and her husband's family) hoped the baby, like many hundreds of others born to Irish mothers between the 1940s and 1960s, would be adopted by an American couple. Although she has no detailed knowledge about her birth mother's motivations, CS speculates that this issue was a further factor in the choice of mother and baby home:

> *Now this is my understanding, this, and I actually do have, I do have people who would concur with my story. That place, *name of Good Shepherd mother and baby home redacted*, where she did go, they did send an awful lot of their babies to America.*[387]

CS's mother gave false names and a false address and claimed that she was single when she was actually married. This was to make it harder to trace but also the Republic of Ireland's 1952 Adoption Act only permitted the adoption of illegitimate children and this is further reason, CS believes, that her birth mother used a false marital status: 'You could not be given up for adoption if you came from a married unit. So she had to say that she was single.'

This subterfuge has made it difficult for CS to trace her birth mother, who initially denied that CS was her daughter. She already knew part of the story of her infant life from her adoptive parents, with whom she grew up in the Republic of Ireland. CS explained that they were 'kind of on, on the list to get, to get a baby.' After waiting a while they were offered CS by a nun in the baby home/adoption society they were dealing with in the Republic of Ireland:

> *So then they get a call to say, "yes, there is this baby girl but", and [what] they said to my parents is "you have to come up to *name of baby home in Republic of Ireland redacted* and they were told to come over when it was dark, and they arrived and a while later a car arrived with me and the papers ... they were waiting, they were definitely waiting for me to arrive. I came down (from Northern Ireland) and it was dark, and then I went off with them.*

CS told the researchers that as part of her search, she contacted an elderly nun who had worked in the Good Shepherd mother and baby home in Northern Ireland where her birth mother stayed:

386 Interview with CS, conducted (by phone) by Olivia Dee, 4 June 2019.

387 See discussion in the chapter on Marianvale on this point. The available evidence suggests that a small number of babies born in this home were adopted by American couples.

> *She actually said to me "You actually were supposed to go to America". And she was just so delighted that she, she remembered me. And I said to her "how do you remember me? You would've had millions of, well not millions, hundreds of babies going through your, your convent". And she said to me that "all the girls there were single and wished they were married and able to keep their babies. But *Name of CS's birth mother redacted*, she was the married one pretending to be single, who didn't want her baby."*

There was another reason why the nun remembered CS. This nun looked after her because 'my mother had skedaddled … with her husband to start a new family. Yeah that's, that's, sure I was gobsmacked when she told me that.'

CS's search for the full truth about her birth parents has been a long one and has involved parish priests, social workers, the media, Facebook friends and others. By accessing her baptismal records she was able to find her birth mother's real name. CS has also met the brother of the priest that she believes was her birth father and this meeting confirmed her understanding of the circumstances of her birth.

LC

LC was adopted as a child and later became an unmarried mother herself.[388] She was born to a single mother and was in Mater Dei as a child. She explained that 'I was told was that I was there until I was a year and ten months. I was then adopted into a family.' She understands that her birth mother's family 'put her out of the house' and this is how she found herself in Mater Dei. This was during the 1950s.

Unfortunately, LC was sexually abused as a young girl by an adult male and an outcome of this was that like 'a lot of abused children … I became… I suppose, a little bit of a party girl.' LC became pregnant and when her adoptive mother found out she 'was taken immediately to a doctor, and within a very short period of time I found myself' in one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. She explained that there 'wasn't a lot of consent, I was just told I was going and that was it … I didn't even know where I was going. I was put in a car with the local parish priest and my mother and off I went.'

LC was seventeen at this point (1960s). Her recollections of arrival included being told 'that I no longer would have my name, that I would have another name, and I was not to discuss anything about where I came from or anything about me or my name, and that was the start of my sojourn.' LC remained in the home for a considerable amount of time: months rather than weeks. This was extended because her baby son's first planned adoption fell through: 'so', she explained, 'I was there for longer than normal. Most girls stayed there 'til the eight weeks', after giving birth, 'I was there, I think, twelve or fourteen, I'm not sure.' LC harboured hopes that her parents might relent and let her keep the child. She remembered that 'they came to visit and I thought, you know, once they see the baby they'll say "yes, we'll bring him home". But they didn't. So that was a last hope … dashed.'

388 Interview with LC, conducted by Olivia Dee, 14 May 2018.

On the subject of money, she maintained that 'we never got any money, any pocket money, anything.' This was despite the fact that the nuns 'were claiming benefits' for the costs of her stay in the mother and baby home. In addition, LC claimed that 'they put me out to work.' This involved going to a nearby house to 'clean for this couple next door. I never got paid for it. It was very difficult. It wasn't far away but I was leaving my baby to go and work in this house with these people that I didn't know.'

LC described her time in the home as demoralising. One event stuck out in her memory:

> *It must've been Easter or St Patrick's Day or something - this, this is a vision that never has left me in all these years -we had to put on a show for the nuns. Pregnant girls dancing and singing. And that vision's never ever left me. We were like, I can't even think of the word I want. Entertainment. Something in a circus.*

The nuns felt that this was something the young women should enjoy, but LC certainly did not. She also felt that 'there always was this element, as well, that we were bad girls, fallen girls, immoral girls.' This was despite the fact that there were some very young girls in the home, 'thirteen, twelve, you know? I knew some of their stories, some of them … they were probably, you know, they were abused by maybe a father, an uncle, whatever.'

Like a lot of the birth mothers from all the homes, who offered testimony, LC discussed the long-term impact of her confinement and the sense that she was judged morally. She suggested it meant that she always feels 'unworthy, like second-class … Not good enough.' In her case, she contemplates being 'rejected as a small baby' and then experienced 'rejection from my adopted parents because I had the audacity to produce this child.'

LC explained how she felt the Good Shepherd Sisters contributed to making her feel unworthy. She felt it was 'subtle':

> *We were made to scrub floors, and we had to do these things, and everything was very regimented and we weren't allowed to do this and we weren't allowed to do that, and were to keep quiet at certain times, and all those elements. As I say, they were very subtle. They took us out for walks, that's another image I still have. You know the way you would see a crocodile of small children? That's the way we were taken out for a walk.*

LC felt that staff at the maternity hospital were also not sympathetic. She described her midwife 'who was very unsympathetic. I was brought into the delivery room and I was left alone.' LC 'knew the mechanics but I didn't really know what was going to happen, and it was scary, it was really scary. And there was no-one to support me, no-one to talk to.' After the birth LC recalls being 'sutured up very dismissively, and … back into the ward again afterwards, and again, alone. No visitors, no nobody, in a public ward with everybody all gawping at me and looking at me.' It is worth pausing here to note that some birth mothers were placed on side wards or in private rooms to relieve them of the feeling that they were being gawped at. Some of them viewed that as a sign of special treatment that they viewed in a negative light but it appears that LC would have preferred that type of arrangement.

LC maintains that she was quickly reassigned to her chores on her return from the labour ward, despite having stitches. This was in addition to looking after her baby. She also 'had to go to chapel. No matter what you felt like you had to go to chapel. And I had a merciful row with them over it. I don't really do authority very well … I had a massive row with the priest, and the nuns, because I didn't want to go to chapel. Why should I?' She felt tired and unwell, but in her view there was 'no sympathy … There was no, you know, "Oh go and lie down for half an hour", or "you're looking tired".'

She developed 'a massive boil' under her arm because 'I was run down' but received no attention for this. Nor did she recall any aftercare. The standard answer was to '"take a shower", "take a bath", whatever. That was it. And again, even then, you know, at that stage you had no privacy. You know, they were there all the time. What were they watching? I don't know, what were they looking at?' It is worth pausing here to note that LC was a resident of the same Good Shepherd mother and baby home in which GT also reported feeling humiliated after being viewed in the shower.

On her baby's adoption, LC said 'you went there, you had your baby, they arranged the adoption. You had no say in the matter. That was it. So then when you're finished and the baby went to wherever it was going, you went home' She remembers being given a few days' notice that her baby was leaving the home and, therefore, had 'time to realise what was happening, and I sat down and I wrote a letter. And I put it in, I had a bag of things, clothes, little toys and I put it in with them and I just hoped and prayed that the nuns wouldn't take it. And that was it, I, it was the hardest day of my life. I will never forget. You had to hand over your baby.'

LC recalled handing the baby over to one of the nuns and watching 'her walk away down this long corridor. And I can still see that. It was a very difficult day.' She was never encouraged to speak of this again 'as if it never happened. So again, all those things got buried right down again. And it is damaging, you know, I know that now. You can only supress emotions for so long, so.' LC was referring here to the mental health issues experienced by birth mothers, and highlighted by Social Worker 3 in her testimony. It is clear that silence and secrecy was no substitute for adequate post-adoption support.

At the end of her testimony LC reflected on the events of her life that are germane to the research project:

> *I never felt that I was physically abused. But I do feel that I was emotionally abused. Mentally abused. My life, all my life has been coloured by the treatment that I received … And then to end up where I did, and the scar, the emotional scar that those women [the nuns] placed on me, somebody needs to answer to it. And to let children be put in a place like that and treated the way they were, it's immoral and it's wrong … and I think the church, the nuns, they have to answer for their behaviour. Their inhuman behaviour, really, at the end of the day. I mean they took, they took our identity, they took money from the government to keep us there, with a bit of food and that was it … So that's the way I kind of feel, that if somebody, somebody has got to bring these people to book. And there's so many women and girls who are now dead, there's so many women and girls who are still living with this and can't speak out because they're afraid, because they haven't told their families, so it's up to the few that can speak out to speak for them. So that's really, basically what I feel.*

TS

TS spent time in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in 1970s at the age of eighteen.[389] Her testimony revealed a common theme in many cases, the role of the family GP in advising the parents of unmarried teenage mothers-to-be:

> *I was whisked off to the doctors by my mother. She went into the doctor's first … mammy would have known him very well. So I sat in the car whilst mammy went in, and when mother came out she was very annoyed … when mammy came out she'd been upset, she was upset, I knew she'd been crying, and she went in, or then I went in and was examined by, embarrassing, you know, to be examined by, that. But anyway, that was on the Monday, and on Saturday I was there, I was in that place, so I'm assuming it came from the doctor. Mammy, mammy and daddy probably wouldn't have known about these places.*

Another regular character in the testimonies of Catholic birth mothers was the parish priest. It was to him that TS was taken next, by her father: 'he suggested that this baby be up for adoption. And there was another priest there … and his sister had adopted a baby.' Adoption was the word she was hearing from everyone as 'mammy had said from day one the baby wouldn't be coming home. So that was it, doctor, priest, and then in there on Saturday, so clearly that was all done behind the scenes.'

TS described her family's arrival at the Good Shepherd mother and baby home and, in her view, the cynical element of their introduction to the home: 'the nuns were so lovely. Like, this one in particular was so lovely. With hindsight, now, looked so lovely to my parents and painting a rosy picture of everything, this will be lovely, and all the craic there would be.' One Sister was 'all bubbly and all, and then she'd say "Does she sing? … Oh we'll have plenty of craic".' TS remembers the family was struck by 'how gleaming the place was, the parlour that we were taken into was gleaming. The wooden floor, it was magnificent. So mammy was saying "these people must be up the break of dawn".'

TS felt that her parents were given to believe that 'it would be alright for me to be there. But it wasn't like that.' She remembers being 'distraught' when her parents left. For TS, 'it was traumatic, now, that I was in there with strange people and crying and, you know, not being able to control it, and probably they had all been through that too.'

She became further aware of her isolation and lack of control when the father of TS's baby made contact with her over the phone. Despite the fact that she was eighteen, the nuns informed her parents about this conversation and her parents issued orders of 'no communication', which the Good Shepherd Sisters enforced. This example corroborates the testimony of Sister 2 which indicates the priority they placed on parental wishes over those of the young mother-to-be.

TS described the daily routine, which involved rising around 8 am, prayers, breakfast, cubicle-tidying and then working in 'the huge big work room.' The latter involved making 'those wee Irish dolls that you see in shops. We sewed the costumes on them things.' Later TS knitted 'the wee baby jackets and things that went to the baby home.' In addition, there was washing up in the kitchen and cleaning of 'the absolutely gorgeous parlours.' She did not resent having to do this work, explaining that

389 Interview with TS, conducted by Olivia Dee, 1 May 2019.

otherwise 'we would never have got the day in there.' However, she also had more negative and unsettling memories about work in the home. One was that chores were given even to the most heavily pregnant women. About two weeks before going into labour, TS recalls 'I was outside up a ladder cleaning windows. So you know, that stays with me. I'm not saying, you know, I probably shouldn't have been doing that like. But I'm not saying I was up that high, but it was a ladder. I shouldn't have been on a ladder at all.'

She discussed one Sister (now deceased) who was 'hard I think … I mean it wasn't a physical abuse or anything, you know, nothing like that. But you were, you knew you were a fallen woman like. You knew, if your skirt was too short … it was humiliation a bit, really.' TS explained that she was afraid of this nun and 'how she would've spoken to you. And you just kind of knew, maybe, that she didn't like you.' TS met this particular nun many years later, in a different context, and introduced herself as a former resident of the mother and baby home. The Sister replied that she did not remember TS but told her "I hope I wasn't too bad to you". On this TS observed 'I just thought to myself, you know rightly. You know. And I'm not saying she was bad to me in a physical way or anything else but, you know, she was a bully I just think.'

Unlike some other birth mothers, TS commented 'I have to say the nurses were very good.' However, she did give birth without any family member to offer support. The possibility of her mum being there 'wouldn't even have been on the radar.' After the birth TS believes that others were filling in forms on her behalf at this point: 'clearly, somebody filled something in or said that [to move her son to another baby home in preparation for adoption] that had to happen. Because I knew, I was away like a lamb to the slaughter. Whatever they told me to do I was, I'd be doing it.' Her son went into the home but TS has 'no recollection of it.' Like many of our interviewees, she has drawn down the metaphorical blinds on this traumatic experience in her life. Of the journey to take her son to the baby home, TS said 'I don't even know whose car we went in, whether my mammy and daddy took me … I have absolutely no memory of where he went to.'

TS's mother had a change of heart and allowed her daughter to bring home the baby. However, his arrival was not conventional: 'he came home as … to my mother's…, in a roundabout way, that he was somebody she had adopted. So then there was even more deception.' However, TS raised the son and also married her baby's father and they are now grandparents themselves.

Speaking about the baby home that her son was sent to, TS remembered the death of a baby due to, she thinks, gastroenteritis and she deduces that 'there must've been something in that home.' When her own son was reclaimed from the baby home he had a rash under his chin 'that was raw. And then that side of his face had a rash. But that's probably where he was on it all of the time. But it took months for him to even out.' She felt the cause of this was due to the baby 'probably was lying there all day every day.' In this respect, this testimony bares comparison with that from SS and DF (who mentions an e-coli outbreak). They also had concerns about the health of babies in this home, having witnessed health problems experienced by their own babies. Moreover, Social Worker 2 also covers this issue in her testimony.

At the end of her interview TS explained that she did not resent her parents for putting her in the mother and baby home. She reasoned that they 'took advice, obviously, from the powers-that-be which is the priest and the doctor – who were the go-to people, obviously, back in the day… I think it was the shame, you know? I think if you'd have killed somebody it would not have been as shameful as being pregnant.'

NO

NO explained the experience of getting pregnant in the 1980s at the age of sixteen.[390] Her mother 'rang the priest and the social worker and the doctor – and they all came out to the house. They were, like, discussing my whole life in the kitchen, and I was closed in the living room.' The outcome was a drive to one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes 'with this woman that I didn't know', the social worker.

Her view of the nuns was 'I didn't think the nuns were very nice, to be honest … they would have made you do chores all the time.' She also remembers that 'they would rush you to the mass – all of that kind of thing. And there was like an oratory? Like a chapel, in the place? And Sister *name redacted*, she used to march us away down there every day.'

Like other birth mothers who were interviewed, NO remembered carrying out physical chores, even in the last stages of pregnancy and had particular view on why this happened: 'I remember whenever I was about eight months pregnant, that they made you clean the stairs. Up the stairs and down the stairs. And I know, the day … that, that was to induce your labour.' She remembers that feeling 'so tired' but was shouted out: "Get up and clean them stairs".

NO explained that she was isolated in the home: 'my mother never contacted me at all in that whole space of time.' She felt incarcerated as she recalls 'bars on the door. And you were really locked up all day. The only time I ever remember going out was when my sister called.' However, this did not always go smoothly. The nuns provided NO with maternity clothing to wear which were 'big white dresses.' On one occasion the doorbell rang and a nun answered it to NO's sister: 'and my sister looked at me and she says: "I couldn't walk up the street with you, love, looking like that".' NO recalled that the nun then shut the door with the words: "You're not having your visit today". Two of NO's sisters came to see the baby when he was born, as did the baby's father, but 'the rest of my sisters just called me a tramp.'

These sisters were drawing on their mother's viewpoint. NO explained that her father died before all of this happened and also that her mother's anger was heightened because her baby's father 'was a Protestant and I was a Catholic.' Her mother's immediate reaction to the pregnancy was that 'she came up and she started to kick me round the place. And it wasn't long after that the she sent me away.' She was 'about five months' into her pregnancy at this point.' NO recalled that her mother 'used to say to me I brought shame on the family and everything. And I suppose I grew up a lot of my life thinking she hated me, too.' This had a long term effect on NO and she revealed that 'I used to blame myself all the time and, I suppose, my whole life after that I just turned to drink and I would have drank a lot.' She had serious mental health issues that related to the adoption of her

390 Interview with NO, conducted by Olivia Dee, 21 May 2019.

son. NO hoped 'I'd be able to keep him and … All of the time, in my heart, I just wanted him. But it didn't work out that way.' When her mother visited her after the birth of her son, NO remembers 'crying and asking her to hold the baby, and she didn't want to. She didn't even want to look at him. But eventually she did hold him. But just, like, for a second.' However, NO was unable to break her mother's resolution that adoption would take place. This account tallies with what the retired social workers explained about the key moment when grandparents met their grandchild for the first time. If their resolve on adoption was not weakened then, it probably never would be. NO recalled going back to the mother and baby home, with her child. When showing him to the other residents her mother and the social worker sent her to the nun's office and then slipped off with the baby, who went to a foster home at this stage.

An adoption was arranged sometime later and NO recalls that 'I was just fighting to get this baby back.' However, her recollection is that the 'social worker used to come to where I worked and sit outside all the time and say to me: "You have to sign these papers. You have to sign these papers". Just, you know, just really hassling me all the time?' In NO's view 'they made me sign these pages.'

It was in the context of her efforts to win back her baby that NO provided an interesting element of testimony about a letter that she wrote to the Good Shepherd Sisters shortly after she left the home. It said 'Thank you, again, for the lovely time I had.' NO explained that it was sent because 'I thought, because my mother was so down on me, I thought if I wrote a letter to them that they were nice to me, that they maybe would help me.' By this, she meant to retain her son. She complimented them to win their support and sympathy, even though the letter did not represent her true feelings. Her real view was that 'I definitely know that they were not nice.'

NO's view is that 'a lot of the stuff that went on in that place … was abuse. They just didn't care how they treated people. Like, they were all young girls that was in there with me. And I'm sure, all their life, it's just traumatised like mine.' It is in this context that another element of NO's testimony should be read. It echoes elements of what SS and BC also narrated about their experience with Sister Z (now deceased):

> *And I remember having a horrible experience with them, where I was in my room and didn't know what was wrong with me, like. I was really bad, in pain, and came out of the room and walked this big, long corridor, and I remember rapping her door where she was. She came out and she says: "What is wrong with you?" And I says: "I don't know whether I'm going to have this baby or not" … She brought me into another room – I think it was another room, as far as I remember – and told me to take off my clothes, and she gave me an internal.*

NO became upset talking about what happened to her next. She explained that she had been sexually abused as a young girl and what happened with Sister Z was a similar experience: 'I remember crying and saying she was hurting me and all, and she says: "Just lie there, lie still, and keep quiet". I remember her talking to me like that.' When this incident finished, Sister Z told her "You're a very, very stupid girl. Go away back to your room". NO recalls 'leaving her office and crying, literally, the whole way back to my room and just lying there crying.'

In addition to the three testimonies about 'internal examinations' by Sister Z, there are also case notes on a 17-year-old who made a complaint about her experience at the home where Sister Z

worked in 1969. Whatever the complaint was, it was dismissed with the girl labelled as 'a peculiar type, not normal.' It noted that she had 'invented fantastic stories of the treatment she received at the ante-natal clinic. Could be dangerous.'[391]

BIRTH MOTHERS WHOSE TESTIMONIES ARE SUPPORTIVE OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD SISTERS

A second group of individuals who came forward to offer testimony about their time in one of Northern Ireland's Good Shepherd mother and baby homes offered perspectives that were more positive. This second group contained only one child of a birth mother. This section starts with this particular testimony because its complexity reveals so much about the history of these institutions and the emotional and cultural dynamics that powered them.

OC

OC is the daughter of woman who spent time in two of the Good Shepherd convents.[392] The testimony is particularly interesting because it describes OC's surprise at the warm relationship her mother had with the Sisters who had overseen her seven year stay in a convent laundry. However, her story did include some details of her mother's experience of two mother and baby homes. More of this testimony can be in **Appendix 2** on Oral Testimony.

OC's mother became pregnant at just fourteen, during the 1950s, as a result of rape by a farm labourer who worked on her family's farm. Her father was a heavy drinker who was often in the local pub rather than on the farm and her own mother had died. OC explained that her mother 'didn't know anything about the birds and bees … she knew what he was doing was wrong to her, but she didn't know what the consequences of it was or, you know, what, what was happening.' She was surprised, therefore when the parish priest arrived at her school gates in his car. Nothing was

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391 Case Notes, *name of home redacted*, 1969. The allegations against Sister Z were so serious that a specific response to them was sought from the Good Shepherd Sisters. Through their solicitor, the Sisters provided the following response:
'Sister Z provided midwifery expertise within Mother and Baby Homes. The Congregation maintain that she was well respected by her Religious Sisters, by civilian medical practitioners and by many of her former patients. Indeed, a number of former residents of the Mother and Baby Homes are reported to have retained contact with her over the years. Sisters who knew her simply do not believe that she would ever have passed judgmental commentary on any of the residents. They recall her as empathic [sic], caring and very professional, someone who maintained good relationships with expectant mothers.

It is recognised, that even with advances in midwifery practice, that internal examinations can be painful. A woman recalling pain, feelings of intrusion and discomfort may genuinely do so but it does not necessarily reflect poor practice, malice or ill-intent on behalf of the midwife.

While SS and NO recounted their experiences as 'sexual abuse' or 'abuse' they are the only two women from among perhaps the 1500 or so patients that Sister Z provided midwifery services for that reflect on their experiences using these terms. Aside from the 1969 complaint, which was dismissed contemporaneously, the Good Shepherd Sisters had received no allegation against Sister Z until the Oral Histories recorded by this project were undertaken.'

392 Interview with OC, conducted by Olivia Dee, 10 May 2019.

explained to OC's mother as she was driven to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. OC's mother told her that on arrival at the convent 'she met the Mother Superior, and apparently the first thing that was said to her was "Get down on your knees and pray for forgiveness". Her mother said "Forgiveness for what?" She didn't know anything, and she said she still didn't know that she was pregnant.' After the birth of her son, OC's mother was transferred to a different Good Shepherd convent where she worked in its laundry for the next seven years. During this time she gained further knowledge of the adjacent mother and baby home.

OC explained that aside from the horrible introductory comment by the Mother Superior, her mother remembered her time in the two convents with an element of positivity that surprised her: 'apart from the one comment from the Mother Superior, she said her treatment after that was really good, and as far as she's concerned it offered her stability and security. She had three lovely meals a day, clean bed to sleep in. Her life, as she put it, was far better in the home, than it would ever have been at home.' In fact, she kept in touch with the nuns and even visited some of them in a retirement home almost fifty years later. During one of these visits, OC's mother encountered a woman who had been in the mother and baby home with her back in the 1950s. This woman had somehow relocated to a residential home linked to the Good Shepherd Sisters in the Republic of Ireland. OC rationalised that she 'stayed with the nuns. I supposed she became institutionalised. Nobody wanted her back – nobody would pay for her to come back and, sure, she couldn't survive on her own, so the nuns are still caring for her. And I'm sure there are others.'

OC drove her mother to these meetings with the nuns and was fascinated 'in terms of how ingratiated she became with the nuns.' She then discussed how her mother had become a trusted resident within the St Mary's home – an auxiliary – during her time there. In her case, this meant that not only was she engaged in the laundry, where 'she did the ironing mostly' but she also was given responsibilities in respect of the mother and baby home that was part of the convent complex. Before Vatican II, the Good Shepherds were part of a closed Order and it was perhaps in this context that OC's mother found herself, as 'a good girl who always did what she was told' under instruction to 'bring the babies – on a bicycle – to the train station and bring them to, like, which would have been a children's home, back up to *town name redacted*.' On her return to the convent she might find that she 'had to share the dormitory with the mother who you've just given their baby away (and had then been moved to the St Mary's home and to work in the laundry).

DF

DF was a research participant offering a generally favourable review of her stay in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home.[393] This occurred in the early 1970s, when she was nineteen. In her case, she was able to contrast this home with one in Dublin to which her parents sent her initially and which she remembered as being much more unpleasant. She was 'from a big family, a big Catholic family, and so it was a bit of a disgrace, you know what I mean? And ... so when I was about five months pregnant ... my mother and the parish priest, they sort of organised for me to go to Dublin.' Shortly after, her married elder sister took pity on DF and brought her to live with her until three weeks before the baby was due. At that point, she went to one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. Of this move, DF reflected: 'I actually can't remember me being part of organising it, like I was

393 Interview with DF, conducted by Olivia Dee, 3 October 2018.

just doing as I was told because I'd been a bold girl like, that sort of thing.'
She recalled that her parents were 'very concerned about me and obviously they were looking out for my best interests as they thought and they just wanted me to consider adoption because, you know, of the implications of having a baby at nineteen, and unmarried and not really having a career structure or anything and being quite young, you know?'

The daily routine in the home, in DF's words 'wasn't like a sweatshop, it was just chatting.' In terms of the chores she was given, she deemed 'it was no more than what I would have done at home, which is like somebody brush down the stairs, somebody … you know?' DF felt that she was not asked to do any task that was difficult to carry out because she was heavily pregnant. She contrasted this to the Dublin home where 'I did see bad terrible things … I mean literally, people on their hands and knees, washing the floor, you know?'

Of the two Sisters running the home, DF said 'I have to tell you, they were dotes, they were really nice. I found them very, very nice people. No problems at all … there was none of this "Oh, we'd better say our prayers now", you know? "You are all terrible women!" I didn't get any of that, I really didn't.' However, DF suggested that the duration of her stay was a factor in her reflections and explained that: 'other people might have had different experience … I think there was a couple of people sort of [said] "Oh you're only here for three weeks … you haven't been here a couple of months", which must have been a different story all together.'

When asked if anyone other than her mother had put pressure on her to have her son adopted, DF said there was a 'bit from a social worker that I saw, you know.' This had minimal impact because DF felt 'I could not imagine, you know, giving away this baby because it would've bad implications for me in the long run, I think.' She recalled talking to a young priest who 'wasn't spouting religion at all but he was like, a real, wise person … And he says 'Don't be worrying about fifteen years away, never worry about the future. Just worry about today, tomorrow, don't be worrying. Do … whatever you think is good for you.' She explained 'I promised Mummy that I would try it, you know … but … I was never giving that child up for adoption.' When he newly born son was moved to a baby home, DF visited 'every single day and spent the whole day with him, so like it was a waste of time, and … come Friday I said "Mum, I … it's not working I can't leave him there any longer"'

The next aspect of DF's testimony should also be compared with that from SS, as both observed their baby in the care young staff, who they considered to be poorly trained, in local baby/children's home. DF was concerned at what she witnessed on her visits: 'I had noticed when I was there, there was a few, quite a few babies there, you know? Now not, I don't mean dozens, just mean a few, and there was these wee lassies looking after them, you know? Lovely girls, lovely … but like sixteen you know? Very, very young. And I don't know if this is in part of your history anywhere but there was an outbreak of e-coli.' DF made the decision to bring her son, who was eight weeks old, to the family home. He was 'peaky, fontanelle all sunken in, green water gushing out of his bum.' The decision was taken to take him 'straight to the fever hospital' where it was confirmed that he had e-coli. 'I mean … I mean I literally only got him out in time you know?' DF's memory is that a baby did die as a result of this outbreak of e-coli. Her own baby son was in the fever hospital for eight weeks. Thankful that she had intervened in time, DF reflected that 'those wee lassies were from the orphanage … and they had no training you know, about basic hygiene, about changing.' Thereafter, DF and her son lived in her family home until she married a few years later.

In concluding her testimony, DF explained that she came forward for two reasons. She wanted to highlight her experience of the e-coli outbreak and to record that she did not have the type of negative experience that she had read about in some of the media accounts of the mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland. Her sentiment was that the home had provided a 'haven' for her. It was 'completely different' from the home in Dublin that she went to first: 'because there girls told me they … they had to stay with their babies for six weeks and then sign the forms, and some people ran off and … because they were demented, you know?'

PW

PW was still a schoolgirl when she became pregnant in the mid-1970s and found herself in one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes.[394] She was from 'a very devout Catholic family' and recalls that her parents quickly involved a social worker and that she was in the home within 'a few days.' PW described the emotional turmoil involved in confronting her parents about the pregnancy:

> *It was one of the rare times I've ever seen my mother cry. So I had left the gate open at the front of the house because I thought oh God, get out of here if she starts. But no, she just … she was draining a pot of potatoes, I can still see her, into the sink and my older brother was with me and whenever he said "This one's pregnant" she dropped the pot into the sink and turned and said "Is it any wonder you're putting on weight?" and went up the stairs past me crying. And I felt so, so small but the old fella [PW's father] had been away, he worked in *location redacted* and he didn't come home … that was a Monday or a Tuesday, he didn't come home to Thursday. And when the car pulled up at the door, Mummy was waiting and she says "Get into the bathroom, lock yourself in the bathroom and don't come out till I tell you to. No matter what he says you stay in there." Which I did, until she spoke to him and calmed him down and whatever. But, my father was of the era where he had said, when I did eventually come out of the bathroom, it didn't matter who I ever married, or if I got married, the child would always be a bastard.*

PW intimated that her mother wanted her in the mother and baby home because even though 'she never said it … I do believe she was afraid that he would give me such a hiding.' For PW, then, the home was a refuge and she explained that it was 'almost as a debt of honour' that motivated her to come forward with testimony because the Good Shepherd mother and baby home 'was a safe place for me to be in. I was away from my father.'

PW described her discussion with the Reverend Mother who was in charge. She 'was very nice as well.' She recalls being told that this Sister 'didn't worry about the girls who came to the convent and had their children, she worried about girls who went to England.' Only later did PW realise that Reverend Mother was referring to Irish women crossing the sea for abortions. Like other interviewees, PW explained that the nuns arranged a welfare payment of £12.45 per week: 'They got most of it but you got some of it for toiletries and things like that, but it was your upkeep.'

She described the 'structured regime' but maintained that 'there was no … none of this down on your hands and knees scrubbing floors or anything like that. It was housework duties that you would do every day at home anyway.' PW explained that after she had a miscarriage scare 'I done the dusting

394 Interview with PW, conducted by Ida Milne, 26 July 2018.

because I was supposed to be resting' More generally, 'any of the pregnant mothers ... or any of the women who already had their babies could have rested in the afternoon.' This was followed, at around three o'clock, by 'tea or whatever and you knitted or crocheted, painted' PW also spent some time in the home doing her CSE exams.

She described the process of leaving the home to have her baby in a local maternity unit. In PW's case 'there was no pressure ever put on me at any time to give my baby up for adoption or fostering or anything, thank God.' Some of the other young women had 'no other option, they felt, but adoption.' She recalls some of them discussing 'putting their child in for long-term fostering.' In fact, there was one woman whose child was fostered locally while she continued to live in the mother and baby home and go out to work nearby. In PW's opinion, 'it was families and circumstances that dictated that these girls give their babies up.'

The other women in the home, who she knew only by their Christian names, included 'qualified nurses, there was professional girls, women and non-professional people.' She also recalled that they were 'free to go in and out' as they pleased. The home itself was 'lonely, there's no two ways about that, it was lonely. But it was a safe place.'

PW acknowledges that the viewpoint she offered during her interview differed from that of many other women who had spoken out in the media. She wondered aloud if the negative experiences were not more likely to be articulated by 'maybe mothers whose children have tracked them down, as adults, and ... it is a fraction of them now, a fraction of them saying "Well, I had to do this, this is what I had to do and I was made to do it."' She also acknowledged that the very central role played by her mother was likely to have influenced the behaviour of the nuns and social workers she encountered: 'my mother would've been very much straight out and I'm kind of like her in that way myself. You know? If something's to be said, say it, move on, forget it then.' It is certainly clear that PW had a strong mother watching over her and it is interesting to reflect that, in comparison, many of those who offered less positive testimony also make fewer references to parental influence or presence in their accounts. It is also notable that engagement with education (doing CSEs in PW's case - or a university degree in other cases) was a hallmark of several of those who built better relationships with the Sisters.

CR

CR became pregnant at 18, in the late 1970s, and entered one of the Good Shepherd's mother and baby homes.[395] After her departure, she remained in contact with one of the Sisters and 'built up a relationship with her because she looked after me very well.' Reflecting upon her entry to the mother and baby home, CR explained that time she had 'a very difficult relationship with my mother ... and there was a great sense of shame in me becoming pregnant at eighteen ... My mother was distraught because of how it would be seen in the community.' As a result, adoption seemed the best 'solution.' Like some other birth mothers, CR felt that the mother and baby home offered a 'safe haven' from the family turmoil outside. In her words, the two Good Shepherd Sisters who were in charge of the home 'were like a mummy and daddy who looked after all these girls who got into trouble basically.'

395 Interview with CR, conducted by Olivia Dee, 7 November 2018.

The former was 'a bit more stern' whereas the latter 'was lots of fun' [and] 'they were like an old married couple.' She felt 'really good vibes' when she entered the home and considered it to be well run.

CR was particularly gushing in her appreciation of one particular Sister who she described as a 'fabulous, fabulous, fabulous, fabulous woman. Really fabulous woman.' CR noted that these two Sisters treated the young women 'like the children that they never had in a way.' While her emotional response to this was clearly a positive one, CR acknowledged that 'some people going in there would have found that patronising, perhaps. Maybe in the late eighties, maybe some girls just thought "who do they think they are?" At the end of the day, they were doing a job.' CR reiterated that 'for me, they provided such a safe haven.' The months before I went into [the home] were not good … It was so safe for me in there … it was just so … the right place to be to help you gently go through and make decisions about your life. That's the way it was for me.'

She had a single bedroom and recalls 'a large TV/work room where we sat making Irish Colleen dolls for the tourist industry. All these seven or eight pregnant girls sitting doing these. It's so bloody ironic when you think of it. Or cushions … so, I mean, you weren't made to work, to be honest. It was something there gentle for you to put your day in. Like, what else were you going to do? Just sit there, you know?' At other times, the women 'were asked to clean the windows, yes, and to help with a bit of "housework" in inverted commas. But it was like living together, it was like chores that you were doing. And you didn't have to do them.' CR only found fault with one element of the home's operations and this was that the women's benefits were paid to the Sisters rather than giving the women themselves more financial autonomy.

Despite the element of discretion that was encouraged in the home, CR explained that 'the camaraderie between us girls was great. That's what kept us going, you know, it really was great.' She vividly recalled an unconventional outing from the home:

> *And there was one day there was a wee young priest that came in and I can't remember his name … And there was a bit of banter with him and a bit of craic. And I remember one day, he decided to take them all out, take everybody out in a minibus, can you imagine? I obviously didn't go out but all the rest of them went out. And they had a whale of a day. He brought them out somewhere, can you imagine just this wee young priest and like seven pregnant girls or something, very obviously pregnant right, can you just imagine that? And it was up in the country somewhere. They had an absolute ball and they came back and they were all buzzing. Sister *name redacted* was not happy, or Sister *name redacted*, they were not. But it was a hoot, it really was.*

CR also acknowledged the difficult circumstances that brought the young women there and the inevitable outpourings of emotion: 'there was days when we would have gone down into the sewing room and some girls would have just been in floods, you know, or would have been in a bad place.' In particular, she recalls 'one girl appeared to be completely disowned by her family … And I mean, as a mother I can't get my head around that … Because they had sex. For God's sake.'

CR felt that at this point, the late 1970s, 'times were beginning to change, that girls were beginning to feel a bit more confident. If I want to keep this baby, and be a single mother and have a baby, well then I'm bloody well going to do it. And two fingers up to whoever's going to tell me I can't do it.' This might help explain why, after being in the home for a few weeks, she began to think 'maybe should

I try and keep it and all of that, so especially when you felt the baby moving inside you' and this is what she did. CR explained that she approached the two Good Shepherd Sisters to discuss this and remembers them saying '"Ask your social worker, ask your social worker". They never would have got involved in making major decisions. They always put you back to the social worker.' CR recalled that she encountered no resistance to keeping her baby. In fact, she felt the opposite was true.

She also recalls the maternity ward on which she had her child and being surprised by 'some of the nurses in that hospital. I mean there was definitely a judgemental thing about an eighteen-year-old girl having a baby. There was definitely that in society, and as if like, the jaw dropped, you know for God's sake we bloody had sex.' CR recalled being made to feel 'like you were a tramp on the street.' Reflecting on why she experienced negativity towards her as an unmarried mother, CR feels that 'it was society. There was stuff put there in society about these dirty wee girls having these babies.'

TY

TY is another woman who spent time in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home after becoming pregnant in the late 1960s, in her early twenties.[396] Unlike a lot of other birth mothers who spoke to the research team, TY managed to conceal her pregnancy from her parents by telling them she was working in England for the summer. Instead, she hid herself away in the home while awaiting the birth of her child. Initially, when TY asked her social worker about how she would manage the problem of her parents believing she was in England for the summer, the social worker suggested 'you can write to them, send the letter to me, and I will forward it to them.' The possibility of adoption was suggested by a priest who thought it was a 'way she could keep it from her parents'. TY particularly wanted to avoid having to reveal her news to her father because he had encouraged her to carry on in higher education and was very proud of her achievements. She felt that she would not have been able to continue studying if she kept her baby.

On arrival at the mother and baby home she was greeted by one of the Sisters who 'took me into the parlour and took all your details and everything and, you know, a wee bit of disapproval in the voice, but, you know, they were going to sort me out anyway.' TY recalled that she was given a private room and 'at that time I thought my sister had paid for that, but she hadn't.' She has concluded that 'there was a wee bit of snobbishness in that I was educated. I think that's why I got the single room.'

She was positive in her assessment of the conditions she encountered and had exchanged Christmas cards and visits with one of the Good Shepherd Sisters in the years after she left the home. She explained that 'you were fed. It was warm, it was comfortable. And we had to do a wee bit of maybe polishing and stuff … We'd to polish the floors and do a bit of window cleaning.' Once a woman had her baby, 'you looked after your baby. You had no housework to do or dishes or anything like that. You looked after your baby and you took turns in the nursery at night. I think I only did it twice.' At this stage all the babies were bottle-fed 'because you'd be leaving because most babies were adopted after six weeks.'

396 Interview with TY, conducted by Olivia Dee, 14 November 2018.

TY remembered that 'nobody knew anybody's surname' and the efforts that were made to maintain this element of secrecy. The 'nuns allowed *name of baby's father redacted* to write to me. I would get my letter face down beside my breakfast table when he wrote, which I thought was really good.' TY also recalled that the nuns 'allowed me to write to him. So that was great, that was a comfort because it was like a lonely time, if you know what I mean, even though you had the girls.' Whilst TY's positivity is heart-felt, it is worth noting that the repeated use of the term 'allowed' in terms of writing and receiving letters implies either surprise that she had a right to receive mail in the home or a sense that it could be withheld. In the case of a number of other individuals, it was the parents of teenage girls who had a role in allowing or disallowing this form of communication.

In contrast, TY's parents had no knowledge presence in the mother and baby home and this was a case where nuns, priests and the young birth mother were involved in a web of secrecy that hid a pregnancy from the woman's parents. TY explained that 'what the nuns allowed me to do was … mum and dad used to visit my sister every Sunday. And the nuns allowed me to go into their parlour and phone my sister and mum and dad came on and thought I was phoning from *location in England*.' The interview with Priest 2 (above) described how some birth mothers were assisted in their attempts to conceal pregnancies from their parents.

Reflecting on routines in the mother and baby home, TY explained that she could not 'remember if I had to go to mass every morning, but we certainly had to go every week, and we had to go to confession every week.' She recollected that the home had a parlour and 'people would come to the parlour on a Sunday to adopt babies and your baby was brought up. Now, if they decided to take the baby, I can't remember whether they went there and then with the adopted parents or whether you'd, they came back and then they came during the week or something.' This observation suggests a more active central role in the adoption process for the home per se than was discussed by the two Good Shepherd Sisters in their testimonies. In a later communication, the Good Shepherd reiterated their view that any adoption that involved collection of babies from the home by adoptive parents only occurred after the appropriate level of vetting by social services.

TY's daughter was, instead, taken to a baby home in advance of potential adoption. TY took the baby to this home herself and recalled the day she left the Good Shepherd home with her daughter. One of the nuns 'who wasn't nasty or unpleasant' but 'sterner looking' than her colleague brought TY 'into the parlour and [she was] given some holy pictures and, you know, a few sort of, I can't remember the words used, but like warnings to behave myself when I got back … no more sex more or less, that's what they were saying.'

TY was relatively sanguine about her experiences in the home and a variety of factors that eased some of the difficulties for her at what was a very traumatic time in her life. She was aware that not everyone had the relatively straightforward experience that she described. She did not know if the nuns 'were the same with everybody' and was aware of a variety of experiences.

TY then returned to her parents' home and recalled that 'all I could think of was I've gotten away with this … I've actually gotten away with it.' The nuns 'actually offered to look after *daughter's name redacted* for me until I married *baby's father*, if I wanted to do that. But I just says "I can't tell Daddy".' She was eventually reunited with her daughter over twenty years later after many years of hoping that she would hear from her. Fortunately, the complex set of family relationships involved

in such a situation have worked well. However, TY does have some regrets. One was that one thing 'you didn't get then was counselling. When I think back on it, really, you know, going through that you should've had a course of counselling, which nobody did then anyway.'

Conclusions on the Good Shepherd Mother and Baby Homes

Assessed side by side, the evidence from the Good Shepherd archives and from the oral testimony reveals the complex nature of the mother and baby homes. The Sisters and those women whose testimonies were supportive of them remain of the view that they made a valuable contribution to the lives of young women, who were offered a safe haven in which to consider what to do with their baby. There is evidence that some young women entered to escape from violence (father's angry about their teenage daughter's pregnancy) or from other forms of parental outrage and denunciation. Moreover, for some unmarried mothers the Good Shepherd Sisters helped them to conceal their pregnancy from parents or wider family. On occasions, priests or others were involved in helping to hide the truth about a pregnant woman. In other instances, family members (sisters for example) were also party to the concealment of a pregnancy from the wider community. As has been seen in this chapter, a significant minority of the birth mothers who came forward to discuss their time in Marianvale or Marianville remain grateful to the Good Shepherd Sisters for the assistance they received during a difficult period in their lives. Based on the examples encountered during this research those in this category included those individuals who continued the pursuit of educational goals while pregnant. TY's testimony draws attention to the possibility that this factor may have led to a more positive reception for an individual arriving in a mother and baby home. Others with more positive memories often included references to parental visits to the mother and baby home. In contrast, those who report much poorer relations with the Sisters were generally younger in age and made fewer references to either their education or to visits by parents.

Most of the critical testimonies make no accusations about physical punishments or being underfed. However, there is a recurring theme about performing physical work whilst heavily pregnant. In this respect, this included the practice promoted by the Good Shepherd Sisters of having the pregnant women clean and polish. As evidenced in chapters on other mother and baby homes this equally promoted by the management of Hopedene and Thorndale: cleanliness was indeed next to Godliness. One interviewee, BC speculates that there was a rewards system of less work for good behaviour and this may explain some of the differences in the oral testimonies about Marianvale and Marianville. There was an echo of the testimonies on the Good Shepherd laundries in the account offered by LC who, upon finding herself in the mother and baby home after her baby's planned adoption fell through, explained that she was told to work without pay as a cleaner in a neighbouring house.

Only a minority of testimonies suggest that the Good Shepherd Sisters lobbied for the adoption of a baby. In one case (TY) a nun suggested that the birth mother should keep her child (once she married the father), even though the birth mother had decided on adoption. The testimony of the two Good Shepherd Sisters placed distance between Marianville and Marianvale and the adoption process. However, some of the evidence indicates greater involvement at times. This was the case in TY's observation of potential adoptive parents visiting one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. It is also evident in some of the correspondence sent to the Good Shepherd mother and

baby homes discussing the legal implications if one of the Sisters transported a baby over the border for adoption, or discussing adoption by potential adoptees in England. Moreover, a number of birth mothers, who offered their testimony about their time in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home, (GT/PN/IH) allege that consent forms bear forged signatures. However, no direct allegations against the Good Shepherd Sisters were made in this respect and it should be acknowledged that the legal requirement was that consent forms were completed with the oversight of social services and the courts. It was not possible to offer an assessment of these claims because adoption consent forms were not available to the researchers.

What could be assessed was the merit of other allegations about cross-border adoptions. As has been made clear in earlier sections of this Report (and outline in detail in **Appendix 1**), there was a complex legal framework governing adoption over the long historical period covered by the research. That legal framework did permit cross-border adoption in certain circumstances. However, the oral history interviews raise questions about whether legal and procedural requirements were met in all cases of babies moved over the border for the purposes of adoption. The chapters on Marianvale and Marianville include details of a significant number of babies transferred to Fahan and Stamullen, in the Republic of Ireland, from where their adoptions took place. In the view of the three retired social workers who offered their testimony, this was not legal. However, as **Appendix 1** explains there were circumstances where such a procedure could have occurred. However, the social workers had no personal experiences of cases were an application was made to a court for a licence or provisional adoption order to allow a cross-border adoption to the Republic of Ireland. Nor did they narrate any experience of an adoption of a baby born in Northern Ireland by a blood relative in the Republic of Ireland. Their testimony also revealed the institutional confusion about Fahan's status as the designated baby home for the Catholic Diocese of Derry. Fahan, in Donegal, was in the Diocese of Derry but was not in Northern Ireland.

The two Good Shepherd Sisters who offered testimony maintained that they had no detailed knowledge of the transfer of babies across the Irish border to Fahan, Stamullen or elsewhere. However, the records associated with Marianville and Marianvale provide many examples of cross-border adoptions. However, these records are limited in detail and only further examination of adoption files on both sides of the Irish border will confirm compliance with the relevant legislation in all these cases. The matter is complicated further by the testimony of KO, who was taken from Northern Ireland to the Republic and on to the USA as a baby and obtained 3 different birth certificates in the process. KO's story also raises questions about the extent of the role played by adoptive parents.

On the wider issue of informed consent, SW3 made an observation that coalesced with the sentiment of many of the birth mothers' testimonies (from across all the mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland). In her view, the fact that many birth mothers did not receive any 'real support' meant that 'in their eyes and experience they had no option at all. So it could be construed as a forced consent even though, legally it wouldn't have been seen like that.' SW3 could understand that the experience of adoption was traumatic, particularly for those who felt isolated within mother and baby homes. However, none of the social workers recalled observing, or being party to, any attempt to persuade a birth mother to give up her child against her will.

Taken together, the archival and oral evidence indicates that Marianvale and Marianville were experienced as conservative regimes for many of those that passed through them. As was the case with the mother and baby home system in general, the decision that placement in isolation and imposing silence and secrecy about their personal lives was the best solution for these young women was sadly misjudged. As SW3 made clear, this was, instead, a recipe for creating mental health problems. The evidence from birth mothers and from GP1, who explained that he did not play a role in the psychological health of the expectant women in the home to which he was attached, suggests a system that was not prepared or equipped to deal with the trauma of adoption for many women. Moreover, SW2 observed that some of the older nuns exhibited a 'carryover from the past institutions' in terms of the cultural practices in Marianvale and Marianville in the 1970s and 1980s. However, there was also oral testimony from a significant number of the birth mothers who came forward of more positive experiences in the two homes. In particular, there was strong support for a number of the Sisters who worked within them, even if some of this testimony shared elements of the trauma and sadness that featured in more critical testimonies. Those offering such testimony would likely agree with the social worker who wrote of one mother-to-be in 1978 that 'the relaxed atmosphere of a Mother and Baby Home may be conducive to a well-based decision about the child's future'.[397]

The retired social workers referenced issues of overcrowding, hygiene and staff training in some of the baby/children's homes to which infants from Marianvale and Marianville were sent. They were generally referring to the 1950s and 1960s, but some of the testimony from birth mothers raised serious concerns in relation to one particular home in the 1970s and the health problems experienced by their own babies (SS, DF).

Some of the most difficult testimony was that which made serious allegations about incidents that took place at one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. Three separate women offered testimony about 'internal examinations' that Sister Z carried out on them (BC, NO, SS). One is specific that what took place was sexual abuse. All three were young teenagers at this time. A previous complaint, made in 1969, in a similar context and against an unknown individual at the mother and baby home where Sister Z was based was dismissed contemporaneously; as was the character of the 17-year-old making the complaint. Moreover, the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes did not have a recognised Visitor, to whom residents could complain until the mid-1980s. At that point, Marianville appointed the Convent's Mother Superior as the Visitor.

Two other birth mothers (GT, LC) made observations that they were made to feel humiliated by one of the staff in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home who observed them while they took a shower. Both were residents in the same home at different points. Finally, TR made a serious allegation about a sexual assault on his mother in one of the mother and baby homes during the 1970s. This was the most difficult allegation to process because TR's mother has been dead for many years and his knowledge of the events is very limited. He was born after his mother left the home and TR explained that only rarely did she mention her time in the home. The allegation involved three unnamed males who TR understands had access to the home. TR's mother did not report this to the police or to the Good Shepherd Sisters.

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397 Marianvale correspondence, 1978.

Chapter 5:

Mater Dei Home

The Mater Dei home was established in 1942 by the Legion of Mary and moved to premises at 298 Antrim Road, north Belfast, in 1944 where it remained until its closure in 1984. Admission records for the period as well as surviving correspondence have been examined. The records for women who entered Mater Dei take the form of file cards which carry details under the categories of: name; home address; arrived here from; remarks; baby born [place]; date of birth; if baptised; mother gone to and date; baby gone to and date. There are varying levels of detail, sometimes on the back of the card more information is added. However, in general, the notes are very brief.

None of the birth mothers who came forward to offer their testimony had experience of the Mater Dei home with the exception of one woman who, when offering experience of her time as an expectant mother in a Good Shepherd home, revealed that her own birth mother had been a Mater Dei resident. Her adoptive parents had given her this information but Family Care Society (FCS) can find no record to corroborate this.[398] The lack of testimony on the Mater Dei Home may reflect the fact that very limited numbers who were entering its doors by the 1970s and 1980s. However, research did unearth an autobiographical account of one woman's time in the home during the 1950s which was a useful resource in a number of respects.

The following were the Mater Dei Hostel Rules on its establishment

Mater Dei Hostel Rules

1. This hostel is for unmarried expectant mothers;
2. They are admitted one month before confinement and after discharge from hospital;
3. When able, they are expected to help in the work of the house;
4. The girl must be recommended;
5. The charge of £2 weekly is made before confinement and £2.11.6 for mother and baby after return from hospital;
6. Each girl is expected to bring Ration Book and Layette;
7. Visitors are allowed at the discretion of the praesidium;
8. The mother must be responsible for the placing of the child when the mother leaves the hostel. The hostel helps when possible;
9. The praesidium will not be responsible for any loss or injury of any nature whatsoever sustained by any individual while resident in the hostel;

398 Interview with LC, conducted by Olivia Dee, 14 May 2019

10. Individuals admitted to the hostel agree to abide by all or any of the decisions of the praesidium and undertake to observe the rules of the hostel;
11. We reserve the right to censor letters when we deem it necessary;
12. No girl may leave the hostel without the permission of the sister on duty;
13. No food to be introduced to the hostel by individuals. Any food received from outside source must be handed in for common distribution.

Admission Numbers

Over the 42 years of its existence, 1,418 women entered the Mater Dei Home. Admissions declined over the decades to only one or two admissions a year from 1977-1984. The highest number of admissions was during the 1940s, with 78 admissions in 1943, 79 in 1944 and 72 in 1945. Numbers fluctuated between 30 and 50 expectant girls and women each year after that, with a peak of 60 in 1960.

The impact of the Second World War is evident with high numbers of admissions through the war years and reductions in the years which followed. The impact of the war and, in particular, the fact that large numbers of military personnel were based in Northern Ireland is evident in the Mater Dei records, with 21% of all admissions recording the putative father as a member of the military. Of this subset, 29%, were recorded as being US servicemen. US troops first arrived in Northern Ireland in January 1942, with their numbers peaking at 120,000 in December 1943. The impact of the arrival of US troops was 'immediate and the excitement they generated was undeniable'.[399] There was considerable concern through the war years about female behaviour and the increased freedom many women experienced with changes in work and living arrangements. Of great anxiety was the 'illicit sexual activity with the American men local women clearly found so attractive' and there was considerable effort by both Northern Irish and American authorities to ensure that troops met 'suitable' women and to discourage marriages between troops and local women.[400] Criticism of the US troops was kept muted in the public domain and the complaints about their behaviour was often redirected towards the women with whom they associated.[401] The Mater Dei records provide only glimpses into the nature of the sexual encounters between local women and the visiting military personnel. In two cases the behaviour of troops was referenced, with one woman's notes recording that the father of her child was an American soldier and how she 'thought she was doped' before having sex. In the other case, in 1945, a 21-year-old woman's notes starkly recorded 'mother met two Americans and was raped. Does not know them'.[402] More broadly, the impact of the influx of military personnel was measured in the illegitimacy rates for Northern Ireland, which increased from 4.61% in 1940 to a peak of 5.62% in 1944 before reducing to 4.37 in 1946.[403]

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399 Leanne McCormick, Regulating sexuality: women in twentieth century Northern Ireland, (Manchester, 2009), p. 148.

400 For more on relations between local women and US troops see, Leanne McCormick, 'One Yank and They're Off: Interaction between US Troops and Northern Irish Women, 1942-45, Journal of the History of Sexuality, 15:2 (2006), 228-57; Simon Topping, 'A Hundred Thousand Welcomes'? Unionism, nationalism, partition and the arrival of American forces in Northern Ireland in January 1942', Journal of Transatlantic Studies 16:1 (2018) 81-100

401 McCormick, Regulating Sexuality, p. 157

402 Mater Dei Admission Register

403 Registrar General Report for Northern Ireland, 1946

Age and Occupation

The age of women admitted to Mater Dei was not always recorded, but of the 1,131 records where age was noted it can be seen that half of those admitted were between the ages of 18 and 23 and a further 30% were in the 24 to 30 age range. Often the perception is that it was young teenagers who entered mother and baby homes, but in the case of the Mater Dei home only 8% of the residents were between the ages of 15 and 17. As the majority of women were between the ages of 18 and 30, many may have been living independently. It is noticeable that many of the women had rural addresses listed as their permanent home address with a Belfast location as their last residence before entry to Mater Dei. It is likely that, for many individuals, the latter addresses were lodgings taken while they worked in Belfast, or, alternatively, the locations where those involved in domestic service were employed.

Occupation was not recorded for women entering Mater Dei, but is intermittently noted in reference to where a woman went after leaving Mater Dei; for example, going into domestic service. Previous research suggests that in the Republic of Ireland middle and working class women entered different mother and baby homes/institutions. [404] In his testimony for this report, Priest 1 also offered up his assumption that the mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland were also used by young Catholic women from more affluent families.[405] However, this does not appear to have been the case in Mater Dei. The women came from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds, many worked in domestic service, others were from rural backgrounds and had limited finances, while a further segment were described as coming from respectable and prosperous families.

Catchment Areas

Women were admitted to Mater Dei from all counties of Northern Ireland as well as the border counties of Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal. The cities of Belfast, Dublin and Derry/Londonderry were also well represented (see **Appendix A - Figure 1**). The relatively high numbers from rural counties illustrate that unmarried pregnant women often left these areas for the relative anonymity of the big city. Hopedene, where the addresses of birth mothers have also been analysed, showed a similar pattern with 73% of its residents coming from outside Belfast.

Entry Routes

Particularly in the period before the late 1960s, the Mater Dei records indicate that being unmarried and pregnant was seen as a calamitous mistake and one which could ruin a life. One letter, sent to Mater Dei in 1944, expressed thanks for admitting a young woman and stated that 'I am sure she will appreciate that you have been the means of giving her a second chance and not spoiling her life entirely'.[406] In some cases, the blame was re-directed towards men who had taken advantage of young women. One letter sent to Mater Dei, also in 1944, requesting entry for an expectant mother

404 Lindsey Earner-Byrne, Mother and child: Maternity and child welfare in Dublin, 1922–60 (Manchester, 2007), p. 185.

405 Interview with Priest 1, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 15 December 2018.

406 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1944

explained that the 'young girl just 21 years old' has 'unfortunately got herself into trouble through, I honestly believe, no fault of her own'.[407]

Being pregnant was often referred to as being 'in trouble' and time in a home and adoption of the baby was viewed as a solution to this. Historian Christopher Shepard has argued that without the 'legal protections afforded by marriage, financial independence or family support, the only viable option available for the majority of unmarried mothers was to give their children up for adoption'.[408] It is certainly the case that large numbers did so. The limited options available to single mothers were highlighted in a letter sent from County Fermanagh, in 1942, which described a woman who 'is in trouble' and explained that 'expectant unmarried mothers are not taken in the local hospital and her mother does not want to send her to the Workhouse'.[409] Added to the limited options was the added pressure of keeping a pregnancy secret and the damage to 'respectability' it could cause. Across the island of Ireland, pregnancy outside of marriage carried a huge social stigma and 'parents of all religious denominations were keen to remove daughters from the eyes of society' and mother and baby homes were central to this concealment.[410]

Maryanne Kerr's autobiography Over the mountain provides evidence of this. She explains how she became pregnant in Dublin while living independently from her Donegal-based family. She was brought home by her suspicious parents, who arranged for the family doctor to examine her in a process which began with his question "So, what have we been getting up to in the big wicked city, eh?' Maryanne recalled that 'I was mortally ashamed, I squeezed my eyes tight, squeezed the tears out of them and wished I could die there and then.' After the doctor confirmed her pregnancy and her mother had screamed that she was a 'whore' and a 'filthy bitch', her parents retreated downstairs to talk with the doctor 'and make plans.' These plans led Maryanne to Belfast's Mater Dei home where she stayed until she left for a nearby 'private nursing home' to give birth. Her younger brothers were told she had tuberculosis and was in a Dublin hospital.[411]

A maternity nurse from Co. Tyrone encapsulated these concerns about secrecy and unwittingly demonstrated that pressure also came from medical professionals when writing to Mater Dei, in 1943, about a 'deserving case, a little girl of 19 who is 6 ½ months pregnant, her mother is a widow and is frantic about this child. I advised her to get her away to a home. She is young and strong and willing to work and will do anything to keep this situation from the public'.[412] Also in 1943, a mother wrote to Mater Dei regarding her daughter who was pregnant and in the home, expressing concern about another female from the same area who was thought to have also taken up residency in Mater Dei. She hoped the two young women had not met, as 'the secret is out if they have'.[413] A further letter sent, in 1953, by a birth mother returning her consent to adopt form explained 'it is wonderful to be at home again and far more that know [sic] one around here knows'.[414]

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407 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1944

408 Shephard, 'The Legion of Mary', p. 130

409 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1942

410 McCormick, Regulating Sexuality, p. 69

411 Maryanne Kerr, Over the mountain (Michael Joseph, 1996) p. 186-7.

412 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1943

413 Mater Dei, Correspondence, 1943

414 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1955

The last two examples illustrate the fear that neighbours might discover a pregnancy. This produced anxiety about potential misdirected post. For this reason, one birth mother wrote to Mater Dei in 1952, enclosing a stamped addressed envelope for a reply as there were two other women locally with the same name and she did not want them getting post in relation to her recent pregnancy and stay in the home.[415] For some women, the fear of being identified led them to use pseudonyms. However, the Mater Dei records and those of other institutions often record the real name as well; so, at some point the secret was revealed.[416]

The desire for secrecy about a pregnancy also extended within families. In many cases, women did not tell their parents that they were pregnant. In other examples, a select number of close family members were in on the secret whilst others were kept in the dark. There was a gender dynamic to this. Female family members, sisters, mothers and aunts were often entrusted with the secret and birth mothers often went to stay with female relatives on leaving Mater Dei. In one case, for example, the birth mother's parents were unaware that their daughter was pregnant, a secret maintained with the help of another daughter who told the parents that her sister was in England.[417] Examples like this very much corroborate the testimony from Priest 1, Priest 2, Sister 1 and Sister 2 (see **Chapter 4**) who all provided instances where family members mobilised to conceal a pregnancy from either other family members or the wider community.[418] Keeping a pregnancy secret from a birth mother's father was also relatively common. One letter, written in 1944 by a family friend, described how a father did not know that his daughter was pregnant as 'it would mean terrible dissension in her home and in all probability, she would be turned out'. Further correspondence, sent nine years later from the grandmother of the baby, revealed that the boy was now boarded out and that her husband was never told about his birth.[419] As in this case, many women who married and went on to have further children, did not reveal the existence of a previous child to their families, husbands or subsequent children. In a letter to Mater Dei, informing staff about her marriage, one woman explained that her husband did not know she had had a child 'if he knew I don't think he would get over it. He is so good living and we are so happy and he thinks the world of me. It would ruin me if he knew I made a mistake before'.[420]

For the parents of single women who were pregnant, the preferred option was often a quick marriage. The records reveal a number of the reasons why these marriages did or did not take place. Religion was a major issue; if the putative father was a Protestant, this was a barrier to marriage frequently. The majority of women who entered Mater Dei were Catholic and as in Northern Ireland, 'the overall attitude of the Catholic and Protestant churches to one another has been negative even antagonistic, this has carried over into their views of mixed marriage'.[421] For Protestant and Catholic Churches concern was over conversion and the religious instruction received by the children of any such marriage. Mater Dei case notes often record how the man involved was Protestant and willing to marry, but not whether these marriages took place. In at least one case, from 1942, a woman had

415 Mater Dei, Correspondence, 1952

416 Mater Dei, Correspondence, 1942

417 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1968

418 Interview with Priest 1, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 15 December 2018; Interview with Priest 2, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 13 February, 2019; Interview with Sister 1, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 17 November 2018; Interview with Sister 2, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 24 November 2018.

419 Mater Dei, Correspondence, 1944, 1953

420 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1955

421 Valerie Morgan et al, Mixed Marriages in Northern Ireland: Institutional Responses (University of Ulster, 1996) section 3.

been advised by her parish priest not to marry the Protestant father of her child.[422] In another set of case notes, from 1946, it is recorded that the Protestant putative father 'would marry…but will not turn [meaning he would not convert to Catholicism]'.[423] Even when the putative father was willing to convert religion the match may still have been unacceptable. Case notes, from 1949, observe of one Protestant father-to-be: 'thinks he might convert and marry her. But her family would prevent it if they knew'.[424] In other situations the reluctance of the woman involved to convert was the issue. One record explained that 'putative father is a Protestant … [she] will not marry him' Notes on another couple explained that he 'wanted to marry her but [she]…refused as she did not want to convert.'[425] In other records, the statement that 'putative father is a Protestant' was effectively a statement that explained why a marriage would not take place. Other reasons that marriages did not take place included the fact that the putative father was already married and in many such cases the case notes bluntly stated that there was 'no hope of getting married'.[426]

While a number of women entered Mater Dei during their pregnancy, there were others who came directly from hospital after giving birth. The name of a hospital was given in 33% of cases as the location women had come from. Members of the Legion of Mary were involved in visiting 'the maternity wards…each week in case any unmarried mother needed assistance'.[427] This interaction is recorded in the correspondence to Mater Dei, with one woman writing, in 1943, from the Jubilee Maternity hospital describing herself as 'a young unmarried Catholic girl'. She had been visited by a Sister from Mater Dei and asked to come to the hostel 'till I get my baby fixed up'. She explained that 'I would like to get my baby with some good Catholics. My own people haven't heard yet about my baby. I would need a little shawl or blanket to wrap up the baby'.[428] Another woman wrote from the Union Infirmary, explaining how she had been working as a domestic servant and her mistress was willing to take her back and help her get her 'baby fixed up' She wondered could she come to the Mater Dei hostel for a month or so until she got a home for her baby.[429]

In other cases, women were directly referred by priests or doctors or welfare authorities. For example, in 1952, Rev. M wrote to Mater Dei regarding a member of his congregation who was in Malone Place with an appeal for help to have her baby adopted. He was 'anxious that the baby be adopted at once that the mother may come home to us. This is a really sad charitable case'.[430] The role of doctors can be seen in the case of a 24 year-old woman who was referred to Mater Dei, in 1953, by a Dr M and then went to work for him after the birth of her baby. The baby went to Nazareth Lodge in Portadown.[431] MD, a 30 year-old woman, was referred to Mater Dei in 1955 by the 'welfare nurse as she was living in very bad conditions'.[432] The changes in social service provision over the decades can be seen by the shifting descriptions of those responsible for referring birth mothers

422 Mater Dei, Case Notes, 1942
423 Mater Dei, Case Notes, 1946
424 Mater Dei, Case Notes, 1949.
425 Mater Dei, Case Notes, 1954
426 Mater Dei, Case Notes, 1945
427 Maureen McManus, 'Legion Adoption Society', (ND) p. 3
428 Mater Dei, Correspondence, 1942
429 Mater Dei, Correspondence, 1942
430 Mater Dei, Correspondence, 1952.
431 Mater Dei Case Notes, 1952.
432 Mater Dei Case Notes, 1955.

to Mater Dei: by the 1970s the term 'welfare' was replaced by 'social workers'.[433] The links between Mater Dei and other institutions is also clear, with 7% of women entering via the Good Shepherd Sisters or other Catholic Institutions. These included the Good Shepherd Sisters in Belfast and Newry, Regina Coeli, Sancta Maria and St Vincent De Paul. Movement from Protestant mother and baby homes to Mater Dei is also evident with 33 women coming from Malone Place; 18 women coming from Thorndale; and 3 from Hopedene.[434]

A number of women, from Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland originally, have English cities listed as their place of referral. These included 27 women from London; 15 from Birmingham; 6 from Liverpool; 3 from Manchester; and one from Coventry, Hull, Sheffield and Bradford. Catholic organisations in Britain were closely involved in this referral process, moving pregnant women back to Ireland and this reveals the networks which existed within the Church regarding unmarried mothers and their children. The organisations mentioned included St Nicholas Mother and baby home London; Southwark Catholic Rescue Society; Sacred Heart Convent, Highgate; and St Joseph's Birmingham.[435]

Conditions in the Home

Unlike the other homes, no one came forward with testimony about their own experience as a birth mother in Mater Dei. Maryanne Kerr's autobiography does provide some insights on the home in the 1950s. Her account records a dormitory with several other pregnant women. The sleeping arrangements reminded her of the convent school she had boarded in as a girl. On her first night at Mater Dei, she befriended the girl in the next bed and 'made frequent sorties to the kitchen for coffee and biscuits, which we were allowed to do.' She recalled that there were 14 residents in Mater Dei who were 'at various stages of their pregnancy or, having had their babies, spending a six-week post-natal period in which they were supposed to decide whether to keep their child or have it adopted' Maryanne described this as a 'stupid system' and cruel' because mothers 'quickly formed an attachment to their babies' She felt 'it would have been more humane to have them taken from them at birth, preferably unseen.'[436] However, as is discussed in many of the oral testimonies discussing a number of the mother and baby homes, this was also a far from ideal scenario and was itself the cause of trauma to many birth mothers.

433 Mater Dei Case Notes, 1970s

434 Mater Dei Case Notes, 1940-1980.

435 Mater Dei Case Notes.

436 Maryanne Kerr, Over the mountain, p. 190-1.

Maryanne described the staff and volunteers who worked at Mater Dei:

> *The establishment was run by the woman who'd received me, a bad-tempered spinster, 'Matron' as she was known. She was universally hated. In her virtuous work, she was ably assisted by 'the committee', a group of young women, 'Legion of Mary' girls .... These were the women who came in every evening to sit with us, talk to us, listen to our problems, give advice. These days they'd be called counsellors, but those days, in that place, they were known as busybodies, patronizing, prissy little virgins, every one of them. They, too, were detested.*

Her autobiography uses the term 'inmates' to describe the residents and Maryanne describes a work regime which sounds similar to the other mother and baby homes during the 1950s. The residents carried out the cooking, cleaning and did the laundry for the home. Her task was 'scrubbing' the floors were 'both tiled and wooden, hard on the kneecaps, and Matron insisted they be kept immaculate.' Maryanne 'didn't mind. This was mortification of the flesh time, atonement had to be made; it was only right and proper to be on my knees, scrubbing my sins away.'

No books were allowed, but well-thumbed magazines were to be found in the common room. Maryanne explained that 'it was here too of an evening that the interminable knitting went on, the matinée coats, the bootees, minute sprigs of clothing for the newly-born, but not beyond'. The residents also commiserated with each other in this common room and 'laughed' and 'sang along with the radio - in tune and out of tune to the latest hits'. She describes dancing and further 'laughing' before noting that in 'one split second, the whole merry scene could disintegrate. It took only one of us to break down, to collapse into a chair in tears, and the laughing would stop, dead. And the entire room just suddenly be filled with the moaning and rocking and wailing of unutterable despair.'

If Maryanne's recollection is accurate, Mater Dei appears to have offered more freedom of movement than the other homes. Once a week the women went out to the pictures and one or two even met up with their boyfriends, returning 'three sheets to the wind, staggering in the door.' The other pregnant women had 'to shut them up and hide them from Matron.'

Maryanne recalls the cheap rings, bought from Woolworth's for two shillings, which the Mater Dei residents wore when they went to the labour ward. However, she did not require one because her birth was planned for a neighbouring private nursing home. In this home, another Matron addressed her as Miss, 'hissing it out like a viper'. In her nine days there, she encountered no one else other than the cleaning woman. With no visitors and no radio, there was no sound other than that of the street traffic and 'the crying of my child, my darling boy.' The Matron insisted that Maryanne breastfeed her son, despite the latter's explanation that the other Mater Dei residents told her it would only make it harder to give up her baby for adoption.[437]

Other personal insights into Mater Dei conditions are sparse. While there are no surviving inspection reports from the Ministry of Home Affairs, the Mater Dei Praesidium minutes record that Miss Kathleen Forrest, the Children's Inspector with the Ministry of Home Affairs in the 1950s, visited on several occasions.[438] She recommended, in 1955, a number of improvements to the home and also advised that it register as a voluntary home, which would allow Mater Dei to claim back some of the

437 Kerr, Over the mountain, p. 192-194

438 Cited in Shepard, 'Legion of Mary' p. 139

capital costs involved in improvements to the facilities.[439] A number of the other mother and baby homes registered as voluntary homes as well, presumably for the same reasons. Seemingly, further inspections drew attention to the need for improvements as the 1968 Annual Report of Mater Dei Praesidium recorded that the 'hostel did not conform to the standards of other mother and baby homes' and 'certain improvements were necessary'. The Diocese of Down and Connor granted £2,500 towards the cost of the renovations on this occasion.[440]

The same 1968 report provided some detail about conditions in the home, describing the work carried out by the residents of the hostel as 'similar in nature to the humdrum business of housework' Its 'guests' received tasks 'allocated as weekly duty'. It admitted that recreation was 'rather limited' and consisted of 'mainly watching TV and knitting'. The religious element of life in the hostel was also emphasised: 'guests are encouraged by good example and prayer to go to mass and Holy Communion as often as possible. Daily prayers, including the Rosary are recited'.[441]

Mater Dei gathered some unwanted publicity in June 1982 when a High Court Judge suggested an immediate investigation of the premises following allegations that children living in the home were suffering from scabies as a result of being bitten by insects. A doctor had given a statement saying there was 'dampness in sleeping quarters, wallpaper peeling from walls above radiators and dirty mattresses lying in the hallway'. Mrs Patricia Heaney, President of Mater Dei, said they refuted the claims and said they had recently been inspected by a public health official who had only made a few minor recommendations. She explained that the hostel was 'primarily for unmarried mothers but we sometimes take in other people at the request of the Eastern Health and Social Services Board'. She went on, 'we normally stay out of the limelight because of the nature of the main part of our work but this claim could hit at the very reason for our existence and make a pregnant girl afraid to seek out help'.[442]

Infant mortality

There were 88 deaths of children recorded over the period of Mater Dei's role as a mother and baby home. The records often included very little detail about the circumstances of these deaths. However, 43 case notes record that the baby died in hospital; another explains the death occurred while the child lived with a foster mother; one baby died after moving to Nazareth Lodge in Belfast (St Joseph's); and one was killed in a car accident. In addition, 18 stillbirths were recorded in the Mater Dei files.

In the years between 1942 and 1946, the numbers of children from the home who died was very high. In 1942, 6 babies died, 12 in 1943, 15 in 1944 and 9 in 1945, falling to 4 in 1946. This five-year period saw the highest admissions into Mater Dei: 404 women. Assuming this number of residents equates to 404 babies this represents a mortality rate of 114 per 1,000 births. The mortality rate for infants under one year-old per 1,000 births in Northern Ireland in these years was 76 in 1944

439 Shepard, 'Legion of Mary' fn. 55, p. 140

440 Annual Report of Mater Dei Praesidium, 1968

441 Annual Report of Mater Dei Praesidium, 1968

442 Belfast Telegraph, 28 June 1982.

falling to 54 by 1946 with an average of 73 over the period.[443] Thereafter, there was no similar cluster of high numbers of deaths associated with Mater Dei. The unpublished written recollections of Legion of Mary members record the high numbers of women entering Mater Dei during the Second World War and suggest that many of these 'expectant mothers were in poor health due mainly to undernourishment and neglect, and this was frequently passed on to the children and there were a number of deaths'. The recollections go on to report that an outbreak of Gastroenteritis within the home almost had 'serious repercussions'. The City Medical Officer reportedly 'could have closed the hostel, but stayed his hand because of his admiration for the work' of Mater Dei. However, he did insist that fully trained personnel must be employed by the home in future, indicating that this was not the case previously.[444]

Death certificates for 13 of the babies who spent time in Mater Dei during World War Two reveal that gastroenteritis was the cause of death; 12 of them died in the Ava Hospital, the Children's Ward of the Union Infirmary at the Workhouse in Belfast and 1 in Purdysburn Fever Hospital. The two youngest babies were both ten days old, four were between 3 and 5 weeks old, five were 2-4 months old, and one was 5 months old. The deaths were spread over the war years, suggesting that gastroenteritis was a recurrent problem in the home over the period.

There are no records of birth mothers dying in Mater Dei.

Exit Pathways

Information about where women went when leaving Mater Dei was recorded intermittently. There is evidence in a number of cases of individuals moving to other institutions within a wider Catholic network. In 1942, a 33 year-old woman was recorded as going to High Park Convent in Dublin (which operated a Magdalene Laundry), while her baby went to a woman in Belfast. A number of other women are recorded as going to a 'Good Shepherd Convent', most often in Belfast or Newry. They were presumably destined for the respective St Mary's home in each convent, in which laundries operated. The Legion of Mary network was also utilised, with a number of women going to its Regina Coeli homes in Belfast and Dublin. In about half the cases they were accompanied by their babies.

As well as stigma and shame and the damage to an unmarried woman's reputation that could be caused by a pregnancy, some faced other unnerving concerns. In particular cases, this included the potential of being sent to a reformatory, another reference to the deployment of Magdalene laundries for the incarceration of young unmarried Catholic mothers. This was demonstrated in correspondence, discovered in the Mater Dei files, between two priests concerning a woman who was in Hopedene in 1948. The priests were keen to find Catholic foster parents for her child, but the letters revealed that the young mother had been brought up in a convent orphanage in Dublin and was concerned that the nuns would hear 'of her disgrace' and have her placed in a reformatory as she was still under 21.[445]

443 Annual Report of the Registrar General, 1946.

444 Joe Jackson and Mary Smyth, 'Mater Dei' (No date), p.4

445 Catholic Chaplin RAF Aldergrove to Fr D., 19/10/1948, Mater Dei Correspondence

The Mater Dei records yielded greater information on where babies went on leaving the home than was the case for the destinations of the birth mothers (see **Appendix A - Figure 2**). They reveal that a quarter of babies and mothers left together. Unfortunately, we do not know the longer-term outcomes for these mothers and babies, but it is certain that, until at least the 1960s, life for an unmarried mother bringing up a child alone was incredibly difficult. It is inevitable that a large number of the women who did leave with their baby returned to their families where the baby was then passed off as belonging to another family member.[446]

A number of women married the father of their child and in a small number of cases birth mothers left directly from the home with their baby to get married. It is not clear if these marriages involved the father of the child because the records sometimes just reveal the bald fact that a marriage took place.

Boarding Out/Fostering

22% of babies went to a different destination address than that of their mothers. A child in this category was probably boarded-out/fostered, as a short-term solution, until either the mother was in a position to care for the child or whilst arrangements were made for a future adoption. A 1959 report on children in care by the Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council (NICWC) recognised the strong tradition of boarding out in Northern Ireland, which left a child 'technically in care but living in the community'.[447] The NICWC report also recorded the high levels of illegitimate children who were in care. For children under five years old, 69.4% of children under the care of welfare authorities and 82.5% of children in voluntary homes were illegitimate.[448]

Voluntary Homes

This high percentage of illegitimate children in voluntary homes drew the concern of the Child Welfare Council which suggested that voluntary homes accepted the 'illegitimate child because no other solution can be found in the immediate crisis of the child's birth'. It was considered that some of the voluntary homes were networked with other institutions which provided for the 'unmarried mother and hence they feel a responsibility for accepting the illegitimate baby'.[449] The NICWC report also recognised that during the first two years of an illegitimate child's life 'the greatest pressure is brought to bear by the mother or her relatives to have the child placed in care'. Often the only perceived solution involved 'placing the child in a home, and the return of the mother to the community without the social handicap of an illegitimate baby'. The report's authors thought it unfortunate that 'the immediate and ultimate good of the child is in these cases is not sufficiently considered'.[450] In terms of the voluntary homes, the biggest percentage of illegitimate children

446 McCormick, Regulating sexuality, p. 69.

447 Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, 1959

448 Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, 1959

449 Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, 1959

450 Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, 1959

were in St Joseph's Baby Home in Belfast and Nazareth Lodge in Belfast; nearly a quarter of the babies from Mater Dei were placed in either St Joseph's or Nazareth Lodge in Belfast. [451] Nearly 40% of all the babies leaving Mater Dei between 1942 and 1984 were placed in baby homes, with other destinations including Nazareth Lodge Derry/ Londonderry, Nazareth House baby home in Portadown, Nazareth House baby home in Fahan, County Donegal, and St Clare's baby home in Stamullen, County Meath.

The NICWC report also drew attention to the involvement of Catholic clergy in placing illegitimate children in voluntary homes. It found that of the 294 children placed in voluntary homes by clergy, 70% were illegitimate. The records of Mater Dei record how the Catholic clergy were involved intimately in Catholic children's/baby homes. Case notes record that babies were moved to particular homes 'through the influence' of particular priests.[452]

In terms of change over time, the placing of babies with foster carers or in a baby home remained commonplace into the 1970s and the early 1980s. In the ten years, up to the closure of Mater Dei, in 1984, half of babies went home with their mothers and half went to foster care or a baby home.

Adoption

The ideal solution from the perspective of Mater Dei's management group was to place babies with 'good Catholic families', with a view to adoption. To facilitate the adoption of babies from Mater Dei, the Mater Misericordiae presidium was formed and registered under the Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1950 as an adoption society. It operated until 1970 and arranged 312 adoptions in the years before adoption work was taken over by the Down and Connor Family Welfare Adoption Agency.[453] However, in the 1940s and 1950s, it proved very difficult to find adoptive families, and the history of the Legion Adoption Society records that 'our greatest problem, however, was finding adopters for the babies in the hostel'.[454] The poor living conditions and lingering poverty in many post-war Catholic communities in Northern Ireland meant that some babies were sent to unsuitable foster homes. One result of this was that, between August 1945 and May 1946, five mothers and children were readmitted to Mater Dei because of failed fostering arrangements.[455] Another factor linked to the breakdown of fostering arrangements was the requirement for birth mothers, before the 1960s, to cover costs for fostering. These fees were often unsustainable for single women, leading to their children being taken into institutional care. Mater Dei records reveal evidence of some fathers being involved in assisting with the costs for fostering their baby. However a far greater number either refused to acknowledge a child as their own or to assist in the child's upkeep, even when they did admit paternity.[456] Mater Dei files indicate that some women took legal action to force fathers to contribute to their children's maintenance. An example from case notes in 1952 recorded

451 Report into the Operation of Social Services in relation to Child Welfare, Northern Ireland Child Welfare Council, 1959

452 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1960; Mater Dei Case Notes, 1952

453 Mater Dei Praesidium Minutes, July 1971

454 Maureen McManus, 'Legion Adoption Society' (No date), p.3.

455 Shepard, 'Legion of Mary', p.133

456 Mater Dei, Case Notes, 1952

that one birth mother had 'taken an action against the putative father (Protestant) who has agreed to pay £1 a week towards baby's keep'; a sum that was later reduced to '15/ per week until the child is 14'.[457] In one case, the father was married but 'says he will pay for the baby's upkeep'.[458]

Advertising

Mater Dei correspondence contains replies to advertisements which were placed in the personal columns of local newspapers aimed at attracting foster parents and adoptive parents. This correspondence often details the adoptions which followed, with solicitor's letters and the requests for Mater Misericordiae to complete the necessary paperwork.[459] It is unclear from the records exactly how many children who appear in the Mater Dei records were adopted, as this is often not recorded. In numerous cases, it is possible to trace that a baby was boarded out or was despatched to a baby home/children's home, but it is not clear what happened afterwards. However, given the difficulties for single mothers to bring up their children alone, it is reasonable to assume that a large number of these children were adopted.

Letters from mothers

A significant element of the material archived at Mater Dei consists of very poignant letters from mothers inquiring after their children. For one mother, the concern was that her son would not be adopted but, would instead, be kept in St. Josephs' baby home/Nazareth Lodge until reaching adulthood. She wrote, in 1964, enquiring as to whether her son of four months was still in St. Joseph's baby home as she was 'worrying in case he will ever be adopted', despite the fact that a couple had indicated they wished to adopt the child. She noted that she had not signed any papers and this was a concern for her, revealing that she had an awareness of the relevant adoption protocols and was concerned that her son had been placed in a home without her consent. She explained to a member of the Mater Dei staff that 'you told me there was nothing to worry about but I just can't help thinking that something has gone wrong. I know you are doing your best for him'.[460] In this case, the prospective adoptive parents were initially turned down on the grounds of 'insufficient accommodation', but the couple carried out the required improvements to their home and the final adoption order was granted in 1965.

The letters also reveal a level of flexibility which appears to have been present in the adoption process. Correspondence from a mother thanking Mater Dei for their kindness, described how she had visited her son, at his adoptive parents' home. It also reveals her pain in giving up her child for adoption. She explained how she was sad when leaving but did not experience 'the same heart break as the parting in Belfast'. In previous letters, she described filling in the adoption form with a 'very sore heart', however, following the visit she explained that 'he has made his new parents so happy and to see him so much loved, that I think now I did the right thing'.[461] Another woman

457 Mater Dei, Case Notes, 1952
458 Mater Dei, Case Notes, 1952
459 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1969
460 Mater Dei Correspondence 1964
461 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1954-55

wrote a similar letter, asking after her daughter: 'I think of her a lot, but I also think that I have done the right thing as I'm sure I never could have given her the life that they will give her, not alone anyway'.[462]

Adoption consent forms were sent by Mater Misericordiae to birth mothers and letters written in response, such as those cited above, often recorded gratitude to the home. A number of letters from the 1950s indicated how mothers clearly felt they were unable to bring a child up alone, and offered their appreciation to the family who adopted their child. One woman wrote how she hoped her son would not give the adoptive family, 'much trouble and I hope he will always be happy'.[463] However, this evidence should be treated with some caution. Two of the birth mothers who gave oral testimony about the adoption of their babies to the researchers indicated that they had written such letters. One was written at the insistence of the young woman's mother, while the second birth mother wrote a similar letter to the Good Shepherd Sisters in the hope that they might take her side against her mother and assist in her fight to prevent her baby's adoption.[464]

The pain of giving up a baby without knowing what the child's precise destination was to be was evident in a letter written by a mother to Mater Dei, in 1953, asking for assistance and comfort. She wanted to visit the family her baby would be adopted into before signing the consent: 'law or no law…I must first see the home and the people and it settled into it. I will give it up contented then, but only that way. After I do that and I sign the adoption papers I will never see the child again for it won't be mine then'.[465] This birth mother had been unable to find long term foster parents and was being encouraged by the welfare authorities to have the baby adopted. Again, the limited options for single mothers made adoption the option that was presented as 'best for a baby', giving the child a life which could not be offered by a single mother. In the end, this baby was adopted and there is no record that the mother ever met the adoptive parents, although she was persuaded to sign the paperwork.

Adoption to the USA

The correspondence from Mater Dei gives greater insight into the legal procedures involved in adoption. During 1966, a lengthy correspondence took place with a couple from Philadelphia who wanted to adopt a baby. A letter from the solicitor who acted for Mater Dei explained that they needed to be domiciled and resident in Northern Ireland to adopt a child in the jurisdiction and to apply for a licence to move a child from Northern Ireland. The solicitor explained to the couple that if they were both American citizens they had 'no hope of getting a Licence or adopting a child'. However, the couple had both been born in Northern Ireland and applied for a licence to remove a child outside Northern Ireland and adopt the child in Philadelphia. The note in the file stated that they 'would like a baby girl with dark hair…they will let us know the name they would like'. This couple were successful and adopted a baby boy, rather than a girl, in October 1966.[466]

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462 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1970

463 Mater Dei, Correspondence, 1955

464 Interview with IH, conducted by Ida Milne, 4 July 2018; Interview with NO, conducted by Olivia Dee, 21 May 2019.

465 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1955

466 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1966

Adoption of Babies to Other Parts of UK

There was evidently movement of children from Mater Dei to other parts of the UK, but the Mater Dei records do always provide full details on whether or not the necessary legal procedures were completed. One such adoption took place in 1954, following an advertisement placed in the Derry Journal, which indicated that a six-week old baby boy was available for adoption. A response came from an Irish woman living in Scotland, who wanted to know if the child was healthy and of sound parentage. 'One has to be careful', she wrote, while indicating a willingness to adopt the baby 'provided it's the type of child I would think suitable for my requirements'. The Mater Dei files contain a report written by the Children's Officer in Scotland who had inspected this woman's house and, just over a week from the date of this report, the woman called at Mater Dei in Belfast to collect the baby. Six weeks later, Mater Dei received a request, from the adoptive family's solicitor, for the signed consent form. This correspondence indicated that the baby's mother 'should know what she is signing and should read before doing so' and also clarified that this should be done in the presence of a Justice of the Peace.[467]

In another case a couple in England viewed a television programme about poverty in Northern Ireland, broadcast in 1970, prompting them to write to a member of the Social Studies staff at Queen's University Belfast, to see if they could adopt a 'poverty-stricken child'. In their correspondence, the couple explained that they would 'like our baby girl to have dark hair and come from reasonably intelligent parents and we would consider it a bonus if she had the possibility of becoming artistic'. Belfast welfare authorities apparently could not help them, so the academic passed the letter to Mater Dei. The register recorded that they did eventually adopt a baby boy from Mater Dei.[468]

Adoption to the Republic of Ireland

As discussed previously, as the researchers were unable to access adoption files, it is unclear whether the required legal considerations and procedures were implemented in the movement of children across the Irish border. Based on the surviving records in the Mater Dei files, those running the home do not appear to have engaged in discussion about this matter. The Legion of Mary does record that its members 'escorted mothers and babies to orphanages in Dublin and Donegal' from the Mater Dei home.[469] Based on the information which is recorded, over 120 babies were placed in institutions in the Republic of Ireland. While not all of these children may have been adopted, there is evidence that adoptions did take place in numerous instances. That this was a common practice was referred to in a letter, sent to Mater Dei in 1970, which explained that 'the nursery in Portadown' (presumably the Nazareth House baby home) placed babies outside of Northern Ireland and that a named representative of that home 'would only be too pleased to discuss what procedure they normally employ within the new Adoption Act'.[470]

467 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1957

468 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1970

469 Maureen McManus, 'Legion Adoption Society' p.3.

470 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1970

Further correspondence detailed the transfer of a one baby to Stamullen from Mater Dei for the purposes of adoption. A letter from the Reverend Mother in Stamullen explained that the baby's birth mother had been informed of all the certificates she was required to bring with her. A letter from the woman's father, in county Derry, to Mater Dei referred to how his daughter had written about 'convent at Stamullen and her adoption case'. The letter detailed their arrangements for travel to the convent and requested that the nuns be informed of when to expect them.[471] That official state agencies were involved in the process of cross-border adoption is illustrated in correspondence from the Irish An Bord Uchtála (Adoption Board) to Mater Dei, in 1954, referring to an application to adopt a child who had been born in Jubilee hospital in 1945 to a mother with a Belfast address. The subsequent correspondence indicates that she signed and returned the consent papers and presumably the adoption went ahead.[472]

Correspondence from 1956 records that an application was made in the 'Eire Courts' to have an infant, whose mother had been resident in Northern Ireland, adopted across the border. The solicitor involved in the case recorded that his firm had been acting for the adoptive father, who had made an application to the Northern Ireland courts in 1951 but 'for some reason or other...the application was struck out'. The solicitor included the adoption consent form and requested that it be completed and forwarded to the 'Adoption Board in Eire'. Also included was communication from the baby's mother and the signed consent forms. It is unclear where the baby was at this point. The Mater Dei register records him leaving the home for an address in Belfast, presumably with a foster mother. Whether the baby had crossed the border with the adoptive parents is unclear. By the time the adoption papers were being completed the child was five years old. This case raises questions about movement across the border and also about the monitoring of children involved in adoption cases, which unfortunately cannot be answered without access to adoption records on both sides of the border.

It is, however, evident that in some cases at least, legal procedures were not always followed, as the autobiographical account by Maryanne Kerr reveals. Her account offers cold comfort for those trying to get at the 'truth' around some of the archival material on illegitimate births, mother and baby homes and adoptions. She makes it apparent that great efforts were made to conceal her pregnancy, her identity and that of her new born son:

> *The doctor had seen to it that the case would not go through the medical records. They had taken the precaution of changing my name; it was as if the whole unfortunate episode had never taken place. Whatever records there were, whatever the legal eventualities that had to be observed, would apply to someone else. The truth, the whole truth, not even the slightest inkling of the truth, would ever be uncovered. In years to come, in generations to come, no one, no matter how hard he or she tried, could ever succeed in ascertaining the facts.*

Maryanne's son was taken from Belfast to a baby home in the Republic in an elaborate train journey, involving herself, her parents and a Legion of Mary volunteer who sat separately from them with the baby. Completing the journey by car, the baby was taken to the home which was in an isolated rural

471 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1956

472 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1954

location. Her parents paid for his upkeep in the home until an adoption was completed nine months later. Maryanne described signing the final papers:

> *The couple who wanted him were wonderful, the nuns in the orphanage said. They were rich, too. They had been making his acquaintance for some time now, and they adored him. They could offer him everything. Everything I didn't have. I had nothing to give him, nothing whatsoever. Not even hope. The choice was simple, in fact there was really no choice. Carefully I signed my name, this time my real name, in my very best handwriting. It was important that it looked good neat and tidy. I signed him away, out of my life for ever. And dropped the envelope in the box when I got home. Like I would a casual letter to a friend.*[473]

Adoption Process

It is clear that Mater Dei processes for adoption had become more formalised by the end of the 1960s. This tightening of procedural rigour was no doubt in response to the 1967 Adoption Act, which came into force in 1969. Case notes for one woman admitted to Mater Dei, in 1969, contained a detailed description of how the organisation carried out the adoption process. It records that, in this case, the baby's mother had 'expressed the wish all along to have her baby adopted and was interviewed on several occasions'. They describe how each birth mother, or 'guest' as they put it was 'seen by one or more members of the Adoption Society', at which time 'alternatives to adoption [were] put forward'. These were listed as 'flat, residential home or own relatives etc.' [474]

Private adoptions

Private adoptions took place between individuals outside the auspices of the adoption agencies. The Mater Dei correspondence records the agreements drawn up on these occasions. In these agreements, prior to 1950, the birth mother generally paid the adoptive mother to take on the responsibility of raising the child. This was to cover the costs of providing for the child and legal expenses.[475] The amounts involved varied; one agreement, in 1945, was for £30 and the adoptive mother was to 'maintain and clothe and support him in the same manner as if the child was her blood'.[476]

A letter from a woman, written in 1959, to Mater Dei requesting the birth and baptismal certificates for her son, explained her plan was to give her baby to a local woman who had daughters already but really wanted a boy. The birth mother requested that Mater Dei arrange for the baptismal certificate to be altered to record the prospective adoptive mother as the boy's biological mother. The woman's letter explained that as part of the arrangement she 'would be able to go and see the baby at any time'.[477] However, a further letter from the birth mother explained that the prospective adoptive mother had spoken to her priest about getting the baptismal certificate changed and he had advised that a formal adoption should take place.

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473 Kerr, Over the mountain, p. 197

474 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1969

475 Shepard, 'Legion of Mary', p. 135

476 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1945

477 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1959

Religion of Parents

It was very important for all the mother and baby homes and adoption agencies operating throughout the period under investigation that children were adopted by parents of the same religious background. The power of this sentiment is revealed in the correspondence (and drafts of letters) from Mater Dei to Belfast Welfare Department regarding the case of one baby whose mother was Protestant. They reveal that there was great concern that although the mother had expressed a wish for the baby to be brought up Catholic (the putative father was Catholic), there should be a signed statement from the mother to say that she approached Mater Misericordiae Adoption Society of her own free will. It needed to include explicit wording that she 'agree that the baby be placed in a Catholic home and brought up in the Catholic faith'. There was clearly anxiety from the Mater Misericordiae about potentially embarrassing repercussions about the baby going to a Catholic home, less they be accused of proselytising in the case of a new born baby and putting pressure on a young Protestant unmarried mother.[478]

Financial Affairs

Historian Christopher Shepard has shown that families often paid for the cost of accommodation for mothers and babies who spent time in Mater Dei. He also identified some examples, from the 1940s, where families paid to speed up the adoption process, with the parents of young unmarried mothers 'willing to part with moderately large sums of money to make illegitimate grandchildren disappear'.[479] In the years before the creation of the National Health Service in 1948, there were some issues over who was to pay for costs incurred in maternity care. In 1943, the Clerk of the Belfast Union wrote to Mater Dei about people coming from outside of Belfast 'for the purpose of being confined here at the public expense'. The Clerk gave the example of a woman who had come from County Fermanagh and whose father could not pay her bill for treatment and maintenance at the Jubilee Hospital. It was requested that Mater Dei take financial responsibility for her. The Belfast Union explained that it was 'abusing privileges to arrange for people from outside areas to come here to use the hospital provided for the Belfast public'.[480] Women did not give birth in Mater Dei but in hospitals such as the Jubilee, a maternity home such as Malone Place, or one of the many private nursing homes which operated in Belfast.

From the 1950s, there was increased engagement with the new welfare state and the procedures to be followed for mothers to claim benefits. In 1955, for instance, the National Assistance Board paid 32s 6d. per week for unmarried mothers with a further weekly allowance of 12s per week for children and 7s 6d. per week for mothers. While this money was paid directly to the women, there was a policy at Mater Dei which 'encouraged and indeed, expected women to contribute to their upkeep while in residence'.[481] As discussed above, officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs were involved in inspecting Mater Dei and advising on how best the home might access available funding.

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478 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1965

479 Shepard, 'Legion of Mary', p.135

480 Mater Dei Correspondence, 1943

481 Shephard, 'Legion of Mary', p. 139

Impact of the Troubles

Notes on one case described how the putative father was Protestant and his family disliked Catholics and were unfriendly towards the mother of the baby. The young couple concerned intended to get married but broke it off during the onset of the Troubles in 1969.[482] In 1972, the home was damaged when a bomb exploded opposite it.[483]

Closure of Mater Dei

The falling numbers of women entering Mater Dei was identified in the Mater Dei Praesidium Minutes in 1976: 'although the unmarried mother problem is as great as ever in the past, the parents of these girls nowadays appear to be more tolerant of their conditions and we do not now receive as many of these guests'.[484] The location of the home, on north Belfast's Antrim Road also placed it in a Troubles hotspot. It is possible that young Catholic women (or their parents) making choices about mother and baby homes may have demonstrated a preference for Marianvale or Marianville.

Conclusion

Significant issues which should be highlighted for the Mater Dei mother and baby home are:

- The home was another one from which babies moved over the border to the Republic of Ireland – 120 babies from Mater Dei;
- In some cases adoptions then took place;
- The Irish Adoption Board was aware of this practice;
- Legion of Mary members took part in the cross-border transfers of babies;
- There was adoption of Mater Dei babies to other parts of the UK and the records do not reveal if all legal requirements were met on this occasions. Inspection of individual adoption records is required to assess if this was the case;
- Evidence that payments were made by some parents of birth mothers to speed up the adoption of a daughter's illegitimate baby;
- Evidence of very high infant mortality rates associated with Mater Dei in the 1940s;
- There is some evidence that false names were used by women with the knowledge of Mater Dei; and
- Nearby nursing homes may have been employed to conceal the identities of mother and babies from the authorities.

482 Mater Dei Case Notes, 1969

483 Mater Dei Praesidium Minutes, 1972

484 Mater Dei Praesidium Minutes, 1976

Chapter 6:

Thorndale House (Salvation Army)

The Salvation Army's work with women in Belfast began in 1886 when it opened a Rescue Home at 63 Great George Street, in the city centre. This moved to Wellington Park on the Malone Road in 1905, where the facility was described as an industrial home, or a shelter for young women. This work continued on that site until 1922. In 1920, the Salvation Army acquired Thorndale House on the Antrim Road, North Belfast, and turned it into a mother and baby/maternity home which operated until 1977. The industrial home moved to the new Antrim Road site in 1922.

The maternity home offered accommodation for twenty mothers and babies, and was open to women paying for private births as well as those who required financial assistance. Thorndale was also able to provide shelter for children up to twelve months old initially, but eventually extended this to five years. Adoptions from Thorndale were arranged through social services and private adoption societies.

The industrial home/shelter became a girls' training home in 1948 and functioned as such until it closed in 1965. In 1951, the Mayflower Unit was built. It was a training facility, used as an alternative to prison for mothers convicted of child neglect. It later became a refuge for women escaping domestic violence. From 1984, the focus of Thorndale was on family work in a residential setting and also as a residential facility for single women. This focus continues today with residential units for families and single women operating on the Thorndale site.[485]

A statement, issued in 1920, gives a sense of the Salvation Army's modus operandi in relation to welfare work with women at Thorndale. Its aim was to serve 'the unmarried mother and her child, the woman "who has lost her way", and the little waif girlie who was left despite her tender years to manage as best she may'.[486] By 1925, the work at Thorndale was arranged by departments:

1. A maternity home for unmarried mothers, who 'if it were not for such homes would have nowhere to go'.[487]
2. Wards for private patients who could pay small sums.

485 This introductory information was taken from a document prepared by the Salvation Army International Heritage Centre (London, 2017).

486 Thorndale Statement, 1920 cited in the summary of the Thorndale archival collection. The collection is housed at The Salvation Army International Heritage Centre, London.

3. A home for 'friendless girls and women who had been charged in the Police Courts for the first time with theft, drunkenness or kindred offences'.[488] By 1931 Salvation Army officers were sent to the courts three times a week to receive offenders.[489] This offered girls and young women the opportunity to avoid a prison sentence by being placed on probation in Thorndale.
4. A Shelter/Hostel for which contained accommodation for up to thirty women seeking temporary help and provided beds, meals and advice on employment.

There was also an after-care home for those who had been in the maternity home and the organisation prided itself on three year follow-up work with those who had spent time in Thorndale.[490]

Thorndale Records

Thorndale records are held in London at the Salvation Army's International Heritage Centre, which hosts the organisation's archives. A research trip was undertaken to this venue and thousands of digital images were taken. The Salvation Army also provided additional material after this visit, for which the research team are very grateful. The records relating to Thorndale are extensive and quite complex in terms of how the information was recorded. The records relating to the industrial home are detailed in the chapter dealing with that institution (**Chapter 16**). For the data relating to the mother and baby home there are Day Books, which record separately details about mothers and babies in the home. A decision was taken to use the Baby Day Books to determine the numbers admitted to the home. These books recorded names, feeding habits, hospital visits, and the next destination of the baby. However, they often offered incomplete information on the exit destination for babies leaving Thorndale. In many cases, they simply cited the name of the local welfare committee taking responsibility for the baby and did not record precisely the destination of the child. In processing this information, it has been assumed that these children went to a children's home or foster home arranged by the named welfare committee. These cases were included in the 'hospital/ other institution' category when analysing the data. In other cases, a baby's exact destination was unclear, often because a town was listed as the destination without further explanation or information. In other cases, babies passed away and the date of their death and, where available, its cause, was noted.

There were some further issues which make it difficult to track the journeys of particular individuals. For example, in some cases, babies' Christian names were changed. As already intimated, in other instances a destination location was recorded only in terms of the name of a town or village, making it impossible to deduce why babies travelled to particular destinations. There were also changes in record keeping in terms of the consistency and style of entries in the Day Books. In some cases, the names and locations associated with an individual baby were entered on different lines; so, it appears that babies who left had no destination listed, when most likely it is just an error. The Day Books also began by using yearly tallies of mothers and babies and then switched to a monthly system, causing a further degree of uncertainty in calculating numbers in the home.

490 Belfast Newsletter, 16 October 1930.

The Day Books commence in 1929 and there are gaps in the records on babies between 1938 and 1941. However, information about mothers and babies was also recorded in the monthly statements of exits sent to Salvation Army Headquarters. These, along with the details about maternity cases included in the New Assisted Cases registers, have been used to try to establish a clear understanding of the numbers of women admitted/babies born and their experiences.

Admissions to the Home

The number of babies born at Thorndale House, based on the calculations undertaken on the records between 1922 and 1976, was 2,222. This differs from Salvation Army statistics of 1,790 babies but is closer to their total of 2,234 women admitted.[491] **Figure 1** shows that like other mother and baby homes Thorndale experienced a peak in admissions in the 1960s, with 590 admissions in comparison with the figure of 419 in the 1950s. Numbers were also high during the 1940s, as they were in Mater Dei. Thorndale and Mater Dei were the only mother and baby homes open throughout the entirety of that decade. The significant numbers of admissions in the 1940s reflects the wartime social conditions and the higher rate of illegitimate births across those years in Northern Ireland. Numbers dropped throughout the 1970s, to just nine admissions in 1976 and Thorndale's closure as a mother and baby home came the following year.

Profile of Women Entering Thorndale

The nature of the Thorndale records meant that the extraction of quantitative information relating to women entering the home is challenging. However, some general points can be made. The age range for the women entering Thorndale Maternity Home extended from 14 to 43 years old. In keeping with the patterns experienced by other mother and baby homes, the average age was in the early twenties and the majority of women were aged between 19 and 29.

Most of the women entering Thorndale had Northern Irish addresses recorded and there were generally a couple of women each year from the Republic of Ireland as well as from parts of Britain. In addition, occasionally women arrived from Australia and Canada. It should be noted that the records noted the last residence of the women, so these details do not necessarily indicate place of birth. Occupations were not routinely recorded for women. Occasionally there was reference to details related to this. For example, in the 1960s and 1970s there were a number of references to students, which reflects the expansion of higher education in this period.

Religion was not recorded, other than via a question in the registers that asked if the woman has 'professed salvation'. As would be anticipated, the majority of women who entered Thorndale were Protestant. However, there were clearly some Catholic women who were also resident in the home and the records on the exit routes for babies during the 1940s record an increased number of babies going to Catholic voluntary homes. However, the records reveal that the relationships between Catholic and Protestant organisations working with unmarried mothers were not always cordial through the period. Notes written about a 25 year-old who had been sent to Thorndale by the Salvation Army Officer in Derry/ Londonderry, in 1934, explained that, she 'stayed with us

491 Home Statistics Books, 1890-1978, WSW/11/1/1, Salvation Army Heritage Centre.

very happily' but she had to enter hospital to give birth and the 'Roman Catholics took her from the hospital'.[492] In 1936, suspicions were recorded in the case of a 29 year-old, that the 'RC's got to know that this girl was with us and we believe influenced her mother to make other arrangements for her'.[493] The case of another woman in 1936 led to a stand-off between Catholic nuns and the Salvation Army. A 20 year-old woman who 'was for some years at Nazareth House' had entered Thorndale. The records noted that 'when she was here they [presumably Nazareth Sisters] called to see her. Not being allowed to do so, they sent a registered letter to the pregnant woman in which they offered to pay for all her expenses in a private nursing home; which she accepted.[494] There were still ongoing denominational issues in 1952 when a 23 year-old woman, who had given birth in Thorndale, left for Mater Dei, the Legion of Mary Hostel. The New Assisted Cases Book records that the woman was 'persuaded to go to the Catholic Hostel by Legion of Mary visitors'.[495] However, the Board of Management minutes were much stronger in their language suggesting that her discharge was 'demanded by Legion of Mary visitor (Roman Catholic)'.[496] Relationships appear to have improved by the 1960s, with the Board of Management minutes for March 1967 recording discussions with the Good Shepherd Convent in Newry about admitting a 19 year-old woman to Thorndale.[497]

A number of women were categorised as having learning difficulties or mental health problems on admission. S.M., who was 27 years-old when admitted in 1940, was described as 'homesick, would not stay to be helped, suspect slight mental trouble'.[498] M.L., who was 29 years-old when admitted in 1972, was described as 'slightly sub-normal mentality' and that she 'came from a good family who can't cope with the situation'.[499] M.K., a 34 year-old admitted in 1952 when four or five months pregnant, was transferred to Purdysburn Mental Hospital as her 'mental state was so bad'.[500]

Like staff in other mother and baby homes, Thorndale staff had a preference for the reception of first-time unmarried mothers although, for financial reasons, the home also accepted those who had had more than one pregnancy. The Board of Management minutes in April 1948 explained that those who had more than one illegitimate child 'did not fully value the work that can be done for them as those with a first baby'.[501]

Entering Thorndale

From what can be ascertained, as in other mother and baby homes, the majority of women entered in the final trimester of their pregnancy. For most women, this was the point when pregnancy became physically obvious and harder to keep secret. After giving birth, the period for which women stayed decreased as the decades wore on. Until at least the 1930s, the expectation was that women

492 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2, Salvation Army Heritage Centre.
493 Ibid.
494 Ibid.
495 Ibid., THO/1/1/1/4.
496 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Report of Work, July 1952, THO/6/1.
497 Ibid., Mar. 1967, THO/6/1.
498 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/4.
499 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, 6 July 1972, THO/6/1.
500 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/4.
501 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, 7 Apr. 1948, THO/6/1.

would stay in Thorndale for four months after the birth of their baby. The record for a 23 year-old, who entered in 1935, explained that 'she did not settle down and resented having to stay the 4 months after the baby's birth'.[502] This had reduced to three months by the 1950s, with E.K. recorded as leaving the home as she 'did not wat to stay three months afterwards'.[503] By the 1960s, the majority of women were leaving around two months after giving birth.

The method of referral for women entering Thorndale, reflected the changing welfare situation in Northern Ireland over the period. In the 1920s and 1930s referrals came in the main from friends and family as well as smaller numbers from Salvation Army Officers and other named women. By the 1950s, the majority of referrals were from the various welfare authorities. This change is also reflected in the destinations of babies from Thorndale, with greater involvement of local authority welfare departments following the establishment of the NHS in 1948.

Reasons for Entering

The records of Thorndale reveal the same societal shame attached to illegitimacy as evidenced in other mother and baby home records. The descriptions of how entrants to the home became unmarried mother varied in the records. One of the questions asked in some of the registers was 'cause of fall', with the answers to this including 'immorality' in one case from the 1930s and 'intimacy with men' in another instance from the 1950s.[504]

Evident in the records is the importance of secrecy for many families. Some of the Thorndale women were not allowed to remain at home during pregnancy by their parents and, in even more traumatic cases, young women were completely disowned on the discovery of their pregnancy. E.G., a 26 year-old, entered Thorndale in 1922 because, the file recorded, her 'mother will have nothing to do with her because of the baby'.[505] Some women and girls entered Thorndale without the knowledge of parents or wider family. V.E., who entered in 1971, was described as a 22 year-old 'attractive girl in great distress about her problem. Her family do not know'.[506] Also in 1971, S.O. who was twenty-one, had told her parents she had come to Belfast to work and another woman, A.B., told her family that 'she is in England working'.[507] A final example in this category illustrates how the limited notes in these files can offer only a glimpse of the personal trauma experienced by the thousands of girls and women whose bare details they record. A 17 year-old, who was sitting her 'O' Levels had concealed her pregnancy from her family until she was almost due to give birth, and went into labour on the day she was admitted in 1972.[508]

In a number of cases, some members of the family knew about the pregnancy, while others did not. A common theme across all the mother and baby homes was anxiety about the young woman's father learning of the pregnancy. It is apparent that paternal anger, often including violence, lay at

502 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

503 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, 12 June 1951, THO/6/1.

504 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2-5.

505 Ibid., THO/1/1/1/2.

506 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Report of Work, June 1971, THO/6/1.

507 Ibid.

508 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, Apr. 1972, THO/6/1.

the heart of this. L.R., who entered Thorndale in 1924 at the age of 27, was the only girl in her family. Her mother was 'afraid her husband and sons would find out L.R. was pregnant and sent her to a friend in England'.[509] In 1970, notes on J.W., who was 17 when she was admitted, stated that her 'mother and family were very distressed … father is an alcoholic and anxious he should not know about baby'.[510] However, not all fathers reacted with patriarchal rage and violence when they found out about a daughter's pregnancy. The father of a 21 year-old, who entered Thorndale in 1938, at first did not know she was pregnant, but when he discovered that she was in the home he arrived to take his daughter (and her baby) home.[511] Other family members took similar actions when they discovered that they had a female relative in Thorndale. An 18 year-old, who entered in 1945, was taken home by her aunt when she found out about her niece's condition.[512]

Some evidence in the recorded details on putative fathers reveals possible incidents of rape and incest. In 1928, the putative father of the baby of a 14 year-old was in prison 'serving 12 months for this'; presumably having been convicted of either having sex with a minor or for rape.[513] In 1924, the father of K.R.'s baby was recorded as being her brother who was serving a prison sentence for his part in her pregnancy.[514] In 1968, there was reference to a 16 year-old who left Thorndale for a day to appear as a witness in a court case which led to the imprisonment of her baby's father.[515] Two cases in 1925 recorded incidents of rape. The short notation on the case of M.S. read, was 'supposed to have been assaulted on a country road by some persons unknown'. Similarly, R.A. was also recorded as having been 'assaulted on a country road'.[516] The use of the word 'supposed' and 'persons unknown' in the case of M.S., does suggest there was some suspicion over her statement. Arguably for some women, being viewed as a victim of rape was preferable to the loss of respectability associated with premarital sex in a society which attached such shame and taboo to the 'fallen woman'. It is clear, however, that very real experiences of rape and incest were central to many of the traumatic stories on which the Thorndale records provide only a glimpse.

Living Conditions

The living conditions and daily experiences of girls and women in Thorndale are discussed more fully by the oral history respondents below. However, for some women entering Thorndale, the living conditions were not what they expected. According to the remarks of one of the home's administrators, M.J., who was 19 years-old when she arrived in Thorndale in 1936, 'thought she would have a suite of rooms and would be waited on, would not settle here'.[517] Officials tasked with overseeing standards in Thorndale had, however, less exacting standards. Members of the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of Belfast Corporation inspected Thorndale every year between 1922 and 1947. There are only brief comments recorded in the minutes but every inspection was very

509 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

510 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management Minutes, 2 Apr. 1970, THO/6/1.

511 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/4.

512 Ibid.

513 Girls Statement Books, 1928.

514 Girls Statement Books, 1924.

515 Ibid., 1968.

516 Ibid., 1925.

517 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

positive and the home was always found in a 'satisfactory condition'.[518] As with the other homes, there are very few existing full inspection reports. However, a 1953 report on voluntary homes by Kathleen Forrest, the Inspector for the Ministry of Home Affairs, described Thorndale as 'well run by adequate trained staff'. She went on to say 'could do with more play equipment for toddlers. Otherwise standards of care and training excellent'.[519]

The Board of Management minutes and reports from 1947 to 1972 record details about the maintenance carried out on Thorndale and what took place in the home. Reports from 1947 and 1948 recorded how the 'girls go for a walk once a week and out with friends occasionally'. Residents were allowed to leave the home on a weekly basis, on a Saturday afternoon.[520] Classes are recorded as being organised for those in the home; in the 1940s and 1950s these appeared to be most commonly, Bible classes, cookery classes as well as mothercraft, arts and crafts and first aid.[521] In the 1960s, there was the addition of relaxation classes and, by 1970, antenatal classes were taking place.[522]

Throughout the period, a variety of local choirs and music groups visited to entertain the residents; these included York Road Band and songsters and the Regent Hall Band in June 1952, and the Bell Ringers in 1959.[523] There was also international entertainment from the 'Musical Minims', who visited from America in 1962.[524] Holidays were also celebrated with, for example, Halloween parties taking place. The 1957 event included fancy dress, games, and ducking for apples.[525] The minutes for August 1959 recorded how all the women and girls had gone to the 'Orangeman's March' on 12 July 1959, with the expectant mothers going by bus.[526] Entertainments noted in the records from 1971 included radio, TV, books and table games.[527]

Birth Experience

Thorndale, along with Malone Place, was the only mother and baby home to have a maternity ward. The majority of women gave birth at Thorndale unless it had been identified that they were likely to have complications during their delivery or had been unwell during their pregnancy. Management minutes from 1947 record details of all incidents at birth, and all the incidents when a doctor was called. Babies and mothers were regularly moved to other hospitals for treatment. It is difficult to get a clear number of stillbirths from the records, however, after one stillbirth in 1951, the management minutes record that there had been a Local Supervising Authority Inspection which was customary after a stillbirth. The minutes record that the inspector had 'remarked how few stillbirths we have had and also what splendid work is carried out at Thorndale'.[528]

518 Minutes of the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, Belfast Corporation, 1922-47, LA/7/9AD/1-3, PRONI.
519 Report on Voluntary Homes 28 Apr. 1953, HA/13/108, PRONI.
520 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, 31 Dec. 1974; 28 Jan. 1948, THO/6/1.
521 Ibid., 1947-60, THO/6/1.
522 Ibid., 1960-72, THO/6/1.
523 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Report of Work, June 1952; Jan. 1960, THO/6/1.
524 Ibid., Minutes, 18 Aug. 1959, THO/6/1.
525 Ibid., Report, Oct. 1957, THO/6/1.
526 Ibid., Minutes, 18 Aug. 1959, THO/6/1.
527 Board of Management Reports, 1971, THO/6/1.
528 Ibid., Minutes, 8 Aug. 1951, THO/6/1.

Infant Mortality

Babies stayed for longer periods in Thorndale after birth than was the case in other mother and baby homes, so deaths of older babies are recorded (usually they occurred in a hospital where they had been moved for treatment). However, the majority of deaths at Thorndale were usually those related to birth experiences, or babies who died very shortly after birth. Forty-nine deaths of babies have been identified in the period between 1929 and 1977. These are discussed below in decades to give a sense of change over time. In the period between 1929 and 1937, the number of baby deaths was twelve, which represents 4% of the total births in that period. Deaths were recorded in various ways and the exact cause of death is not always clear. In 1930, one baby died of broncho-pneumonia, and another died of antenatal nephritis, an inflammation of the kidneys. In 1931, a baby's death was marked only as 'monstrosity', suggesting severe disfigurement or impairment, and the death certificate confirmed that the child was born with spina bifida. This unfortunate child died when it was two days old. Another baby, who was born in 1931, was 'removed to hospital' and died two days later with no cause cited. A cause of death for a baby in 1933 was unidentified, with the records stating only 'died' and the date. A death in 1934 was also unidentified, but the corresponding death certificate confirms that the child died as a result of 'debility due to prolonged labour (twenty-nine hours), rigid cervix, occipito posterior presentation'.[529] During late 1936 and early 1937, it appears that there was an epidemic of infectious disease, present in Thorndale, with four deaths recorded in September and December 1936 and February 1937. While an epidemic or infectious disease may have led to these deaths, it was discovered that the final death, in this group, in February 1937 was recorded on the death certificate as being due to severe anaemia (occurring at two-and-a-half months old).

Unfortunately, there is a gap in the Baby Books, which were used to identify infant deaths, for the years between 1938 and 1941. From 1941-49 there were seventeen deaths which is 3% of the total births during this period. The entries in the Registers for this period began with three baby deaths from pneumonia in January 1941. Two babies in 1945 also died from pneumonia. Spina bifida was the cause of death for two babies, one in 1941 and the other in 1945. Two babies also died from conditions related to pregnancy and labour. A baby who died in June 1946 had the cause of death listed as 'convulsions, probably intracranial haemorrhage, long labour with forceps delivery'. The death certificate for a baby who died at eight days old in 1946 recorded the cause of death as 'Debility from birth due to prematurity due to marginal placenta praevia with antepartum haemorrhage'. There are another eight entries during this period which simply state 'died' or 'baby died', which offer nothing in terms of circumstances or context for the death.

Nine Thorndale babies died between 1950 and 1959. This represents 2% of the total number of births during this period. The Baby Day Books indicate that four children died in December 1954 in the Fever Hospital in Belfast. A search at GRONI for death certificates reveals that one of them died from dysentery and, given the contagious nature of that illness, it is likely to have spread within the home. This was confirmed in the Board of Management Records for December 1954 which reported an outbreak of Sonne Dysentery.[530] This source indicated that eleven babies had been transferred to the Fever Hospital and confirmed the four deaths. This tragic occurrence may have increased

529 Occipito posterior presentation is when the back of the baby's head is against the mother's back.

530 A contagious contact borne strain of dysentery, particularly prevalent in children and often accompanied by colic. Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Report of Work, Dec. 1954, THO/6/1.

awareness at Thorndale about the severe consequences of infection. In March 1955, when two infectious cases at Thorndale were reported to the Medical Officer of Health, swabs were taken of all staff who handled babies or worked as domestics. When some staff tested positive for Haemolytic Strep, the wards were closed down, the Sanitary Authority sprayed all wards and bedding was fumigated. The Ministry of Home Affairs (MOHA) visited three times and was then satisfied that the wards could be re-opened.[531]

Between 1960 and 1969, nine babies died, which represented 2% of the total births in the decade. The causes of death, where these have been identified, included a cerebral haemorrhage, congenital heart disease, atelectasis (collapsed lung) and two babies with spina bifida. At least four of these children died in hospital. Finally, three Thorndale babies died between 1970 and 1977, representing 3% of all the births in the decade. All of these babies died in either the Royal Maternity Hospital or the Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, having been born in Thorndale. One cause of death is recorded as being the consequence of cerebral damage due to neonatal asphyxia and a second, asphyxia hypoglycaemia. These are both conditions relating to traumatic labour in which the baby is starved of oxygen.

Financial Records

Thorndale mother and baby home received a grant from the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of Belfast Corporation from its establishment in 1922. A request was sent by Miss Adelaide Cox, the Commissioner of the Salvation Army, to the Medical Superintendent of Health (MSOH) in that year. The MSOH inspected the home and reported favourably and a grant of £300 was then approved by the Ministry of Home Affairs. The conditions attached to the grant were that the MSOH had the right to nominate cases of admission to Thorndale, that the records and accounts were to be kept to a standard that satisfied the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee and that the its members could have representation on the Thorndale's Committee of Management.[532] It was explained, however, in January 1933 that, as Thorndale did not have a management committee, it would be difficult for Corporation representatives to be involved in this way. Instead, it was noted that Maternity and Child Welfare Committee members were always welcome to inspect the premises and that their suggestions were welcomed.[533] The grant to Thorndale remained at £300 until 1947, even though the grant given to Malone Place was increased from £300 to £550 in 1944 (sums equivalent to £10,665 and £19,553 in contemporary terms).[534] The only accounts detailed in the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee minutes were from 1933, at which point income for Thorndale was £2,328.6s.3d and expenditure was £2,315.18s.10d. The comparable income figure for Malone Place was £1,504.68s.

The home also depended on fundraising. An annual garden party took place, usually in July, and included a 'baby show'. In July 1931, there were forty babies entered in the show. This was a competition, which involved infants being weighed as part of the process and the winners were chosen by Dr Olive Anderson and Dr E.G. Henderson.[535] At the annual garden party of 1932, Dr Olive

531 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, 7 Mar. 1955, THO/6/1.

532 Minutes of the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, Belfast Corporation, 19 Oct. 1922, LA/7/9AD/1, PRONI.

533 Ibid., 23 Jan. 1933, LA/7/9AD/2, PRONI.

534 Ibid., 14 Jan. 1944, LA/7/9AD/3, PRONI.

535 Belfast Telegraph, 31 July 1931.

Darling presided and sang Thorndale's praises: 'No one can be in a more cheerful, brighter place. I run in and out of it every day or so, and it is always the same'. She told those gathered for the event that the Thorndale's impact should not be underestimated because many of the mothers were 'turned out of home and quite friendless'.[536] Sales of work produced by the Thorndale women also took place regularly to raise funds, with £204.11s.1d being raised in 1964.[537] Also, as part of the Salvation Army network, Thorndale had access to wider denominational funding.

Following the administrative and financial changes ushered in by the creation of the welfare state in 1948, debates around voluntary and state homes and their funding were reported in the newspapers. In this respect, the Belfast press carried occasional details on the financing of Thorndale by the various welfare committees. In 1950, the Belfast Telegraph reported that Tyrone Welfare Committee had contributed £320 to the re-equipment of the maternity home in Thorndale House.[538] Board of Management records also related details of the ongoing discussions with the welfare committees about funding Thorndale. Belfast Welfare Committee agreed to pay £1,600 per annum, in 1951, to fund eight beds.[539]

Prior to the establishment of the welfare state, the Thorndale data recorded whether women were insured or, if not, how else their accommodation costs were being met. After 1948, women could pay for a stay in a mother and baby home themselves or draw on national assistance, maternity, sickness or supplementary benefits with any shortfall met by their local welfare authority. The Management Minutes recorded which welfare authority was paying for which woman. This followed the same procedure as in other mother and baby homes. However, the desire of some women (and their families) to cast an impenetrable veil over their residence in a mother and baby home meant that, in some cases, contact with the relevant welfare authority was refused. R.B., who was 17 years-old when she entered in 1972 was 'adamant that no authority should be approached for maintenance' and that her sister would take responsibility for the costs of her stay in Thorndale.[540]

In the early decades of the twentieth century particularly, the Salvation Army was very keen on ensuring that putative fathers took financial responsibility for their children. The Country Statement books included a section focused on the putative father, recording his name, address, whether there was an Affiliation Order and if he was contributing financially. In occasional cases, men provided a lump sum of money or had been taken to court and were contributing towards the baby's upkeep. However, the vast majority of records state that either the father could not be found, or that he denied parentage. In some cases, the Salvation Army attempted to get the evidence to prove paternity but usually these efforts terminated with the short statement, 'not enough evidence'. Some women pursued Affiliation Orders through the courts, but, in a number of other cases, it was explained that the 'girl's parents do not wish it'. Such a course of action would mean an illegitimate pregnancy becoming a matter of public knowledge, which was what most families were actively trying to avoid. The opinion of the Salvation Army Officer drafting some of the records was evident on occasions, with one putative father described, in 1927, as 'an absolute waster'.[541]

536 Ibid., 16 June 1932.

537 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Report of Work, Nov. 1964, THO/6/1.

538 Belfast Telegraph, 17 Apr. 1950.

539 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, 11 Sept. 1951, THO/6/1.

540 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, 3 Aug. 1972, THO/6/1.

541 Girls Statement Books, 1927.

Exit Pathways and Destinations

The information recorded by Thorndale staff does not always make clear the exit destinations of women leaving the home and it is difficult therefore to offer any quantification of this. However, before the 1950s, the available examples indicate that the majority of women went to domestic service jobs arranged by the Salvation Army. Women were encouraged to place their babies with foster mothers and contribute towards their upkeep from their wages. This was undoubtedly very difficult for women on low domestic service wages and, in a number of cases, parents, friends, or the putative father, also contributed to the costs. It is unclear from the records how long these mothers were able to meet these maintenance costs, or how many of their children ended up in children's homes or being adopted: it is likely that this number was considerable. Thorndale actively sought foster mothers for babies, placing notices in the miscellaneous adverts section of the local press. For example, in 1944, this notice appeared just above an advertisement for pet dogs:

> Wanted: Foster Mother for Girl and Boy, age 5 months and 7 months. Matron, Thorndale House, Belfast.[542]

The second largest proportion of women returned home to their parents, but the number of babies who accompanied their mothers on this journey was relatively small throughout the decades, peaking at 32% in the 1960s. In a number of instances, parents came and took their daughter home before she gave birth. Sometimes, this was due to the women being homesick and asking to come home as in the case of two teenagers aged 17 and 19 in 1935.[543] In other cases, Thorndale staff decided that contact from their families upset the mothers-to-be. In the case of a 27 year-old, who was admitted to Thorndale in 1934, staff recorded that she arrived with 'the idea of being helped as an unmarried mother is helped, on the understanding that she intended to do better in the future'. However, the young woman was 'discontented all the time' and 'the too frequent visits of her mother led to her going home again'.[544] A 28 year-old woman, who arrived in Thorndale during 1929, was 'intending to stay until her confinement was over but her people were very restless about her and eventually came and fetched her home, she would have settled herself alright had her people left her alone'.[545] There were also numerous cases where women left of their own volition, usually recorded as 'unable to settle'.

Marriage was viewed as one of the most positive exit pathways for women in Thorndale. A 19 year-old domestic servant was brought by her mistress to Thorndale in 1932, 'but the man responsible came forward and offered to marry her so she went home to get married before her baby was born'.[546] It is evident that the Salvation Army took an active interest in ensuring marriages took place. M.W., who entered Thorndale in 1924, had been 'keeping company' with a man who 'wronged her but promised marriage after the baby was born'. M.W. 'wanted to go out every night to see him', so the Salvation Army encouraged them to get married before the birth of the baby – which they did.[547] In some cases, it was more than encouragement which was involved and the Salvation Army officers

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542 Belfast Telegraph, 6 May 1944.

543 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

544 Ibid.

545 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

546 Ibid.

547 Ibid.

were able to facilitate marriages. Notes on the case of for a 24 year-old mother-to-be, who entered in 1932, record how she 'came to us single, we arranged the marriage' and 'she then remained for her confinement and returned to her husband'.[548] Similarly in 1942, in the case of R.M., her notes record, 'interviewed man' and then 'special marriage licence secured, married in Grosvenor Hall, lunched at the Carlton with minister and warden and home mother and friends'.[549]

Women could be removed from Thorndale if their behaviour was deemed difficult. Or in other cases, such as that of V.R., who entered in 1932 telling staff that 'this was her first pregnancy'. When it was revealed V.R. had already had a previous child in the Salvation Army home in Liverpool, she was sent home.[550]

Some women entered hospital upon leaving Thorndale. In several cases, women were found to be suffering from venereal disease and were sent to Ward 26, the VD Ward in the Union Infirmary. E.A., who was seventeen when she entered Thorndale in 1927, went with her baby to Ward 26, five months after she had given birth.[551] S.M. entered as a maternity case, in 1932, and was also sent to the Union Infirmary for VD treatment.[552]

In terms of the destinations for babies from Thorndale, as discussed above, women were encouraged to place their children with foster mothers if they were unable to take them home. It is useful to compare and contrast the exit pathways for babies over the decades in order to assess the changes which occurred in terms of where babies went on leaving Thorndale.

Over the whole period, the majority of babies went to addresses in Northern Ireland, in particular Belfast. Between 1929 and 1937, 90% (228) leaving Thorndale remained in Northern Ireland with 55% (141) of these babies staying in Belfast. 4% (12) of babies went to the Irish Free State and 1% (4) to Britain. The destinations of fifteen babies (5%) are unknown. Of the twelve babies who crossed the border into the Irish Free State, the majority travelled with their birth mothers, suggesting the mothers came over the border to give birth and then returned. In three cases, babies were taken over the border with women who are named but their connection to the child is not explained. This makes it unclear as to whether they were birth mothers travelling back home or the babies were being moved by a social worker or a foster parent. Examples of this cross-border movement included a case on 30 July 1932 when a 'Mrs C' was responsible for taking a four-month-old baby to Dublin. In March 1933, a 'Mrs G' supervised the journey of a five-month-old baby to County Wicklow. A final example indicates the cross-border links which were maintained by Protestant religious voluntary groups. In March 1933, a Thorndale baby was sent to Miss Walker at Bethany Home, 23 Blackhall Place in Dublin.[553] Miss H. Walker was the Joint-Honorary Secretary of the Bethany Home, a mother and baby home with links to the Church of Ireland.[554] It is currently one of a number of institutions under investigation by the Commission of Investigation into mother and baby homes in the Republic of Ireland.[555]

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548 Ibid.

549 Ibid., THO/1/1/1/3.

550 Ibid., THO/1/1/1/2.

551 Girls Statement Books, 1927.

552 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

553 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/1.

554 Irish Times, 8 Mar. 1935.

555 http://www.mbhcoi.ie/mbh.nsf/page/List%20of%20Institutions%20under%20Investigation-en

Appendix B - Figure 2 shows that between 1929 and 1937, one third of babies (94) left Thorndale with their mother and a further 5% (14) went to family and friends. In one unusual situation, in February 1929, the wife of a baby's putative father arrived at Thorndale to take the child born from her husband's adulterous relationship.[556]

As discussed above, half of babies went to either foster homes (88/32%) or nurse mothers (56/20%) and 8 babies (3%) were adopted directly from Thorndale. The 'nursing out' of children was a type of unofficial fostering, where birth mothers paid a 'nurse mother' to look after their children. This may have been for a short period of time, or could develop into a more formal 'boarding out' (fostering) arrangement with the authorities. As mentioned above, there are a number of cases where named women took babies from Thorndale. It is unclear whether these were foster/nurse mothers, welfare authority representatives or social workers. The figures offered here are the best possible interpretation based on the problematic dataset offered up by research in the Thorndale records.

Five babies (2%) went to hospital or another institution. For those who went to hospital, it was not recorded that they returned to Thorndale, so is it unclear whether they died or went elsewhere. These included a five-month-old baby sent to the 'Children's Hospital' (Royal Belfast Hospital for Sick Children, RBHSC) for treatment in April 1929, a one-month old sent to the Isolation Hospital on the Lisburn Road in May 1930 and a seven-day-old baby born with spina bifida sent to the 'Children's Hospital' in September 1930.[557]

For the period between 1941 and 1949, there is geographical information available for the destination of 416 out of 482 babies. Again, the overwhelming majority of babies, 91% (379) remained in Northern Ireland, with 43% (164) staying in Belfast. 28 babies, (7%) went to the Republic of Ireland and nine (2%) went to other parts of the UK. [558]

Of those babies who crossed the border, a minority travelled with named individuals, but it is not clear if this was a family member or to what destination they journeyed. In the majority of these cases, the babies were transported to specific institutions. These were the Children's Fold, Dublin (5 babies); the Good Shepherd Home Dublin (1 baby); the Bethany Home, Dublin (3 babies); the County Home in Cavan (1 baby), Nazareth House in Fahan (1 baby); and the Kimberly Home in Greystones, outside Dublin (5 babies).[559] This last institution became the Westbank Orphanage in Greystones, having started life as the Protestant Home for Orphan and Destitute Girls with a base in Dublin city before it moved to Greystones in the 1940s. It has been placed under public scrutiny due to allegations of abuse and the trafficking of children across the border (to Northern Ireland). Ulster Unionist politician, Danny Kennedy, has been among those calling for an investigation of allegations that children from this home were sent to Northern Ireland to work as unpaid labourers on farms, having been sent to live with un-registered foster parents. There have also been disturbing allegations of physical and sexual abuse connected to these informal relationships in this context.[560]

556 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/1

557 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/1

558 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/2

559 Ibid.

560 Irish Times, 14 May 2012; 20 November 2014

In addition to infants being moved to baby homes across the border, they were also transferred to baby homes in Northern Ireland. These included a larger number to Roman Catholic institutions than was the case in the 1930s. It is arguable that the increased rate of unmarried mothers during World War Two led to an increased number of Catholic women entering Thorndale. The only other Catholic mother and baby home open at this period was Mater Dei, which was heavily over-subscribed. At least five Thorndale babies were transferred to Nazareth Lodge in Belfast and one baby was relocated to Mater Dei in Belfast. One baby went to a convent in Newry in 1946, most likely the Sisters of Mercy children's home. One baby went to Hopedene in Belfast and another to the Dr Barnardo's Home in Kilkeel. Another baby is recorded, rather oddly, as going to the Youth Hostel in Bryansford, County Down. Of the babies who went to other parts of the UK, two babies went to Dr Barnardo's Homes in Dumfries, Scotland and Reading in England.[561]

Details on their exit destination was found for Thorndale babies in 278 of the 482 cases discovered for 1941 to 1949 (see **Appendix B - Figure 3**). Of those babies for whom we have information, 68% (190) were placed with a foster mother. A much smaller percentage 13% (36), returned home with their mother or went with her to other family/friends. A further 8% (23) babies went to another institution and 6% (17) of babies in this period died.[562]

There were 12 (4%) recorded baby transfers to hospitals between 1941 and 1949. These were not marked with a return date to Thorndale, so it is unclear whether babies were discharged from hospital or died there. They were sent to a number of different hospitals. For example, a two-month-old went to Downpatrick Hospital in April 1941. A three-month-old baby required treatment at Belfast City Hospital in August 1943. Two babies went to Purdysburn Fever Hospital (September 1944 and February 1949) and six went to the 'Falls Road Children's Hospital' (RBHSC) between July 1945 and January 1947.[563]

As with the other periods, between 1950 and 1959, the majority of babies 93% (260), for whom destination information was recorded, remained in Northern Ireland. Of this subset, 61.5% (160) remained in locations within Belfast. A combined total of 6% (18) went to the Republic of Ireland or to other parts of the UK. One baby went to Australia with its mother. Of the small number of babies whom the Register recorded being moved over the border into the Republic of Ireland, four were babies taken to 'Kimberley, La Touche Road, Greystones County Wicklow.'[564] This is the institution discussed above, and research collaboration with the government and/or researchers from the Republic of Ireland will be necessary if full details of these cross-border movements of babies are to be gathered and their compliance with legal requirements in relation to adoption assessed.

From 1950, there was a marked change in the placement of babies from Thorndale. Information was recorded for 393 babies (see **Appendix B - Figure 4**), with 25% returning home with their mother or going to family and friends, whereas double that figure (50%) were placed in institutions. This was undoubtedly due to the creation of the National Health Service and the fact that local welfare authorities had greater responsibility to provide free care for children. Various welfare authorities were recorded as the 'destination' of at least 108 babies. They included Belfast, Armagh, Fermanagh,

561 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/2.

562 Ibid.

563 Ibid.

564 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/3-5

Tyrone, Antrim, Down and Londonderry. It is not clear whether this meant that they were being placed in a children's home or being fostered or adopted through the welfare authority. The establishment of new welfare-run children's homes is also evident with at least fifteen babies going to Conneywarren, the County Tyrone Welfare Home in Omagh, across the decade. Dr Barnardo's homes in Northern Ireland received at least nine babies over the period. Catholic voluntary homes such as Nazareth Lodge appeared only twice, which arguably suggests that with the establishment of Marianvale and Marianville in the 1950s (joining Mater Dei), there were greater options for unmarried Catholic women and those guiding their choices, such as family, priests and GPs.

Changes to the adoption legislation also had an impact. There were at least fourteen cases where the baby left Thorndale having been adopted, with these cases often marked 'c/o Church of Ireland Adoption Society, Belfast'.[565] This reflected legislative changes under the 1950 Adoption Act, which required the registration of adoption societies. Numerous other entries also indicated that an adoption was pending and linked either a society or a welfare authority with this plan.

Between 1950 and 1959, four Thorndale babies were despatched to Belfast hospitals due to illness and the records do not record the success or failure of these medical interventions.[566]

As in the earlier decades, the 1960s saw the majority of babies, (98.5%/406) born in Thorndale, for whom information was recorded, remain in Northern Ireland. Of these, just under a quarter (100) stayed in Belfast. Four babies (1%) went to the Republic of Ireland and two babies (0.5%) went to other parts of the UK.[567] No details are available on whether or not these movements were for the purpose of adoption and if Thorndale staff, or others, were required to ensure that any legal requirements were met. Once again, this is a matter, which will only be fully understood, with the opening of adoption files (if any exist for these cases) or any other relevant surviving file held in the Republic of Ireland.

The 1960s witnessed further changes in terms of the placement of children from Thorndale, with a higher proportion (32%/159) going home with their mother or to family and friends (see **Appendix B - Figure 5**) and only 31 babies (6%) being placed with foster mothers. Also striking was the high proportion of babies recorded as being adopted (39%/193). This was part of a general trend at this point. The number of overall adoptions in Northern Ireland grew in the 1960s to a peak of 514 in 1969 and 554 in 1970, before a general decline through the 1970s and 1980s to 144 in 1990.[568] Welfare authorities (and their associated residential homes) received 20% (101) of the babies leaving Thorndale; these homes included: Coneywarren; Glendhu; Brefne and Dr Barnardo's Home in Ballycastle. As in the 1950s, only one baby was sent to a Catholic Home, St Joseph's in Belfast in July 1963; again, reflecting the fact that, with alternative mother and baby homes available for Catholic unmarried mothers, they had no need of Thorndale's services.[569]

565 Ibid.

566 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/3-5.

567 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/6-7.

568 Registrar General Annual Reports for Northern Ireland 1960-1990

569 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/6-7.

Three babies are recorded as going to hospital and while no further information is recorded on two of those, in one case in February 1969 it is recorded that a baby was transferred to the 'Children's Hospital' (RBHSC)and 'adopted from there.'[570]

Between 1970 and 1977, 98.5% (138) of babies for whom we have information remained in Northern Ireland with 41% placed in Belfast. Only one baby went to the Republic of Ireland and one baby is recorded as going to Victoria, Australia, in 1973. It is not known if these cross-border movements met any appropriate legal requirements. For this period, the number of babies fostered increased considerably compared with the previous decade, rising to 46% (see **Appendix B - Figure 6**). The number of babies adopted fell to just 5 (3%). 39 babies (27%) went home with their mother or to friends and family and 22 (15%) babies went to children's homes. These included welfare homes as well as Dr Barnardo's homes.[571] Unlike many of the other mother and baby homes, adoption does not appear to have been overly prevalent in Thorndale. Indeed, one 18 year-old in 1971, who was described as 'intelligent but selfish', was criticised in the Board of Management minutes for 'thinking only of her own position, no thought for the child and a desire to be rid of 'IT' as soon as possible'.[572]

Oral Testimony on Thorndale House

The Salvation Army archives provided a great deal of useful material through which to construct a broad statistical analysis of the history of Thorndale House. However, there are limits on what these institutional sources can reveal. Inevitably, these sources fail to reveal the more problematic or darker aspects of the personal histories of the girls and women who found themselves resident in the home. Newspaper descriptions of an annual garden party in the 1950s, for example, with that pleasing descriptions of bonny babies cannot offer in-depth perspectives on the reality of the experiences of Thorndale residents. Oral testimony offers one way to overcome the absence of this perspective in official sources.

A total of four individuals volunteered their testimony about time they spent as unmarried mothers in Thorndale House. Another individual provided an interview focused on her aunt's experience of Thorndale. As discussed more extensively in **Chapter 1**, interviewees with experiences of Protestant mother and baby homes were less numerous than those for the homes connected with the Good Shepherd Sisters. There are a number of possible reasons for this. The first is that Thorndale closed its mother and baby home in 1977, thirteen years before the closure of Marianville. However, perhaps the most significant possible explanation for the smaller number of respondents from Protestant mother and baby homes is that media coverage about mother and baby homes has focused heavily on those run by Roman Catholic Orders in the Republic of Ireland. Moreover, coverage has been dominated by the most disturbing allegations that have made about the homes. These include the allegations linked to the discovery of the unmarked graves of 800 babies at the mother and baby home in Tuam and investigations of illegal trans-Atlantic adoptions. Faced with the widespread media discussion of these grim stories, individuals who spent time in Protestant mother and baby homes (about which there have been no equivalent allegations) may have felt that their personal testimonies was less consequential. Indeed, a number of interviewees who spoke about

570 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/7

571 Day Books for Babies, THO/2/1/3/7

572 Mothers and Babies Home Board of Management, Minutes, 5 Aug. 1971, THO/6/1.

Thorndale or Hopedene made comments to the effect that Tuam, for example, was a much bigger 'story' than their own experience entailed. This issue may well have caused many individuals to remain silent. Coming forward to offer this type of testimony was massively courageous for all that did so and it must have been much harder to do so if one felt that your story might be viewed as less 'relevant' or 'unimportant' because it did not include the type of incidents that the media have been discussing.

It was in this context also that the researchers often found it necessary to explain to the Northern Irish media that the history of mother and baby homes was also a 'Protestant' issue. The fact that the local media stories drawing on the one campaign group in Northern Ireland associated with this issue (Birth Mothers and their Children for Justice NI) focus on the Good Shepherd homes, further identifies the issue as a 'Catholic' one. In reality, as the testimony discussed in this chapter indicates there were numerous common issues that arose from individual cases across a range of mother and baby homes. Although the number of Thorndale testimonies is relatively small, it is noticeable that they replicate similar recollections on experiences. They also produce an overall assessment that offers much more that is negative in tone than is positive.

No former members of staff came forward in response to radio, television, newspaper or social media appeals for assistance on this aspect of the research. Moreover, whilst the assistance received from the Salvation Army on the archival side of the project was extremely helpful (including carrying out some digital photography of the records), the organisation was not able to assist with the oral history element of the research. It maintains no formal contacts with former staff from a home that closed in 1977.

Material from each of the five relevant testimonies is now discussed and related to the analysis included in the first part of this chapter. Longer discussions of each of these testimonies can be consulted in **Appendix 2** which includes key elements of all the oral history interviews.

AB

AB was a resident in Thorndale mother and baby home for a few months in the 1970s. During her interview, she used photographs she has kept from this time to provide insights on the Mayflower, a home for victims of domestic violence, which was adjacent to Thorndale. She explained that the women residing in both houses mixed together. AB's personal story reflected many of the grim and traumatic elements of the testimonies which were gathered as part of this research. Her personal experiences included familial abuse, neglect, abandonment and lack of support from relatives and friends. Abused from the age of 8 by her step-father, AB decided as a young teenager that the only way to escape this abuse was to become pregnant.

Sadly, AB recalled that, despite the arrest and conviction of her abuser, no pastoral care or emotional support was offered to her at Thorndale or by any other relevant authority. Although she was only fifteen, AB recalls that rather than support her, Thorndale staff placed an emphasis on sinning, on shame and on the stigma of being an unmarried mother:

> *You felt as if you were the lowest of the low and a sinner, the biggest sinner there ever was, because you had this baby out of wedlock.*[573]

Despite being so young and coming from an abusive family situation, AB felt unsupported in any of her decisions and received no advice on how to tackle a pregnancy at such a young age:

> *nobody ever asked me exactly what had happened, how it happened, when it happened, how I felt – or anything like that. No one asked me.*

Like so many of the residents of mother and baby homes investigated during this research, AB described an authoritarian and alienating regime. There was a rota of duties which included cleaning, cooking, laundry and, AB recalled, prayers three times a day. She also remembers being walked to Sunday services at the Salvation Army Citadel on the York Road. During the height of the Troubles, this entailed an intimidating walk from the nationalist Antrim Road to a largely loyalist district. AB also describes a culture of shaming which was difficult to define:

> *It was just the, you know, they would bring the religion into and 'Thy shalt not this' and 'Thy shalt not that' – you know? There was all that to it, right? And there was always comments – 'Well, you know, if you'd kept your legs closed you wouldn't have got pregnant'. There's that sort of thing, like, you know, right? … Thorndale was a very regimental place; that I remember. And it all based around prayer and all this, and being, you know, joining the Church and all this sort of thing, right?*

AB had little to no understanding of the nature of pregnancy, labour or birth, and was offered no support or acknowledgement of the reasons why she was there or the circumstances of her pregnancy. As she was significantly underage, it is concerning that she recalls little attention being paid to making sure she was able to give birth without complications or undue anxiety. AB discussed some of these matters with the other women but recalls receiving little professional medical advice. As with other testimonies from Thorndale, AB explained that she was expected to carry out her chores in Thorndale up until she went into labour, including whilst suffering with labour pains.

When AB went into labour proper she was given Ativan for anxiety, and an enema, and delivered a baby boy. She recalled that her experience of labour was 'very, very lonely'. There was no one to support her and to ask basic questions like "How do you feel?" She was left to feel that 'your feelings didn't matter' and the attitude towards her was 'just get on with it'. AB also recalled two stillbirths during her stay in Thorndale but does not believe that the mothers involved received any effective form of personal psychological support in the aftermath of their traumatic experiences.

After leaving the home, AB began working in a job arranged for her by Thorndale staff. She raised the son that she gave birth to in Thorndale. Her interview does not include any suggestion that the Thorndale staff made any attempt to convince her she should have the baby adopted.

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573 Interview with AB, conducted by Olivia Dee, 22 May 2019.

JM

JM is another individual who found herself in Thorndale at a very young age, having experienced physical and sexual abuse in childhood. She was pregnant at 15 years-old and ultimately found herself in the mother and baby home. Tragically, she experienced a difficult and traumatic labour and birth.

JM describes Thorndale in a similar way to AB, claiming that the pregnant women were left alone, and that the Salvation Army 'didn't really have a lot to do with us'.[574] She remembers the dormitories and that she was younger than the other women there. JM also recalls the conversations the women had with British Army soldiers, through the windows of the home. Thorndale was adjacent to the Girdwood Barracks. Unlike AB, she remembered adoption being discussed during multiple visits from social services. JM explained that she rebuffed suggestions about adoption.

JM explained that although a doctor identified her pregnancy as breech and recommended that she was taken to hospital, staff there sent her back to Thorndale after telling her that the baby would turn and that 'everything is fine'. When she subsequently went into labour, JM recalls that Thorndale staff were unresponsive to her concerns initially but then rushed her back to the hospital when they realised the baby was arriving and it was still a breech birth. She was eventually given an episiotomy for the breech birth, which had not resolved itself. Her baby, a boy, was taken away, and she did not see him, despite asking to do so.

After being informed that her baby was unwell, JM was returned to Thorndale within a matter of days. Later in the interview, JM became visibly upset at this and described not being able to connect with her son following his birth. JM was told that her baby had brain damage and that he needed to be christened as a matter of urgency. She told the researcher that he was christened but that she was not allowed to attend the ceremony. Her son was dead within five days, without her seeing him. JM described what happened next:

> *Anyway, so what happened was, after five days they told me that he was dead and he had to be buried. And I went to the funeral, and it was a little white box, and I tried to open it to hold him, and two social workers physically restrained me from going near the box. They held me back by my arms.*

The next element of JM's account chimes with a number of other testimonies given to the researchers by those who were the youngest and most isolated birth mothers. Their testimony suggests that their youth and vulnerability were identified by predatory individuals in positions of authority. In JM's case a clergyman was sent to Thorndale to talk to her about her bereavement. He took advantage of the situation to pursue an interest in the sexual nature of her experience, rather than offering personal or spiritual support at such a traumatic time:

> *After that a vicar[575] came to see me, and I sat in a room, I remember it had a big bay window, at Thorndale, and the vicar sat one side of the room and I sat at the other. And he said to me "Did you enjoy having sex? What position did you have sex in?" That's all he asked me, just about ...*

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574 Interview with JM, conducted by Olivia Dee, March 2019

575 'Vicar' is not a term that is used by the Salvation Army. The term was used by JM and it appears that this individual was invited into the home to offer support after the death of JM's son.

he never said to me, you know, anything religious or nothing. He just wanted to know whether I enjoyed the sex and what position I'd had it in.

JM's sadness and unhappiness related to this dreadful experience was, she recalled, compounded by the fact that her repeated requests for her baby son's grave number were only answered three decades later:

Thorndale said there was no record of me ever being there, and the social worker went back and said "Well, clearly that's not true because you buried her child, it's on the death certificate". You know?

The lack of information she feels she received about her son and his death, leave gaps which have led her to speculate about what happened and doubt what she was told at that time:

Because if it turns out that they took my son, or anything comes of this, I'd like the grave exhumed and I'd like a DNA test to prove that he's my child. That that baby's in there. Because there's always that question mark … I want, yeah, I want to know that that was my baby that I buried, that he is in there, and I wanna hold him. So I know it'll be bones in a box, but I want a DNA to prove that's my child, and I wanna hold him.

RG

RG had her first child, during the 1970s, in Thorndale, and always intended to keep the baby. She was older (21) than most of the women who offered testimony on their experiences of Thorndale. RG explained that it might have been possible to remain in her parental home during the pregnancy, but that it was common to feel embarrassed about a pregnancy outside of marriage, and for this reason she decided against it and did not have an open conversation with her mother and father. Her experience of Thorndale was much more benign than those narrated in the other testimonies. She had more support, from both her family and the baby's father (who she later married). The fact that she was older than others who spoke to the researchers about Thorndale may also explain why her testimony was significantly different. Generally speaking, the mother and baby homes do not appear to have made much allowance, if any at all, for the very youngest birth mothers.

RG's observations on Thorndale were broadly positive:

Good, I have to say good. You know, nothing horrendous, nothing … obviously it's your first time. You don't know what to expect. You don't know what's normal, what's not normal, what … everything was fine as far I was concerned I was treated well. You done your duties, you done, everybody done the same, everyone else done the same and you just got on with it. And there was nothing, no rudeness, no … you weren't made to like … yes, you had your floors and stuff to clean, but that was it. Nothing horrendous, nothing at all, no.[576]

576 Interview with RG, conducted by Olivia Dee, 27 November 2018.

She did, however, recall that these cleaning duties continued for the entire pregnancy. The Thorndale staff appear to have made no allowance for the fact that she might be expected to get some bed rest.

As with other women, RG had little knowledge of pregnancy; what was happening to her body, or what the process of labour would be like. She remembered check-ups but not attending antenatal classes. When asked about the culture of shame that other women had mentioned, RG felt that this was not the case, nor was she expected to attend religious services.

RG did not report any of the difficulties connected with birth discussed by some of the other Thorndale women. RG explained that she did not recall a great deal about her time there but reiterated that 'it was all good and straightforward and no pressure and everybody was, you know, pleasant, no rudeness …You got … you got all the help like that you needed.'

MN

MN became pregnant in the 1960s when she was 16 years-old and gave birth in Thorndale. Her family wanted to hide her away because they thought it was shameful to be pregnant outside of marriage. Like very many of our interviewees, MN explained that she was naive about sex and did not understand the process of conception. Initially, she was taken to a backstreet abortionist. However, MN decided she could not go through with an illegal termination and was then told by her boyfriend's father that she would go to Thorndale. This man appears to have been a driving force behind the reaction to the pregnancy. He was a member of Faith Mission and MN believes her mother was persuaded by him that the baby must be adopted.[577]

MN echoed elements of the testimony provided by some of the other Thorndale women in her comments on daily life in the home. It also resembles elements of the testimony from a number of the Marianvale and Marianville birth mothers. Like them, MN believes that her options were circumscribed by the religious ethos among the staff she encountered at Thorndale. MN feels that she submissively accepted the conditions in the home because she had been come to view herself a sinner:

> *The regime was fairly horrible now when I think about it. At the time I just accepted whatever because I was a bad girl. I had been very, very bad and I needed to be punished. So, I just accepted it. It was punishment and I deserved it and that was that.*[578]

MN also remembers that:

> *We were all marched to the Citadel, somewhere about the Antrim Road [sic York Road], I'm not sure where, by the staff, on a Sunday, to church. And we were taken there and marched in. We didn't have a choice whether we went or not, we were just taken. And I think it was to demonstrate how bad we were and how, you know, we needed to look for forgiveness and atone*

577 The Faith Mission is a Protestant evangelical organisation, active in outreach activities and with a focus on living by faith that God will provide.

578 Interview with MN, conducted by Olivia Dee, 16 November 2018

> *for our sins. I think that was really why we were taken. And it also showed everybody else in the Citadel, you know, as an example. So, an example was very much made of us, both before and after our babies were born. And in the most part, we were all very young girls.*

She believed that the women 'were very much looked down upon, very much frowned upon' within the home. MN was critical of one particular Salvation Army officer, explaining that:

> *we had cleaning duties to do, and I had to clean her room. That was part of my job. We had to clean corridors, we had to do that on your hands and knees … Right up to nine months pregnant, right up till our babies were born.*

Like other interviewees, MN was critical of the lack of information on her upcoming labour: 'there was nothing to tell you what was going to happen. I hadn't a clue'. She did, however, recall that 'there was one nice girl, and I can't remember her name, who was in the Salvation Army'. This individual took MN to Thorndale's maternity unit when her waters broke. MN also remembered a social worker who visited her in Thorndale who was kind and was 'the only person who told me that I wasn't bad'.

Shortly after giving birth, MN was sent to work in the Thorndale House laundry. She described it as 'Victorian'. A week after birth, she was washing sheets by hand amongst the steam and heat. Eventually she began to bleed heavily because she had haemorrhaged and, at that point, she was returned to the maternity unit. MN explained that she was expected to breastfeed her baby, despite the knowledge that she was not going to be able to keep the infant. She also remembers tough night-time feeding routines, which she claims the Thorndale staff enforced. This left her exhausted. Reflecting on herself and the other young mothers, MN explained 'They weren't bad girls, they weren't. You know, they were all lovely girls and we were all treated so nasty by the staff'.

MN's baby was adopted, and she described the process emotionally:

> *And then after six weeks my baby was up for adoption. So, when my six weeks were up, she, I had to take her, I had to dress her the day that she was going, this was the same day as I was going home then. I had to feed her that morning. I had to dress her. I had to wrap her. We were instructed what clothes to bring for them. I had to wrap her in a shawl. I had to carry her down the front stairs, which we weren't normally allowed to use, into the Colonel's office and I wasn't allowed to see the prospective parents. I had to then hand her over to the Colonel [a Salvation Army rank] and then I had to leave the room. And then she took her and give her to her new family. That was the last I saw her. It was extremely difficult to do that. If, if at least they'd had the humility to dress the baby that morning and take her from the nursery it would have been a little bit easier. And this wasn't just me, this was every girl. It was the same, it was the same for everybody. That's what it was.*

Later revelations in MN's interview returned to a theme which surfaced regularly in this investigation of mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries. Both institutions may have exacerbated the trauma of victims of sexual abuse by an apparent failure to develop any policy to comfort them or offer psychological support. MN revealed that her boyfriend's father, the domineering force behind her placement in Thorndale, 'was not averse to interfering' with her, despite being outwardly a religious man. MN explained that he abused her under the pretence of demonstrating what sexual assault looked like and that he did this to other girls as well. She also discussed how other girls or young women in the Thorndale were pregnant due to rape or sexual abuse and noted that the staff

treated them no differently than anyone else. MN did not witness anything which suggested that they were given effective personal psychological support or advice. She recalled the case of one particularly young girl who was pregnant as the result of rape:

> *We were all treated as if we'd done something wrong and she was, even they seemed to be even more harder, even harder on her even though she was so young. And she was, it wasn't through any fault of her own.*

As with other former residents of mother and baby homes, MN emphasised how hard it was to live a 'normal life' in the years which followed, and how challenging it was to speak to people about her experience. She claimed that she would have been devastated if her brother discovered her secret, suggesting she still attaches some shame or stigma to her first pregnancy. When asked what she wanted to see as an outcome of this research project and why she decided to contribute, MN replied:

> *I felt I wanted to let people know that the Salvation Army is not the organisation that it purports to be. That it was, its members then, and I don't know anything about them now, that its members then were not, they were not Christian, they were not caring, they were in no way sympathetic, they were too, with the exception of possibly one girl, they were sadistic and horrible. There were rules and regulations that didn't need to be. And they were just made as a punishment for us. And to be forced to carry your baby and just hand her over and just walk away was a terribly, terribly hard thing. And I tried to, I made her wee clothes and I had embroidered her initials inside her clothes in the hope that, if her name was changed she might at least have her initials. And I still have her other clothes today. That's fifty years ago and I kept them.*

CC

CC's mother spent a period of time in Thorndale House, as a teenager, in the late 1940s after becoming pregnant following a relationship with a married man. His marital status was not the only obstacle to resolving the situation via a wedding; CC's mother was Protestant and her baby's father was Catholic. Her baby daughter was adopted and CC's mother left Northern Ireland for a number of years, during which time she married and gave birth to two further children including CC.

Tragically, her mother died in the mid-1950s and CC's information about the pregnancy has been pieced together only after three decades had passed: 'my grandmother never told me the story, never ever told me the story, I heard it from other relatives … my, my half-sister was never mentioned until right up until just after my grandmother's death'. She discovered that knowledge of this element of family history was perhaps gender specific:

> *even my uncle, who would've been younger than my mother, about three years younger than my mother, so he might've been, say about fourteen at the time that my mother went into the home. He never knew anything about it. He never knew about her going into the home. It was all just, obviously, hush-hush.*[579]

579 Interview with C.C., conducted by Olivia Dee 15 April 2019

CC learned that her mother remained within Thorndale until around month six or seven of her pregnancy and thinks that her 'grandmother washed her hands, a bit, of it all'. At this point, another female relative visited CC's mother and was upset by 'how distressed she was'. Apparently, she had been 'up to her elbows in caustic soda' and 'her arms were really red with doing this laundry, in a sweat, her hair was clinging to her face, and she just saw how distressed she was'. CC understood that 'within a matter of days she [the relative] removed my mother and arranged that she go up to *location redacted* and stay with a relative, a relative of my great aunt'. It was in this relative's house that CC's mother had her first child. Moreover, the same family adopted the baby, a girl, 'within the family circle': a strategy that was discussed by informants encountered earlier in this report, including Priest 1 (see **Chapter 4**). The adoptive parents later emigrated to the other side of the globe with their adopted daughter/CC's half-sister. It may be significant that this side of CC's family was Catholic given that the father of the adopted baby was himself a Catholic.

As she never had the opportunity to discuss these events with her mother, CC has been left to speculate about why her mother became distressed in Thorndale to such an extent that it compelled her relative to arrange her immediate departure. The reference to laundry work – her mother's red arms – led her to draw upon images from media coverage in the Republic of Ireland about work in Magdalene Laundries. However, this has left CC with some uncertainty about whether or not the home was Thorndale because it had no commercial laundry. She is reliant on second hand accounts from a relative who 'knows it was in Belfast, and she knew it was the Salvation Army, and she knew it was the laundry, and that was all I know'. CC's lack of knowledge led her to ask the researcher 'would it have been a specific Salvation Army laundry that she, do you know? That wasn't even in Thorndale, if you know what I mean'. This question reveals the unease and uncertainty which has been experienced by many others who, in recent years, have learned that their mothers went through the mother and baby homes of the mid-twentieth century. Media revelations about how some of them operated have unsettled individuals like CC and she is left to wonder how well her mother was supported at a time of great personal difficulty and trauma. In answer to her particular question, Thorndale did have a laundry which was used for the purposes of the staff and residents of the home. It was not a commercial laundry.

Conclusion

The material presented in this chapter highlights a number of issues. These include:

- The majority of an albeit small number of interviewees report that their experience was of an authoritarian and alienating regime.
- That the most difficult and traumatic experiences were recollected by the youngest and most vulnerable girls/women. The one more positive testimony came from an older individual.
- As was the in testimony from at least two other mother and baby homes, the oral testimony includes an allegation that a predatory individual exploited a vulnerable teenage girl.
- As in other mother and baby homes there appears to have been little emphasis on pastoral care and emotional support, even for victims of sexual abuse.
- Pregnant women in Thorndale appear to have carried out physically demanding work right up until going into labour.
- Thorndale engaged in the cross-border movement of children. The destinations of those babies included Protestant-run orphanages in the Republic of Ireland which have been the subject of critical scrutiny.

Chapter 7:

Kennedy House

From 1911 the Church of Ireland Rescue League ran a rescue home at 133 Crumlin Road in Belfast, which provided some accommodation for unmarried mothers.[580] The home was renamed Kennedy House in 1947 and was operated in conjunction with the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association.[581] It moved to larger premises on Cliftonville Avenue in 1949.[582] It closed in 1956 due to financial difficulties, with appeals being made to save the Kennedy House at the Church of Ireland Armagh Synod in 1955 coming too late.[583] However, until the 1980s, the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association continued to help unmarried mothers find employment, locate foster mothers, arrange adoptions, or locate places in other mother and baby homes.[584] Records for both the Rescue Home and Kennedy House are extremely limited, particularly for the former. This chapter begins with discussion of the initial Rescue Home.

The Church of Ireland Rescue League

The Church of Ireland Rescue League ran a Rescue Home, prior to the establishment of Kennedy House. In fact, the latter was named after the League's long-time President, Lady Kennedy. The aims of the League were:

- to visit women prisoners belonging to the Church of Ireland both in jail and subsequently in their own homes when discharged;
- to visit girls and women in Workhouses and generally to do the outside rescue work of the Church of Ireland for those who have fallen;
- to provide a temporary Home for those who have no friends but who wish to return to work and lead better lives.

An example from the League's annual report for 1924-25 demonstrates the type of work undertaken at the Cliftonville Avenue premises in the years before Kennedy House was established. It also reveals the desperate plight of unmarried mothers in the very earliest years after the partition of Ireland, when the stigma around their status was greatest and the support of the state non-existent. In the year covered by the report, the Rescue Home took in 50 women, about whom it was concluded 'several were placed in institutions and are doing well while some we have apparently failed'.[585] A number of the women admitted were unmarried mothers. The League's records described that one

580 Northern Whig, 22 Nov. 1912; Belfast Newsletter, 9 Apr. 1924; Northern Whig, 19 Apr. 1934.

581 Belfast Newsletter, 7 Nov., 1943.

582 Belfast Newsletter, 2 Sept. 1949.

583 Portadown News, 15 Oct. 1955.

584 Minutes of Church of Ireland, Moral Welfare Association, March 1940.

585 Church of Ireland Rescue League, Annual Report 1924-5, D/1326/26/18, PRONI

'a girl of seventeen, pretty and refined came with a 7-day old baby and begged to be taken in. She was a country girl of respectable parents who had come to a shop in Belfast and had, we believe, failed through ignorance'. The stigma and shame attached to her situation was seen by the fact seen as she 'entreated' the League 'not to tell her mother'.[586] The plight of the unmarried mother was expounded on at the Annual Meeting of the Rescue League in April 1937 by Miss Clark-Kennedy, matron of the Royal Maternity Hospital. She explained that the death-rate among illegitimate children was twice that of legitimate children and to her mind there 'was an urgent need for some central organisation to take up the care of unmarried mothers and their babies.'[587] The Church of Ireland Rescue League was incorporated into the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association in the early 1940s.

Kennedy House

Kennedy House was established to cater specifically for unmarried mothers with a history of more than one pregnancy, as was explained in a letter, written in August 1949, from the Honorary Secretary of the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association to the Belfast Corporation Welfare Committee. The purpose of Kennedy House was, it outlined, to provide:

> temporary shelter for women and girls who are in need of such help. The home will, in the main, cater for unmarried mothers in their second or third confinements as distinct from unmarried mothers having their first confinement who are catered for at Hopedene. It will also provide accommodation for women and girls who may be in danger or in special need through lack of a temporary home.[588]

Despite the differentiation made between the roles of Hopedene and Kennedy House and the implied moral categorisation of unmarried mothers, records of the latter home revealed very few references to its residents having more than one child.[589] The need for a home for those with more than one illegitimate child was, arguably, a response to fears about falling standards of morality following World War Two. Throughout the war years, the Moral Welfare Association expressed concerns about young people grasping 'life while they had it' which would lead, they felt, to a 'lowering of standards'.[590]

The records available for Kennedy House are from 1950 to 1955. They consist of a register which recorded the name of the woman entering the home, her address, her religion, the date she was admitted/date discharged and where the mother and baby went on leaving the home.

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586 Church of Ireland Rescue League, Annual Report 1924-5, D/1326/26/18, PRONI

587 Belfast Newsletter, 22 Apr. 1937.

588 Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association to Belfast Corporation Child Welfare Committee, August 1949, Welfare Committee: voluntary homes, LA/7/3/E/25/38, PRONI.

589 Kennedy House, Entrance Register, 1954.

590 Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association, Minutes, February 1943

Profile of women entering Kennedy House

In the 5 years between 1950 and 1955, 168 women entered the home. Age was only recorded for 1953 when the age range was from 14 to 30. 32% of entrants were aged between 14 and 19, 66% of women were aged between 20 and 29 and one woman was 30. As was the case at Hopedene, Kennedy House entrants were overwhelmingly Protestant with only one Catholic woman recorded as a resident. The majority of women were from Northern Ireland, with sixteen women (10%), from the Republic of Ireland. The average stay was three months. The shortest and longest stays were, respectively, one day and eight months.[591]

Entry routes

There is a frustrating absence of information on the issue of how women came to enter this mother and baby home. The Church of Ireland Moral Welfare records indicate that it referred women to Kennedy House. However, the records contain no referral information or personal information about the women or the factors which led to their admittance.

Infant mortality

Three babies linked to Kennedy House are recording as dying between 1950 and 1955, one in the Jubilee Maternity Hospital and another in Malone Place, the place of death for the third is not recorded.[592] This figure represents 3% of the babies for whom information survives in the archive. This compares with the Northern Ireland infant mortality rate of 3.7% for legitimate births and 5.6% for illegitimate births in the years between 1950 and 1955.[593]

Birth Experience

There is no information recorded about where women gave birth or any further details. It is recorded that several children were born with disabilities. In 1954, one child was born 'paralysed from the waist and had club feet' and another was described as 'unsuitable for adoption' with the use of the contemporary term 'Mongol'.[594]

Finance

In October 1949, the Secretary of Armagh County Welfare Committee received a letter from the Secretary of the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association offering the Committee accommodation in Kennedy House for unmarried mothers and their babies. It made mention of Kennedy House's focus on those 'who are having their second and successive babies.' The letter outlined that the cost

591 Kennedy House, Entrance Register, 1951

592 Kennedy House, Entrance Register, 1951, 1952

593 Government of Northern Ireland, Registrar General Reports, 1950-1955

594 Kennedy House Register, 1954

of the purchase of equipment for the new home would be £4,000 and, of this capital cost, it was suggested that the committee might be 'prepared to contribute on the basis of £200 per bed – the balance being met from the voluntary funds of the Association'. The Association had raised a sum of £2,000 towards the cost and equipment of Kennedy House and 'its work would be hampered if it could not raise, or be assured of, the balance'. The Armagh Welfare Committee resolved to provide £600 for the provision of three beds in the proposed home.[595] The records of the home indicate that the number of days spent by each woman from each county in the home were recorded to enable the costs to be claimed from the appropriate welfare authorities.

Exit routes

60% of women returned home when they left Kennedy House and 34% percent of babies went home with their mothers. A small number of women are recorded as going to other institutions on leaving Kennedy House. One mother went to the Welfare Hostel in Coleraine with her baby; another mother and baby went to Bethany Home in Dublin; three women and their babies went to Hopedene; and one mother and baby went to Thorndale.

As **Appendix C - Figure 1** indicates, 25 (17%) of the babies went to welfare or voluntary children's homes; 14 (9%) were fostered; 54 (37%) were adopted. Discussing the work of Kennedy House at the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association Annual Meeting in 1953 it was explained that while there had been 10 adoptions during the year only 'two of the girls really wanted to part with their babies. The others were compelled to do so by circumstances at home'.[596] Although the records do not specify who arranged the adoptions, it is likely that the majority were through the Church of Ireland Adoption Society. There is no recorded information about where they were adopted.

Conclusions

There is limited information in relation to Kennedy House when compared with other mother and baby homes. No evidence has emerged from this sparse material to suggest that any malpractice took place in terms of adoption or that infant or maternal mortality rates were significantly higher than the norm.

595 Secretary, Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association, to Armagh County Welfare Committee, 28/10/49, Children's and Young Persons Act, HA/13/73, PRONI

596 Northern Whig, 8 May 1953.

Chapter 8:

Hopedene

Hopedene was established in 1943, at 55 Dundela Avenue in East Belfast, as a home for unmarried mothers. The need to provide accommodation for unmarried mothers and their babies when they left hospital was the driving force behind its foundation. A deputation from Belfast Council of Social Welfare met with William Lowry, Minister of Home Affairs, in June 1943 to try and secure financial support for Hopedene. Lowry was reluctant to support it financially and drew attention to the fact that there were already four institutions in Belfast providing accommodation for unmarried mothers, Malone Place for 30 cases; Thorndale for 23 cases; Kennedy House for 6 cases; and Mater Dei for 18 cases.[597] However, the deputation argued that there was not accommodation for babies and mother 'after confinement'.[598] The idea that Hopedene could look after mothers and babies for up to six months after birth had been discussed at a meeting in Belfast City Hall in April 1943. This discussion centred on the 'unmarried mother problem' and the fact that 'social workers were alarmed at the increase in illegitimacy'. The plans to establish Hopedene had considerable support from powerful individuals, including Lady Abercorn and the Lord Chief Justice Andrews. The Lord Chief Justice, who went on to become President of Hopedene, thought that establishment of Hopedene would 'reduce cases of infanticide, concealment of birth and illegal operations coming before the courts'. The concern was that the Midnight Mission [Malone Place] had a long waiting list and that the other alternative, fostering babies, 'was not in practice found very satisfactory'.[599]

Hopedene had a Protestant non-denominational ethos with its Vice-Presidents on incorporation including, the Church of Ireland Primate of All Ireland, the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church, the President of the Methodist Church and the Divisional Officer of the Salvation Army as well as representatives of charities and local hospitals.[600] In 1950 Hopedene registered as a voluntary children's home and was also closely associated with the Church of Ireland Adoption Society. It closed in 1985.

Like many of the Protestant mother and baby homes, Hopedene was managed by an elected committee and had an Annual General Meeting and an Annual Report. These were often reported in the local newspapers. The Catholic mother and baby homes were not organised in the same way and did not report on their activities publicly.

The objectives of Hopedene were:

- To care for unmarried mothers and their babies who for any reason cannot be looked after by their own relatives;

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597 Memorandum to Cabinet from W. Lowry, Minister of Home Affairs, June 1943, FIN/18/23/208, PRONI.

598 Ibid.

599 Northern Whig, 20 May 1943.

600 Articles of Association of Hopedene Hostel for Unmarried Mothers and their Babies, 1943.

- To foster motherlove by providing a place where mother and baby may live together in a healthy spiritual atmosphere for the first few months of a baby's life;
- To find employment for the mother either in the hostel or outside, so that she may be able to support herself and her child.[601]

However, in addition to these stated objectives, analysis of the pronouncements made at Hopedene's annual meetings offers a deeper sense of its conservative and paternalistic ethos. For example, the importance of family life and the anxieties that unmarried mothers caused were discussed at the Hopedene Annual Meetings in 1953 and 1954. Lady Wakehurst, in her address to the 1953 meeting, explained that the problem of the unmarried mother was causing great concern. She felt that one of the major issues was girls leaving school and plunging into industrial life and unorganised leisure. She condemned cinemas and dance halls and espoused 'more creative use of leisure through club activities'. In a comment that suggested that the those behind the Hopedene project were out of touch with the socio-economic hardships of life in 1950s Northern Ireland, Lady Wakehurst explained that she felt that the 'Queen was setting a wonderful example of family life'.[602] Patricia McLaughlin, MP for West Belfast, was the speaker at the Annual Meeting in 1954 and offered greater attention to religion as a solution to illegitimate pregnancy rather than the monarchy. She emphasised that girls required the love of a family and that going to church as a family could resolve their feelings of being unloved which was at root of the issue of unmarried motherhood. McLaughlin felt that 'Hopedene gave love in a way that state homes could not' and encouraged women's church groups to do more to be an 'aunty' to these young women.[603]

The Records

Hopedene's records do not contain as much information as some of the other mother and baby homes about the women who entered. Its entrance registers contain personal details for women entering and some brief medical details. They also record the date of hospital admission, the date of the baby's birth and where mother and child went on leaving Hopedene. These registers are only available between 1950 and 1968. Adoption Routes explained that a fire destroyed records relating to Hopedene in the 1970s.[604] Other records of the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association were used to identify women who were transferred to Hopedene for the periods 1943-50 and 1968-85. The total figure of admissions is, therefore, likely to have been slightly higher than the one provided below.

Hopedene – the Oral Testimony

Five women came forward to offer testimony about Hopedene. Four of the women were birth mothers and one was the daughter of a woman who entered Hopedene when pregnant with her. The testimonies feature a number of themes that arose in the other mother and baby homes

602 Northern Whig, 16 June 1953.

603 Belfast Telegraph, 31 May 1955.

604 Email from Adoption Routes to Leanne McCormick, 30 August 2018.

These include the pressure that was put on women to hide their pregnancy and to protect their families' reputation; an emphasis on work within the home (particularly on the cleaning which was so ubiquitous in these institutions); traumatic and life changing decisions about adoption; and the influence of religious ideas about sin and atonement. As is the case with the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes and Thorndale maternity home, there is also testimony that suggests predatory individuals exploited the vulnerability of some of the girls and women either within the home or during their hospital visits. Fuller details of these testimonies can be read in **Appendix 2** on the Oral Testimony but salient points feature in this historical account of Hopedene.

Entry Numbers and Length of Residence

The figures available record 670 women and girls entering Hopedene between 1943 and 1985. As was the case for other mother and baby homes, there was a peak in numbers in the 1960s before a gradual decline to the 1980s. Within the busiest decade, 1964 was a highpoint with 42 pregnant women entering Hopedene. That number fell to 31 the following year and had reduced even further to 21 in 1968. By 1973 numbers had fallen to 6 admissions over the year and only 1 woman was admitted each year between 1981 and 1984 (see **Appendix D - Figure 1**). This decline was reflected in the experience of interviewee GN, who was resident in Hopedene for several months during the mid-1970s. She described the modest numbers of co-residents: 'the maximum, I think, we had ever at one time was 3 in the period that I was there. There were very few. But they would come in for very short periods – days, maybe a week, two weeks. I was there for several, you know, a few months. But a lot of the time I was there by myself'.[605] As will be discussed later, this had particular implications for GN's experience of life in Hopedene.

In terms of length of time spent in Hopedene, data is not available across the whole time period. Hopedene differed from many of the mother and baby homes in that it had a nursery where babies could stay while mothers went to work. The 1951 Annual Report described how 'many of the mothers now found work and stayed on at Hopedene and returned in the evening to look after their baby'.[606] Some women stayed for long periods of time in Hopedene. One woman gave birth in February 1966 and then returned with her baby to Hopedene. Several months later she took up employment outside the home and only left Hopedene when she married two years later.[607] Also in 1966, a 13 year-old returned to Hopedene with her baby after giving birth and went back to school. The following year she got a job and the next year was discharged from Hopedene. At that point, her baby went to a foster mother.[608]

Profile of Women Entering Hopedene

Age information was not recorded for all women, but for those for whom information is available it appears that Hopedene had a slightly different age profile than for the Catholic mother and baby homes, with 46% of women aged between 13 and 19 years old, 49% between the ages of 20 and 29

605 Interview with GN, conducted by Oliva Dee, 2 May 2019.

606 Belfast Newsletter, 16 June 1951.

607 Hopedene Register, 1966.

608 Ibid.

years old, 5% between 30 and 39 years old and one woman aged 44. In Marianvale, Marianville and Mater Dei the 20-29 age group was substantially larger than those under 19 years old (being as high as 64% in Mater Dei).

The majority of women, 613 (95%), for whom an address was recorded were from Northern Ireland. There were 20 women (3%) from other parts of the UK and 14 (2%) from the Republic of Ireland (see **Appendix D - Figure 2**). As Hopedene only admitted two Catholic women it appears that those admitted from the Republic were Protestants. This reflects both its own Protestant ethos and the fact that Marianville and Marianvale were opened in the same period and, along with Mater Dei, were options for Catholic unmarried mothers.

Referrals

The majority of women (56%), entered Hopedene via the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association. This organisation acted as a referral point for unmarried mothers, mothers with babies and those with other family welfare issues. It referred people on to relevant organisations or institutions. A range of individuals and organisations referred people to the Welfare Association, including clergy, institutions such as children's homes, and organisations such as the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (later rebranded as Gingerbread). In terms of the unmarried mothers who were referred to the Welfare Association, the majority were admitted to a mother and baby home such as Hopedene. The Welfare Association incorporated the Church of Ireland Adoption Society and assisted with adoptions.

The data suggests that Social Services directly referred 13% of the women sent to Hopedene. However, as they also referred women to the Moral Welfare Association, this total is likely to have been higher. The Moral Welfare Association no doubt referred many such cases onwards to Hopedene. Protestant clergy, like their Catholic counterparts, were also involved in referring women. This was the true in 11% of those cases where pregnant girls and women were sent directly to Hopedene. Protestant clergy also referred women to the Moral Welfare Association, so their role is not fully reflected by the figure presented here and was, in reality, higher. 10% of women were referred by doctors or hospitals and 7% by other institutions, charities or voluntary organisations. 3% were self or family referrals. However, this figure may again under-represent the true picture as families often contacted the Moral Welfare Association in the first instance before being referred on to Hopedene.

It is not clear from the records if any of the Hopedene birth mothers had experienced previous pregnancies. However, a newspaper report from 1954 suggested that Hopedene was reserved for 'first cases'. It was believed there was more chance of succeeding in their moral reform if they were 'segregated from second or habitual cases'.[609] This was a reference to what Hopedene saw as its efforts to morally reform the unmarried mothers it encountered. In terms of this hierarchy of perceived moral failure, Kennedy House was the preferred location for unmarried women who had been pregnant before.

609 Belfast Newsletter, 3 July 1954.

There are a few references in individual case notes to suggest that some of the women had some form of learning difficulty. In 1954, a 15 year-old was described as 'intelligence not very bright' and another woman, who arrived in the same year, was described as having 'low mentality'.[610] It is not clear how these assessments were made or by whom. As explained above, there are very few personal comments about the women on the entrance register or details about their backgrounds or situations.

The various methods of referral were also discussed by those oral history respondents who offered their testimony as part of this research. YN, who entered Hopedene as a 16 year-old during the 1960s, described the reaction when her mother found out she was pregnant:

> *Of course … you know, she took over … she took steps to try and get something sorted out. And we went to, and I don't know how she found this information out, how she … I just don't know. From then on she did the thinking, she took over really, I suppose. But I do remember going to a place in, at the side of the City Hall and, I don't [know] whether it was a Church of Ireland Church House or what the heck it was. I know it was a Church of Ireland place anyway. And it was a building like this, and you went up the stairs and into the interview room and that's where all the arrangements were made.*

YN explained that this interview was with a woman who worked 'with the adoption side of things, so she did, within the Church of Ireland'. YN felt like she was treated like a package that was simply 'handed over, posted along'.[611]

Although her pregnancy was two decades later, FD described a similar experience. She explained that she was placed in Hopedene because 'my family didn't want me back, because I was 16 years of age. I was a disgrace'.[612] In her case, a social worker escorted her to Hopedene.

The final Hopedene interviewee was FX, who came forward to discuss her birth mother's experience in this home.[613] This was in the early 1970s. FX's testimony provided an example of a woman who acted with some independence of her family because they were from the Republic of Ireland and she lived and worked in Northern Ireland in a professional occupation which afforded her that element of independence. FX's mother was 21 years-old when she became pregnant and was older than some of the other birth mothers whose experiences were related to the researchers. It is possible that her age and professional status made a difference in the way FX's mother was treated and/or experienced Hopedene. As her daughter explained it, she was far less negative about her time in the home than the other birth mothers.

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610 Hopedene Register, 1954.

611 Interview with YN, conducted by Olivia Dee, 2 Nov. 2018.

612 Interview with FD, conducted by Oliva Dee, 25 Jan. 2019.

613 Interview with FX, conducted by Oliva Dee, 26 March 2019.

Reasons for Referral

There is limited detail about the individual women entering Hopedene. However, as in other homes, there are some indications of the stigma attached to illegitimacy and the need for secrecy and a space to hide a pregnancy. Some women had also not informed their parents of their situation. A note on the record of a woman admitted in 1956 stated 'Parents said to be unaware of this girl's condition'.[614] The notes for a 17 year-old, admitted in 1967, recorded that she had been admitted to Hopedene without the knowledge of her step-father, presumably for fear of his reaction. However, in this case, when he found out he 'said she was to return home'.[615] In several cases women returned home before they gave birth. A 17 year-old, who entered Hopedene in 1956, was described as 'feeling somewhat homesick'. Her parents had visited and she 'cried and said she wanted to return home' and they took her with them.[616] Another 17 year-old, resident in the home in 1960, was also described as 'somewhat homesick' and her mother took her home.[617] Undoubtedly, in other cases parents were not as amenable and refused to accede to a daughter's wish to leave Hopedene and return to the family home.

Mrs Gilbert Waterhouse, speaking at the Hopedene Annual Meeting in 1957, referred to the difficulties that many unmarried mothers faced. She suggested that society was becoming more tolerant of unmarried mothers but went on to note that in rural areas 'brothers were often [the] sternest critics' and refused to allow their sisters to return home. She also drew attention to how hard it could be for unmarried mothers to find work and that landladies were not willing to let rooms to them.[618] This was a discreet reference to the continuing importance of the notion of respectability in mid-twentieth century society and persistent links between unmarried mothers and sexual immorality. This was a factor that would shock the average landlady's neighbours and, equally likely, lower demand for other rooms in her property.

The significant patronage that Hopedene received is revealed by regular radio appeals for public donations from high profile speakers. One of these was Lady Andrews, the wife of the Lord Chief Justice who made an appeal on Radio Ulster, in February 1947, on behalf of Hopedene. She explained some of the reasons why women were referred to the home and how in 'some cases after their confinement in hospital, these girls have been turned away from their homes and in their dire need and extremity they have had to face the awful temptation of living on the streets'.[619] She went on to explain that 'Hopedene is really 'home' to these girls. The doors are always open and no girl runs away. All are free'.[620]

However, the records do demonstrate that a number of women did run away and a discussion of this subject introduces a further source of referrals. A number of Hopedene women absconded by leaving for appointments or on errands and simply did not return. In most of these cases the police were called and the woman, sometimes having taken her baby, was usually found at her family home

614 Hopedene Register, 1956.
615 Hopedene Register, 1967.
616 Hopedene Register, 1956.
617 Hopedene Register, 1960.
618 Northern Whig, 30 May 1957.
619 Northern Whig, 3 Feb. 1947.
620 Ibid.

or that of a relative.[621] In these cases there is no record that the girls or women concerned were under any Place of Safety Order or a Fit Person Order issued by the courts and it is not clear why the police became involved in returning them to Hopedene.

There is no discussion of incest in the Hopedene records. There are a few references to sexual assault or rape being the cause of any resident's pregnancy. In the case of a 13 year-old girl, who arrived in 1954, the notes describe how her grandmother's lodger had admitted 'committing an offence' and that a carnal knowledge hearing had taken place. The girl was later placed in the care of her aunt under the supervision of Antrim Welfare.[622] In 1964, another 13 year-old was admitted after a court hearing committed her to Hopedene through the care of her local welfare committee, though no details were recorded about why this came about. There was a further court hearing after the baby was born and her parents applied to take her home; this request was granted, with three years' court supervision, and the baby went to her grandparents.[623] As was the case with the other mother and baby homes, the role of the male sexual predator was discussed rarely in the records. However, the 1965 Hopedene Annual Meeting offered a different perspective to those usually heard at the event. Detective Inspector Marion MacMillan, the Head of the RUC's Women's Section, explained that 'she thought too much attention was focused on the unmarried mothers and not enough done about the men and boys who drive or walk about looking for girls'. However, her talk then returned to more conventional themes when she opined that 'there was a definite drop in moral standard of the young'.[624]

The interview with FX unearthed an example of self-referral to Hopedene. Her birth mother, from a Protestant family in the Republic of Ireland, came to Northern Ireland to work in in the early 1970s. She met a man and they began dating and, several months later, she discovered she was pregnant. FX's birth mother was from 'a God-fearing farming family' and as she explained to FX, decades later, she reasoned that as there was 'a lot of stigma at that time...she really didn't feel that it was practical, or best for me or her, for her to keep me.' When she had told FX's father about the pregnancy, he reply was that 'it would affect his job, it would affect his life in a major way too': by which he meant his employers would take a dim view of the situation; although FX is not sure if she believes this or not. FX's birth mother would have preferred for the pregnancy to remain a secret from her own family, but this was not possible because a family celebration required her to return home at one point and her condition became known. Asked if once they knew of the pregnancy, her grandparents might have been willing to take the baby FX into their own home she explained: 'it wouldn't have been an ideal situation.' Moreover they lived in 'a very, very small town, and there would've been a lot of scandal around it.'

Living Conditions

A 1978 inspection report described Hopedene as 'institutional rather than domestic ... well maintained but with few creature comforts'. The bedrooms were described as offering 'little or no privacy ... with one single room'. The report noted that the other bedrooms can 'accommodate two,

621 For example, Hopedene Register, 1957, 1962.

622 Hopedene Register, 1954.

623 Hopedene Register, 1964.

624 Belfast Telegraph, 2 June 1965.

three or four residents together'.[625] The inspector did not meet any mothers and suggested that 'Miss X appears to want to keep them out of sight of visitors. I am sure this has more to do with her own rather than the mothers' attitudes'. The report explained that 'resident mothers are expected to assist with household chores'.[626]

The living conditions were clearly not satisfactory for one woman who left after three days. The register notes that 'this girl is under the impression that Hopedene was a private nursing home where she could be confined, leaving her baby afterwards to be cared for. She also wanted a special diet'. Her sister came to collect her and took her to stay in a hotel in Belfast for her confinement.[627]

The oral history interviews with former residents of Hopedene provide a perspective on living conditions in this home. They narrated accounts of time spent in Hopedene at various historical periods. One was focused on events in Hopedene during a period in the 1960s, three referred to the 1970s and one to the 1980s. The interview with FX, who was the daughter of a Hopedene birth mother did not offer much detail on this element for obvious reasons other than to indicate that her birth mother had conveyed no criticism towards Hopedene and its staff in this regard. After she traced her birth mother and asked her about her experience of Hopedene. FX explained that 'it was obviously a difficult time for her, but that the place was fine.' Her birth mother told her 'that the ladies who worked in the home, who I presume looked after me, she always said that they were really lovely and very kind ladies.' FX remained in Hopedene once her mother left: three weeks after the birth. FX does not know how her birth mother passed the time in Hopedene or have any knowledge about daily routines.

In contrast to FX, the testimony from the birth mothers offered a much more negative tone. They recall the work they did while in Hopedene when pregnant. YN described the daily routine in Hopedene, the first element of which was to get 'washed and ready and down for breakfast'. Thereafter, YN thinks 'that there was a rota system for people to go and help for the breakfast' and then someone had to 'help clear up and do dishes and then there was, your washing had to be done, the kitchen had to be cleaned, the dining room had to be cleaned, it had to be polished. Everywhere had to be cleaned every day'. This continued even when she was heavily pregnant. Reflecting on the continual cleaning that went on, YN said 'looking back on it, it was probably a bit like a boot camp ... you're a fallen woman'. She added, however, that she never heard staff use that type of term. In terms of workload, YN also added a qualification, noting that there was a 'hierarchy' in Hopedene that meant 'those who were mothers, they got more comfortable seats and they didn't have the work to do because, you know, they were mothers now. They were kind of elevated'.[628]

IH, who was a 17 year-old when she entered Hopedene in the 1970s described 'cleaning the stairs, and if the stairs weren't clean enough, you had to go back and clean them again, and vacuuming this and vacuuming that. In addition, she explained 'there was babies there as well who were waiting for adoption, and you did, you looked after the babies, washed all the dirty nappies by hand, this was to give you a sight of what this was all going to be like, and during the night you got up and fed the babies. Even though they weren't your own babies, they were somebody else's babies'. The

625 Report SWAG, 22 May 1978, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A.

626 Ibid.

627 Hopedene Register, 1959.

628 Interview with YN, conducted by Olivia Dee, 2 November 2018

level of work required in the home was something about which IH's doctor at the maternity hospital intervened. IH explained that he 'wrote me a letter … so I wouldn't have to do as much housework when I went back to the home'. This intervention followed an antenatal check-up when her blood pressure was found to be high. IH recalled that 'he asked "What do you have to do?"' When she told him about her Hopedene chores, he said '"I'm going to have to write a letter, because you shouldn't be doing all that, even normally". He says, "You shouldn't be doing it." He was quite sympathetic'.[629]

GN, who was also a Hopedene resident in the 1970s, having become pregnant as a 19 year-old, described the cleaning tasks. They were particularly significant in her case because for some time she was on her own in the home and had to clean the extensive building without the assistance of companions. In addition to this, 'with the nursery being so big and so many children there – I had to do their washing as well, you see?' What was frustrating about this element of GN's work was that:

> *This is the bit really gets me – at that time most people had them twin-tub washing machines? They had come into being then. So we had them, obviously, at home. And when I went there, there were two twin-tubs – but they were for use of the staff. We weren't allowed to use those. My facilities for washing were out the back, you know? And there were two, big Belfast sinks, you know, two of those.*

GN was forced to use a scrubbing board in the mid-1970s and she offered a one-word answer on why she thought this was the case: 'punishment'. Expanding on this, she added 'it was punishment, in my opinion, to make you think of your sins, you know? Hard labour to atone for your wrongdoing'.[630]

Of her Hopedene experience, YN assessed it as 'not unpleasant, but … certainly not somewhere you would want to go. But I mean, not cruel or anything like that in the way that you hear about, you know, some people being beaten and all this sort of thing. No, nothing like that. But it sure as hell wasn't homely'. She felt that the staff encouraged the pregnant women to think in terms of they had 'a job to do' and that involved limiting the formation of relationships: 'because their babies are going to be adopted, these girls are going to go and that's it, that's the last you'll see of them. So it's a job for those couple of months'.[631]

IH's assessment of her time in Hopedene was similar to that of YN. IH did not believe the treatment was particularly bad, but then she explained that there was 'no care, as such. No sort of, head care, you know, no mental care'. There was little sympathy from anyone associated with Hopedene. A religious minister visited to speak to the women but IH felt his view was that 'we had all done something terribly wrong … we were bad'. He did not ask 'what can we do to help you?' IH concluded that life in Hopedene was about 'punishment for being such a tramp'. She recalled that there was one young female member of staff 'who was a bit more sympathetic, the rest just didn't want to give you any sympathy at all'.[632]

One testimony, that of GN, provided an example of a what appears to have been predatory behaviour by an individual taking advantage of the vulnerability of a young unmarried woman who

629 Interview with IH, conducted by Ida Milne, 4 July 2018.

630 Interview with GN

631 Interview with YN

632 Interview with IH

was isolated from family in the institution. GN revealed what happened to her in the context of her concluding thoughts on Hopedene, when she explained that it was 'the type of place where they thought - the hierarchy within the Church of Ireland - would've thought they were goody-goodies, you know, compared to what the nuns were doing? But psychologically and ... there was a lot of abuse. Yeah. A lot of abuse'. GN followed this up with a disturbing account of being groped by an unidentified visiting clergyman, something which GN alleged the Hopedene staff witnessed and found amusing because he passed off his actions as comic and playful. [633]

Birth Experience

The majority of babies in Hopedene were born in Malone Place and women attended its maternity unit for antenatal care. If there were complications with the pregnancy or birth, women went to the Ulster Hospital, Royal Victoria Hospital or Jubilee Maternity Hospital.

IH, who was in Hopedene in the 1970s, described the experience:

> *There was no antenatal care, nobody ever told you anything about giving birth, you just were sent in to do it. There was no explanation of what they were going to do or anything.*

On examination, it was discovered that she was to have a breech birth and she was then sent off for a hospital appointment, on the bus, 'on my own. Just sent on your own, 17 (years old), not even a native of the place'. She made a second visit to the hospital at which point staff 'tried to turn the baby around'. IH became emotional remembering the fact that 'once again, I went to the hospital on my own, nobody there, to say, "Oh, you will be okay", anything'.

This procedure was unsuccessful and IH returned to Hopedene. She recalled that people in the hospital, 'even, in those days were terrible as well, because when I went into the hospital, they said, "Now we are going to call you Mrs, because it's not right for Miss, anybody Miss to be having a baby. We have wedding rings we can give you, if you want to wear a wedding ring."' IH did not want to do this and 'make a liar out of myself'. However, when the married women on the ward received visitors, the maternity ward staff pulled the curtains around IH.[634]

This coldness extended to other areas of her treatment, she felt. As she would not be breastfeeding after the birth, IH was given a given a tablet:

> *So that I wouldn't produce any milk. So, it just wouldn't happen. Just there just wouldn't be any ... Nobody even mentioned that people would be doing that, you know, like it's ... just take this tablet now, this will make sure you don't ... you dry up quickly you know, like and that was it. And ... nowadays you would think, oh I might get, get mastitis, I might get all these different things, but nobody even, there was no, nobody ever checked, were you alright, was everything, your bits alright, you know, like, just ... They were very ... just very cold.*[635]

633 Interview with GN

634 Interview with IH

635 Ibid.

Another interviewee, GN, had an induced birth, which added to the traumatic nature of her experience. She is very angry about an incident, which she recounted, that occurred in a unit she was moved to recover after the birth:

> *And this is where I'm really, really, really, really angry – and I'm determined I'm going to find out who this person is, who she is. I suppose you'd have to go through the Health Boards? The matron of *maternity unit redacted*– I want to find out who she is. When I went in … Now, again, I am so, I was so naïve, that you never would have dreamt that people would be, you know, would have behaved like this. But now I know. Now, I had just been there for a few hours and the matron had come up to see me. And I was lying in the bed and she said: "Well, a girl like you, I'm sure, will want to get her figure back as soon possible" you know? Get her figure back as soon as possible. And: "I'll tell you what to do". Nowadays if any doctor or nurse told me to do anything that I knew … I'm not doing that if I thought it would … But I was naïve … never thought that anybody would – medical person – would go out of their way to do, basically, any harm? So, I did. She took the pillow, pillows from the bed, so I was lying flat on my back. She told me to touch my toes [this was just days after giving birth]. So, I did that. And she told me to keep going. Now, well, naturally the inevitable happened. All my stitches burst.*

When the doctor next examined GN, he said "You do realise now, Miss *name redacted*, don't you, you're never going to enjoy sex again in your life". And she's standing behind him like this [indicated a smirking matron].[636] GN has wracked her brains to think of why a medical professional would have told her to do this, but has reached the conclusion that it was a malicious act based on her unmarried mother status.

Infant Mortality

As with many of the mother and baby homes, mothers did not give birth at Hopedene. There were 4 babies who were stillborn and 3 babies who died shortly after birth in hospital. One baby, who died in 1953, was a twin that came with her mother from Malone Place Hospital. The baby had been in Hopedene for eleven months when she became unwell and was admitted to the Ulster Hospital where she died. Her post-mortem examination recorded the cause of death as a subdural haemorrhage and she was buried in public ground in Belfast City Cemetery.[637]

Concern about the rates of infant mortality amongst illegitimate children in Northern Ireland had been raised by Major Anderson, the Chair of Directors of Hopedene, in letters to the Ministry of Finance asking for financial aid, in September 1945. He explained that Northern Ireland's mortality rates for illegitimate children were 'alarming, leading one to the conclusion that many of these unwanted children are allowed to die'. He suggested that 'for this reason alone I think some financial assistance should be given to Hopedene'.[638] Speaking at the Annual Meeting in 1947 Anderson again raised the issue, explaining that a Salvation Army officer had told him that 'infant mortality rates were seventy five percent higher' in mother and baby homes 'due to the ordinary conditions of

636 Interview with GN.

637 Hopedene Register, 1953.

638 Major Anderson to Ministry of Finance, 11 Sept. 1945, Hopedene Hostel, FIN/18/23/208, PRONI.

the type of woman that the hostel served'.[639] The official statistics for mortality among illegitimate children do bear out Major Anderson's concerns. The Registrar General Report for Northern Ireland in 1947 recorded that the mortality rates for illegitimate children for the period 1942-47 were 'considerably in excess of the corresponding rates for all children' particularly for 'pneumonia, premature birth and injury at birth, congenital debility, and diarrhoea and enteritis'.[640] A decade later, the same statement was still being made by the Registrar General and it was not until 1974 that the mortality rate for legitimate children per 1,000 legitimate live births was higher than the corresponding figure for illegitimate births.[641]

Financial Matters

For the first three years of its establishment Hopedene received a grant of £500 from the Pilgrim Trust. The same charity provided an additional one-off grant of £516 for repairs. In 1946, Hopedene's management committee appealed to the Belfast Corporation Maternity and Child Welfare Committee for an annual maintenance grant and were promised £150.[642] Hopedene was also reliant on fundraising and voluntary donations, and numerous radio broadcast appeals were made throughout the 1940s and 1950s. The first appeal in 1947, which was broadcast on Radio Ulster, was made by Lady Andrews, wife of the Lord Chief Justice who served as President of Hopedene. She explained how it cost £100 per month to run Hopedene and that the building required immediate repairs costing £200.[643] The Northern Whig reported that £433 had been donated following the broadcast and that the home's Annual Sale had raised over £250.[644]

Another radio appeal by Lady Dunleath, on 6 January 1951, was broadcast by BBC Northern Ireland's Home Service. She explained that Hopedene only got a small grant from Belfast Corporation and was almost entirely dependent on voluntary funding.[645] The 1951 Annual Meeting reported how, in addition to the £150 from Belfast Corporation, Hopedene also received £220 from welfare committees across Northern Ireland. The grant from the Belfast Corporation Maternity and Child Welfare Committee was reduced to £100 in 1952.[646] The 1954 Annual Meeting recorded an annual deficit of £259, mainly due to a £340 shortfall in welfare grants. As the system of state benefits improved in the following decades, like other mother and baby homes, Hopedene recorded how women often paid for their stay in Hopedene through national assistance, maternity, sickness or supplementary benefits with the shortfall paid by welfare authorities/social services. YN, an interviewee who was in Hopedene in the 1960s, described the financial transactions. They involved her making trips to the Post Office 'because you got a wee book' for welfare payments.[647] However some women paid privately, including those from the Republic of Ireland. In several cases, the putative father was recorded as having paid the costs.

639 Northern Whig, 7 June 1947.
640 The Registrar-General's Annual Report for Northern Ireland, 1947
641 The Registrar-General's Annual Report for Northern Ireland, 1974
642 Belfast Telegraph, 16 June 1946.
643 Northern Whig, 3 Feb. 1947.
644 Northern Whig, 7 June 1947.
645 Belfast News-Letter, 6 Jan. 1951.
646 Belfast Child Welfare Committee Minutes, 7 Oct. 1952, Children's and Young Persons Act (NI), HA/13/59, PRONI.
647 Interview with YN

In 1959, the Belfast Welfare Children's Committee recorded that weekly maintenance charges were to be £4.10s. for mother and child and £3.10s. for mothers-to-be. By 1978, the Committee reported that 'resident girls receive their social security benefits and retain a pocket money allowance. The maintenance charge which they meet is currently £11 per week. Area Boards supplement this sum up to £31 per week'. In addition, grants were also provided to Hopedene. It was recorded in 1975 that the Department of Health and Social Services would 'continue the grant at the rate of £1200 for the period 1 Feb. 1975 to 31 Jan. 1976'.[648]

By 1981, the per capita charge allowed by the Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB) was £72.40 for babies and £51.40 for mothers per week. However, by that point, Hopedene was in financial difficulty with a £20,000 deficit and it was only 'kept going with the sale of property, £22,500'.[649] A letter from the Hopedene Board to the Assistant Director of EHSSB, explained that the financial position was due to the small number of mothers and babies seeking accommodation and that it would be impossible to continue working after 30 June 1981.[650] The letter in reply said 'that this was a surprise' and asked for an extension of their deadline as 'your hostel is the only remaining one in Northern Ireland for Protestant unmarried mothers'.[651] At a meeting the following month, with the Hopedene Board and representatives of the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) and EHSSB, a representative of the DHSS recognised that the number of 'girls seeking hostel accommodation away from home when pregnant is small' and that those giving up their child for adoption was also decreasing, but he felt that 'if there are only one or two girls needing this type of accommodation the need should be met and in the absence of voluntary provision the Board has to meet it'. As there were not facilities in the Eastern Board for Protestant girls and women, he suggested that if Hopedene remained open the department would subsidise running costs to balance its books. The decision was taken that Hopedene was to stay open, but that it would take no further pregnant women whose due date was after 31 December 1981.[652]

Hopedene continued to operate and, in May 1982, the management committee was replaced and a decision was taken to continue to cater for unmarried mothers but not for unaccompanied children. It was decided that while it was felt the old building at Hopedene was unsuitable, the EHSSB was happy to offer financial assistance to keep Hopedene open and provided £2,500 towards this.[653] A letter to the EHSSB from Hopedene thanked them for 'bailing out' the home and explained that the 'girls are now well involved in the running of the hostel, cooking and cleaning, and the Directors are now looking at the opportunities for voluntary education, health, informal, friendly association which their enforced stay affords us'.[654] By October 1982, part of the building was leased for the use of boys from Rathgael Training School for IT classes. The occupancy rates had increased to 5-6 girls on average per month and EHSSB had agreed to new per capita rates of £105 per week for each resident less any supplementary benefit paid to them.[655] The final decision to close was made in

648 W. Kirkpatrick to N. Nesbitt, Hopedene Hostel, 11 Mar. 1975, HSS/34/12A, PRONI.

649 Minutes of Meeting, Hopedene Committee, DHSS, EHSSB, 8 June 1981, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A.

650 Letter Hopedene Board to RJ Bunting, Assistant Director EHSSB, 25 May 1981, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A, PRONI.

651 R.J. Bunting to Hopedene Board, 28 May 1981, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A, PRONI.

652 Minutes of Meeting, Hopedene Committee, DHSS, EHSSB, 8 June 1981, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A, PRONI.

653 Minutes of Meeting, Hopedene Hostel, 17 May 1982, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A, PRONI.

654 Hopedene to EHSSB, 27 Sept. 1982, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A.

655 Minute of Meeting, Hopedene Hostel, 21 Oct. 1982, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A, PRONI.

March 1985. A letter from Hopedene to the Permanent Secretary at the Department of Health and Social Services stated that, 'Area Boards have been circularised and do not seem to need the service provided. The hostel has been running at a substantial loss for the past few months'.[656]

Exit Routes

On leaving Hopedene, the majority of women (78%) for whom information was recorded, returned to their homes or to relatives. This reflects the trends witnessed in the other mother and baby homes. Only 30% of babies returned home with their mother, which is nonetheless a higher figure than for the Catholic mother and baby homes (Mater Dei, 25%; Marianvale, 17%; Marianville, 15%). However, a word of caution is necessary at this juncture. Details on the destination of Hopedene mother and babies on leaving Hopedene are not fully available for the period after 1968, so it is difficult to chart trends over the full historical period. There were a number of cases, several of which were described above, where parents came and took their daughters out of Hopedene. In 1965, one 18 year-old's parents 'decided to take her home and keep the baby when born'.[657] A number of women also left to be married. One woman left Hopedene, in 1952, a month after her baby was born and married the baby's father the following day.[658] In 1967, a 17 year-old was 'discharged with baby directly from hospital to be married to the putative father'.[659] Another woman was discharged to her own home 'undelivered to be married before the date of confinement'.[660] Indeed, it is clear that the marriage of one of their young mothers-to-be, was an option favoured by Hopedene staff. This preference for marriage as a 'solution' to the problem of an unmarried mother was clumsily revealed in the 1947 AGM, when Chair of Directors, Major D.M. Anderson explained that 11 mothers and babies and 15 expectant mothers were admitted in the previous year: one of them 'a girl aged 17, had unfortunately died but, to balance this tragedy, another mother had been happily married'.[661] Whether or not some kind of equilibrium was reached in these two events is questionable.

Unlike the Catholic mother and baby homes, very few women entered other institutions after leaving Hopedene. Examples of those that did included one 13 year-old who, in 1953, was sent by the court to Thorndale for twelve months as part of a supervision order lasting for three years.[662] Another 13 year-old was put into the care of Down Welfare, in 1962.[663] In 1951, a mother and her baby were referred to Mater Dei.[664]

The destination of babies leaving Hopedene is also very different to the Catholic mother and baby homes. Only 7% were recorded as being placed in institutions, the majority of these going to the Dr Barnardo's Home in Ballycastle. 13% of babies were either fostered directly from Hopedene

656 Hon. Secretary Hopedene to Permanent Secretary, Department of Health and Social Service, 20 Mar. 1985, Hopedene Hostel, HSS/11/60/11/A, PRONI.

657 Hopedene Register, 1965.

658 Hopedene Register, 1952.

659 Hopedene Register, 1967.

660 Hopedene Register, 1965.

661 Northern Whig, 7 June 1947.

662 Hopedene Register, 1953.

663 Hopedene Register, 1962.

664 Hopedene Register, 1951.

or placed in the care of Welfare/Social Services, most likely to be fostered. However, the largest proportion (46%) were adopted (see **Appendix D - Figure 3**).

Adoption

Speaking at the 1949 Hopedene Annual Meeting, Church of Ireland Bishop Hind explained that Hopedene 'did not encourage adoption as the normal course for babies because it [instead] encouraged the mother child relationship'. He suggested that the fall in the number of adoptions from twelve the previous year to one in 1949 'reflected the success of their policy'.[665] Similarly, at the 1951 Annual General Meeting it was stated that, 'no adoptions were ever arranged though Hopedene ... except in exceptional cases in which the mothers had only been 14 or 15 years of age'.[666] The Annual Meeting in 1954 welcomed a guest speaker, Miss J.E. Higson who was described as 'generally regarded as almost the pioneer of moral welfare work in Great Britain'. Higson was the founder of Josephine Butler Memorial Home in Liverpool for the training of moral welfare workers. She offered her view that adoption should only be 'considered as an exceptional and deplorable necessity'. Higson deprecated the practice of removing a baby from the mother at a very early stage. She explained that 'there are some unmarried mothers – too many, in my opinion – who never see their babies. They are given away, sold almost, if you like at a very early age'. She believed that adoption should not take place before three months, giving the mother time to consider her position.[667] However, the statistics from Hopedene that year reveal that fifteen babies were adopted and only six were 'taken into their mother's home'.[668] The home did not, therefore, always appear to practice what it preached. This may reflect the practical and financial difficulties a single mother faced during this period. It is also likely that many families of unmarried mothers opposed the more advanced thinking espoused by Higson in her speech.

Adoptions at Hopedene were facilitated largely through the Church of Ireland Adoption Society for Northern Ireland. This body was incorporated into the Church of Ireland Social and Family Welfare Society, which the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Society had been renamed by the 1970s. The Welfare Society provided advice and help to a range of people, but a considerable proportion of its work was with single mothers, some of whom the Welfare Society assisted by referring them to mother and baby homes, such as Hopedene. Between 1945 and 1984 the Welfare Society organised 544 adoptions, the numbers peaking at 47 in 1966.[669] The process of adoptions from Hopedene was explained in a response to a Ministry of Home Affairs query about adoption in 1964. This explained that when an:

> unmarried mother who has been cared for in the hostel does not wish to keep [her] baby and asks to have it adopted the usual practice is to inform the Church of Ireland Moral Welfare Association that the baby is available ... and the arrangements for adoption are made by the adoption society of the association. The baby is retained in the hostel until it is handed over to the adoptive parents. An exception to this practice is when an unmarried

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665 Belfast Telegraph, 10 June 1950.

666 Belfast News-Letter, 16 June 1951.

667 Northern Whig, 17 June 1954.

668 Northern Whig, 17 June 1954.

669 Church of Ireland Adoption Society Records, Adoption Routes.

> mother has been sent to the hostel by a local Welfare Committee in which case the baby is placed for adoption by that committee.[670]

The locations of adoptions from Hopedene are not recorded in the registers. However, the Church of Ireland adoption records reveal that all adoptions by that society were within Northern Ireland. There were no cross-border adoptions or adoptions to other parts of the UK.

The experience of adoption and other aspects of life in Hopedene was recalled by several of those who provided testimony for this research. YN took her baby home, but reflected on what she felt was a cold and functional process around the moment at which Hopedene mothers gave up their children for adoption:

> *And I think what happened was, you know, whenever the babies … I never actually saw anybody handing a baby over, because that … those were the sort of things that well … there will be such and such will be happening, you will be in the sitting room. It was all … it would've been all, you know, sort of … orchestrated in that way. And the baby would've gone in one door and … That was it. Once your baby was given away that was you … you kind of nearly left the same time.*

Another of the Hopedene women, FD, was a young mother who defied her family. Pregnant at sixteen, she explained that she was taken to Hopedene by her social worker because 'my family didn't want me back, because I was sixteen years of age. I was a disgrace'. Telling her family the news was difficult 'because it was the religious factor came into it as well. I was a Protestant and he was a Catholic, so there was a whole big issue around that'. Her experience of Hopedene was different from that described by the three other birth mothers who spoke to us about it. This appears to have been based on a number of factors. One is that she arrived in the 1980s, at a time when, arguably, there were less judgemental attitudes towards unmarried mothers. Secondly, even as a 16 year-old she had been responsible for looking after the domestic duties in her family home. As a result, Hopedene 'actually wasn't that traumatic. For the first time I had a lot of independence and I had my own space and I didn't have to make other people's meals or, you know?' By that point, her family had made it clear, FD explained, that they 'wanted me to give him up for adoption, and I just said "No"… I actually was a tough 16 year-old, yeah'. When she left Hopedene and reached her seventeenth birthday, she explained that 'I was fit to apply to the Housing Executive and get my first own home'. Significantly, FD's testimony also offered a positive assessment of her social worker who was 'very supportive. She was feisty, she was bubbly and confident and, you know, all those things in terms of making you feel – making a bad situation feel positive'.[671] FD secured a good home in which to raise her child and was also the beneficiary of a more understanding approach from her social worker. Both were features of a more supportive, if still far from ideal, framework for unmarried mothers in the 1980s.

FX, who is the daughter of a Hopedene woman described what she learned about her adoption after she had traced her birth mother. She explained that her birth mother 'wasn't in any way forced to give me up for adoption.' The Church of Ireland Adoption Society arranged FX's adoption and her birth mother remained with her for three weeks after giving birth. She also visited her twice in the

670 Hon. Sec. Hopedene to Minister of Home Affairs, Adoption of Children, 17 Mar. 1964, HSS/34/17, PRONI.

671 Interview with FD

following weeks. FX explained that her adoptive mother had health issues that were underplayed by the GP who wrote the medical reports as part of the adoption process. Her adoptive parents were Church of Ireland members and were recommended by the Church. It was a closed adoption: 'it was a completely closed adoption, so they knew very little about her [birth mother], and she knew nothing about them [adoptive parents].'

FX was clear on the issue of whether or not her birth mother consented to the adoption:

> *She said there were people who, who talked to her. I don't know if they were social workers. But there were people that would have talked to her and talked through her options. And at no point, you know, she's very clear, at no point was she forced or did she feel under pressure.*

Her mother also recalled 'a minister who came in from a local church. A young minister who used to come in and play with the babies, and just that he was really nice and, you know, that he would've thrown me up in the air and I'd have laughed, and things like that. So there, there must have been some kind of connection there. Maybe it was the local Church of Ireland, or whatever, that the minister would have come in.'

FX's knowledge of these events was constrained by her birth mother's limited willingness to discuss them. She explained that:

> *any time I've had a conversation with her it's me that's made the conversation happen. And even the conversation where I, I would, I put her on the spot and asked her about my father. She made it very clear at the end of that conversation that "I'm going to tell you this stuff, and then I don't want to discuss it again". So there's things I can't even go back, you know, that I might want clarified.*

Conclusion

The testimony on Hopedene presented similar accounts to the majority of accounts collected on other mother and baby homes. The Hopedene birth mothers who spoke to the researchers explained that they felt a sense of alienation. They certainly were required to work hard, on occasions to the detriment of their health, if the testimonies collected here are representative of wider experience. One of the accounts narrated by a former resident is concerning and implies that malicious or predatory individuals exploited their positions of authority over vulnerable young women either in Hopedene or during stays in maternity units. However, there appears to be no evidence that Hopedene staff used their proximity and influence over the mothers-to-be to pressure them to agree to adoptions. Nor did Hopedene babies end up in the Republic of Ireland, as was the case for some babies from Thorndale, Mater Dei, Marianvale and Marianville. Like Thorndale there was the possibility for women to remain in Hopedene for longer periods of time if they wished, using the onsite day nursery while they went out to work. However, this nursery was small and particularly in the period before the 1970s there was limited encouragement for unmarried mothers to keep their children. In Hopedene, as in many of the other homes, adoption to a good family was the preferred option. This was despite a number of pronouncements that it was not Hopedene's preferred aim.

Key Points

- Evidence of an authoritarian regime within the home.
- Former birth mothers describe cold and judgemental staff.
- Evidence of demanding workloads being asked of heavily pregnant women with an impact on their health.
- The home outwardly presented a policy of adoption as a last resort, but the statistics indicate that this policy was not followed through in practice. Viewed as an important source of Protestant babies for adoption.

Chapter 9:

Workhouses

The Poor Law (Ireland) Act of 1838 led to the construction of 130 workhouses across Ireland, each run by a Board of Guardians. These workhouses offered indoor and outdoor relief for the poor and destitute. Following the partition of Ireland, the number of workhouses in Northern Ireland was reduced gradually and many were converted into district hospitals. However, in Northern Ireland, after partition, the poor law 'remained more influential in the region than elsewhere in the UK and provided the bulk of free health care, emergency accommodation and aid to the destitute'.[672] The poor law system was brought to an end, in 1948, with the establishment of the National Health Service. However, as discussed below, workhouses continued to be utilised under different names until accommodation for residents or other institutions were established.

Unmarried mothers frequented workhouses from the establishment of the new poor law regime and this resulted in legislation being enacted to deal specifically with the issue of illegitimate children in the workhouses. In 1862, the Poor Law Amendment Act allowed for the boarding out of children up to 5 years old (this was extended to children up to 15 years old in 1898). This allowed the authorities to 'board out' children with local families rather than keep them in the workhouse.[673] This legislation also introduced measures through which putative fathers of illegitimate children could be pursued for maintenance. Boarding out continued to be a feature of the workhouses in Northern Ireland, following partition.[674]

The records for the workhouses in Northern Ireland are extensive, including indoor and outdoor relief registers, and minutes and records relating to the Board of Guardians as well as a variety of committees. Given the time restrictions on the project and, as Belfast was the largest Poor Law Union in Northern Ireland, its records form the focus for this chapter.

Prior to 1948 many unmarried mothers gave birth in the Belfast Union Infirmary (the workhouse hospital) and, along with women who gave birth in mother and baby homes, had their children boarded out through Belfast Board of Guardians.[675]

Given the considerable size of the records for the Belfast workhouse, it is difficult to get an accurate figure for the number of unmarried mothers who entered the workhouse or to identify what these women did following the birth – or what happened to the babies. A count of the maternity cases in Belfast workhouse in sampled years reveals that the number of unmarried mothers giving birth in

672 Peter Martin, 'Social policy and social change', in L. Kennedy and P. Ollerenshaw, Ulster since 1600 (2013) p. 311.

673 For more on the experience of children under the Poor Law, see: Virginia Crossman, 'Cribbed, contained and confined? The care of children under the Irish Poor Law, 1850-1920' in Eire-Ireland, vol 44, no. 1&2 (2009), pp 37-61; Olwen Purdue, 'Nineteenth-century nimbys, or what the neighbour saw? poverty, surveillance, and the boarding-out of poor law children In late nineteenth-century Belfast' in Family and Community History, vol 23, no. 2 (2020) pp 119-135.

674 See for example: Contracts on boarded-out children, 1911-47, Belfast Board of Guardians, BG/7/IC, PRONI.

675 Contracts on boarded-out children, 1911-1947, BG/7/IC/1, PRONI.

the workhouse between the early 1920s and 1948 peaked in the early 1930s (it stood at 202 in 1932). Much larger numbers of married women gave birth in the workhouse as well. (see **Appendix E - Figure 1**)

Concerns about unmarried mothers, and in particular those with more than one child were raised by the Committee on the Protection and Welfare of the Young and the Treatment of Young Offenders (Lynn Committee). In its 1938 report, it condemned the practice where 'women with one or more children make the workhouse their home and by reason of being useful workers are not encouraged to leave'.[676] They were also most concerned about women 'often of a low mentality' who 'return to the workhouse every year or two to bring another illegitimate child into the world'. The Committee conjectured that these children 'of such mothers will probably swell the number of juvenile offenders in the future' and recommended that a Mental Deficiency Act, like those in operation in England and Scotland would allow 'a judicial authority to deal with some of the worst of these cases'.[677]

It is clear that a stigma was attached to women entering the workhouse to give birth and to children who were born in the workhouse. The Lynn Committee also discussed how it was difficult for some fostered and boarded out children to secure employment in later years and had to produce birth certificates that revealed their illegitimate birth. The committee recommended issuing a 'certificate for these children which would indicate merely the name and age without disclosing the illegitimacy'.[678] This recommendation does appear to have been taken on board. A letter sent from the Ministry of Home Affairs to all Boards of Guardians in Northern Ireland in 1943, stated that the use of the term 'Union Hospital' or 'Workhouse Hospital' for place of birth on a child's birth certificate 'may be detrimental to the child in later life applying for posts of employment … [it] cannot be doubted that the use of the terms … may cause an undeniable stigma to attach to the person'. It suggested using the ordinary form of address for the hospital; for example, the Jubilee Maternity Home for Belfast.[679]

Boarding Out/Fostering for Nursing and Maintenance

For many illegitimate children, boarding out/fostering was common. The Belfast Board of Guardians boarded out children who were born in the workhouse, other maternity homes or mother and baby homes. A Boarding Out Committee had overall responsibility for boarded-out children. Individuals who applied to receive children through this scheme had their home inspected and had to provide character references. If they succeeded in being added to the Boarding Out list, their home conditions were regularly inspected during the time any children were boarded out with them.[680]

Following the creation of Northern Ireland, the newly established Ministry of Home Affairs took over the administration of local government services and included on its staff a 'Lady Inspector of

676 The protection and welfare of the young and the Treatment of Young Offenders, p. 139.

677 Ibid., p.140.

678 The protection and welfare of the young and the Treatment of Young Offenders: Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Home Affairs (Belfast, 1938), pp. 139-140.

679 Ministry of Home Affairs to Clerks of Board of Guardians, 22 Mar. 1943; Children in Workhouses, Children and Young Persons Act, HA/13/6A, PRONI.

680 Minute Book of Boarding Out Committee, Belfast Board of Guardians, BG/7/AI/1, PRONI.

Boarded-out Children'. The Ministry expressed the belief that children should be removed 'from the distressing and demoralising influence of the Workhouses' and it stated, in 1925, that there was 'hardly one child in a workhouse not capable of being boarded out'. It believed that the 'poor children of today have now every chance of growing up into healthy citizens, as contrasted with the old arrangements under which the poor children were brought up in the Workhouses and were imbued with Workhouse ideas to their physical and moral detriment'.[681] Similarly, the Lynn Committee report in 1938 concluded 'that a workhouse is far from being a suitable place to bring up children'.[682]

The records of the Belfast Guardians Boarding Out Committee record that all placements were inspected by the 'lady visitor'.[683] In 1939 the Committee was 'gratified' that an inspector from the Ministry of Home Affairs, had visited all the homes in which children had been placed and they were all found to be satisfactory and that 'all the children seem happy and contented and are being well cared for by their foster parents'.[684]

There were, however, continued concerns about how the system of boarding out was abused and how much unregulated activity, relating to the care of children, took place. Notes relating to the debates on the Children's and Young Persons Act Amendment Bill in 1931 recorded some of the abuses of the system that had been uncovered. A 'Mrs X informed the Children's Inspector she could give no information regarding the child she was keeping except that it had been given to her by some man unknown to her who had given her 20s [shillings]'. In another case 'a child born in the Workhouse who was taken out by its grandmother and placed in a certain home. It was given out by the home to a woman to nurse, the woman's name being given as AB. On inquiry, no person of this name could be traced and the whereabouts of the child remain unknown, although the police took the matter up'.[685] The 1931 Children and Young Persons (Amendment) Act (NI) required at least 48 hours' notice to be given to the Board of Guardians in advance of a child being placed in a home. It was hoped that this legislation would limit the abuses of baby farming and 'strengthen the hands' of the Board of Guardians, by requiring much fuller information about where children were being placed.[686]

In addition to Boarding Out children, the Poor Law Guardians were also responsible for the supervision of 'registered' children put out to nurse with foster parents.[687] The Children Act, 1908 required nurse mothers to register a child with the local authorities within 48 hours of it entering their care. It also included regulations on the inspection of nurse children, the responsibility for which lay with the local authorities. This was extended in the Children (Amendment) Act (NI) in 1931 where foster parents had to obtain the written permission of the Board of Guardians before taking in a child to foster for financial reward.[688] Children placed with nurse mothers 'were predominately

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681 Memorandum, 20 Mar. 1925, CAB/9/B/53/3, PRONI.

682 The protection and welfare of the young and the Treatment of Young Offenders: Report of the Committee appointed by the Minister of Home Affairs (Belfast, 1938), p 138.

683 Report of the Boarding Out Committee, Belfast Board of Guardians, 26 Apr. 1937, BG/7/AI/1, PRONI.

684 Report of the Boarding Out Committee, Belfast Board of Guardians, 15 Aug. 1939, BG/7/AI/1, PRONI.

685 Notes for Children's Act Amendment Bill, Second Reading in Northern Ireland Senate, 10 Mar. 1931, Amendments, 1931, Children's and Young Persons Act, HA/13/55, PRONI.

686 Brian Caul and Stanley Herron, A service for people: origins and development of the personal social services of Northern Ireland (Belfast, 1992), p. 50.

687 Ibid., p. 138

688 The protection and welfare of the young and the Treatment of Young Offenders, p. 135.

illegitimate children who, due to economic necessity and the shame of illegitimacy, needed to be kept for a number of months or years by someone other than a relative'.[689] This was an essential form of childcare for those single mothers who needed to return to employment to support themselves and their baby financially.[690] In the year to February 1937 there were 1,757 notifications received for children to be nursed and maintained[691] and in 1947, there were 1,109 children nursed for financial reward in Northern Ireland, with 590 of these in Belfast.[692] Many of the infants from mother and baby homes (and also the separate baby homes) were sent to nurse mothers. They were often not specifically referred to in the records as nurse mothers, but the placing of a baby with a woman, not related to the birth mother makes this a likely scenario.

The Lynn Committee Report raised concerns about the payment for children at nurse, based on examples brought to its attention where someone who had been refused permission to take a child had 'subsequently been discovered in charge of a child for whom it is alleged no payment of any kind is being made'.[693] The committee concluded that there seemed to be a 'general practice' in some areas to evade having to notify the Board of Guardians by saying there was not payment being made, when, in reality, there was. The Lynn Committee recommended that in all cases where children were put out to nurse, 'whether for reward of not', that notification with the Board of Guardians be compulsory.[694] It also recommended involving the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC) in the inspection of foster-children's homes.[695]

In 1945, fears were again expressed that the fostering system was being abused. A memorandum from the Inspector from the Ministry of Home Affairs explained the concern that a number of children who 'should be visited are not known to the authorities as the foster parents and their mothers are becoming increasingly aware of how easy it is to evade the law'. She went on to explain that she had been told that 'during the past six months over 40 illegitimate births have been registered in the Omagh Union and of these only four have been registered as nurse children'. It was felt that it was:

> becoming a regular practice for a mother to enter into an agreement drawn up in a solicitor's office with a foster mother. It is then claimed that the child is adopted and not subject to the regulations, re registration and inspection. No mention of any money payment is made and if inquiries are made it is denied that any reward has been received but in the course of time it sometimes transpires that money has passed hands. No legal action can be taken against the parties to such an agreement should they succeed in keeping it secret for 6 months as this is not a continuing offence.

689 Buckley, The cruelty man, p. 15.

690 The protection and welfare of the young and the Treatment of Young Offenders, p. 138.

691 Ibid., p. 135.

692 Transfer of functions - children nursed for reward and boarded out by Board of Guardians (1947), HA/13/19, PRONI.

693 The protection and welfare of the young and the Treatment of Young Offenders, p. 136.

694 Ibid.

695 Ibid.

The Inspector said this ensured that the child 'has thus neither the advantage of supervision as a registered child, nor the legal advantages of an adopted child'. She also raised one of the issues that had been a feature of boarding out from the establishment of this practice, the fear of proselytization, as:

> *in Londonderry, Strabane and Limavady I have had reports of mothers being approached by members of a different church with offers to take their children off their hands. Owing to the difficulty in finding homes within the capacity of these mothers to pay or any home where the children could be suitably cared for, it is understandable such offers should be accepted as the alternative is frequently a prolonged stay in the Workhouse.*[696]

The other question which was raised at the Ministry of Home Affairs relating to children at nurse was, whether a foster mother who had unofficially agreed with a parent to nurse a child for payment, could refuse responsibility for the child 'should the payment cease or should the child prove difficult and force it on the Guardians'. The concern was that 'mothers from across the Border, some of whom come here to have their children and then leave them at nurse, finally ceasing any payment and also others who are working here prior to confinement, then place the child at nurse and later clear out'.[697] The official response from the Ministry was that undertaking to nurse a child for reward did not 'place the acceptor in loco parentis to the child and make him responsible for its maintenance'. The Inspector said 'that in view of this decision, I fear the Board of Guardians, as soon as it becomes generally known, will have some unpleasant surprises'.[698]

Some of the situations that necessitated babies to be boarded out or fostered are revealed in the records of the Fermanagh County Welfare Committee. They describe how an 18 year-old, who had given birth in Thorndale, in 1953, had parents who were 'unwilling to accept her home with her baby'. As this young birth mother was unable to make alternative arrangements, it was felt that 'it would not only be in the interests of the mother but also in the interests of the child to accept the latter into care and give the mother an opportunity to find employment'. The baby was boarded out and the mother informed she would be required to pay 7s/6d every week towards the maintenance of her baby.[699] Several other cases came before the same committee in the following years when parents refused to allow an unmarried daughter to return home with their baby and they were boarded out or placed in county welfare homes. In some cases, the costs were borne by the relevant county welfare committee. In the case of three babies, born in 1956, their mothers were described as 'unmarried and unable to provide for the child'. These children were placed in Coleshill children's home and each woman paid 8 shillings per week for their maintenance.[700]

With the closure of the workhouses and the integration of their services into a new National Health Service structure after 1948, there was considerable discussion by the various county welfare committees about who was responsible for children boarded out in their jurisdiction but born elsewhere. As one of the aims of boarding out was to remove children from cities to rural areas, many children from Belfast were boarded in rural areas. When investigating cases in his area in 1948,

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696 Memorandum, Florence Harrison, 21 Mar. 1945, Children's and Young Persons Act, HA/13/8, PRONI.

697 Memorandum, 11 Mar. 1945, Children's and Young Persons Act, HA/13/8, PRONI.

698 Memorandum, 22 Mar. 1945; Note, Florence Harrison, 14 Apr. 1945, Children's and Young Persons Act, HA/13/8, PRONI.

699 Fermanagh County Welfare Committee, 17 Jan. 1953, HA/13/43, PRONI.

700 Fermanagh County Welfare Committee, 28 May 1956, HA/13/75, PRONI.

the Welfare Officer for Down discovered that 61 boarded-out children were from Belfast as opposed to 53 from Down.[701] Annoyance about paying maintenance fees for children from outside the locality was a common sentiment within health and welfare financial discussions in Northern Ireland, particularly during the years in which the new welfare state structures were implemented after the closure of the last workhouses.[702]

There were also continued difficulties in finding suitable foster parents. For example, in 1958 a Ministry of Home Affairs Children's Inspector, explained to the Antrim County Welfare Committee that, 'in our previous attempts to obtain foster homes we have had little or no success from advertisements placed in the press'.[703] The Proceedings of the Child Welfare Council reported the increases in boarding out allowances made available to foster parents. By 1954 they were: for children up to 5 years old, £2.13s.4d per month; for 5 to 8 year olds, £2.15s.4d; for 9 to 13 year olds, £3.2s.0d; and for those over 13, £3.3s.0d. The report for that year noted that the number of children 'nursed for reward' had gone up from 102 children in 1949 to 124 in 1954.[704]

Boarding out or fostering was viewed as preferable to children being lodged in either the workhouse or in residential homes. In this context, there was a concern that Catholic voluntary homes did not attempt to board out children as much as it was felt they should. Two Children's Inspectors reported that there was not a 'sufficiently active policy in boarding out children in their care' being pursued by the Nazareth Sisters who ran St. Joseph's Baby Home in Belfast.[705] Barnardo's boarded out a number of children from their homes, but finances were also an issue in this case. In 1951, there was a discussion about who was financially liable for children boarded out from Barnardo's homes. A memorandum from the Ministry of Home Affairs stated that, welfare authorities should be responsible, rather than Barnardo's.[706]

Inspections

The minutes of the Children's Committee of Belfast Union detail a number of the inspections of potential foster families' homes. These could and did lead to some families being prevented from fostering/boarding out. One report from an inspector acting for the Poor Law Guardians in 1947, revealed unsatisfactory living conditions where the 'woman, her husband and two children sleep in one bed'. The inspector took steps to prevent the woman from receiving any more babies to board out.[707] This example is indicative of the socio-economic difficulties that could lead some women

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701 Down County Welfare Committee Minutes, 27 Jul. 1948, Boarding Out of Children Policy, HA/13/13, PRONI.

702 For more on this see: John Privilege and Greta Jones, 'Crisis and scandal: government, local government and health reform in Northern Ireland, 1939-44' in Irish Economic and Social History, vol 41, no. 1 (2015) pp. 33-52; and John Privilege, 'The Northern Ireland government and the welfare state, 1942-48: the case of health provision' in Irish Historical Studies, vol 39, no. 11 (2015) pp. 435-459

703 Belfast Midnight Mission Minutes, 1942, Belfast Midnight Mission, D/2072, PRONI; Antrim County Welfare Committee, 14 Dec. 1958, HA/13/100, PRONI.

704 Proceedings of the Child Welfare Council, Mar. 1950, June 1954, HA/13/11A, PRONI.

705 Letter to Secretary Ministry of Home Affairs, 25 Oct. 1950, St. Joseph's Baby Home, Children's and Young Persons Act, HA/13/94A, PRONI.

706 Memorandum, 26 June 1951, Boarding Out of Children, Children's and Young Persons Act, HA/13/185A, PRONI.

707 Minutes, Belfast Board of Guardians, Children's Committee, 10 June 1947, HA/13/26, PRONI.

to seek the small amounts of income that fostering a baby might offer them. The inspections of boarding out applicants became the responsibility of local authorities from the early 1950s, following the closure of the workhouses.

In a number of cases the babies involved arrived either from mother and baby homes or via another of the voluntary homes where they had been placed by a mother and baby home. This produced a complicated process with the inspectors having to go back to the mother and baby or other voluntary homes to discuss the baby's situation if there was an issue with the living conditions. In one instance, in 1952, a baby was fostered from Thorndale but the report described the foster mother as 'really too old for this job' and that she was 'making a great fuss over maintenance' and 'threatening to return the baby' to Thorndale. The Inspector detailed a number of voluntary agencies involved as well as the welfare authorities.[708] The situation could also be complicated by religious differences as in the experience of a family who had fostered a baby from Mater Dei. They wanted to adopt the baby who was Catholic but they were Protestant. The baby's birth mother was prepared to let the baby be adopted but 'the Roman Catholic Church will hardly allow this! Present position is most unfair' to the foster mother, observed the Inspector. The child was subsequently returned to Mater Dei by its welfare workers 'where the mother is with her second baby'.[709]

Adoptions

The Board of Guardians also facilitated adoptions, following the introduction of the Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1931 and could make the decision to begin an adoption process if it was found that the mother was not 'a fit person' or the child had been 'deserted'. An example in this category involved a woman who, in 1947, was unemployed and had been in the workhouse infirmary receiving treatment for venereal disease. Her six-month-old baby was transferred to the Workhouse Nursery Department and recommended for adoption as the 'mother is not a fit person to have control'.[710]

As the last workhouses closed in 1948, it is not surprising that there was very little response to appeals for oral testimony from those who had experience of giving birth as unmarried mothers in these institutions. Two individuals did approach the researchers in connection with workhouses. QB's mother was born in a hospital in the early 1940s and was then transferred with her birth mother to the local workhouse.[711] A short time after this, QB's mother was sent to a children's home and never saw her birth mother again. QB's family has spent much of the past few decades trying to trace the birth mother before finally discovering that she had died in the 1990s in the Republic of Ireland. QB has managed to trace some of her grandmother's family. This has revealed that some of grandmother's immediate family played a role in shaming her and forcing her into the workhouse. At a recent family reunion in her grandmother's hometown, QB and her mother were made very welcome: 'over sixty people turned up and still keep in touch.' These newly found family members confirmed that it was only after the death of QB's aunt (her grandmother's sister) that her grandmother was ever mentioned. Before that point, if she was mentioned 'the aunt would ignore whoever asked and would freeze up.' One family member had been able to discover that QB's

708 Registers of Children Nursed and Maintained, Belfast Corporation Welfare Committee, c.1940-60, LA/7/28/CA/6, PRONI.

709 Registers of Children Nursed and Maintained, Belfast Corporation Welfare Committee, c.1940-60, LA/7/28/CA/6, PRONI.

710 Minutes, Belfast Board of Guardians, Children's Committee, 22 Jul. 1947, HA/13/26, PRONI.

711 QB. Statement read to Olivia Dee, 11 October 2018.

grandmother 'was marched or stoned out of her home and walked the seven miles to *workhouse* and [was] told never to return.'[712]

CO, who was interviewed in her home in England, offered testimony on her mother's personal story.[713] She became aware that her mother had given birth to a daughter in one of Northern Ireland's workhouses in the mid-1940s when that adopted daughter, over sixty years later, began to search for her birth mother. This prompted CO to investigate her mother's early life. CO does not know a great deal about how her mother came to give up her first daughter for adoption. Her elderly mother suffers from dementia and it is not possible to ask her about these events. However, CO observed that 'if you were pregnant and single that was not a good idea' in the 1940s and that:

> *apart from the fact unmarried mothers were regarded as no better than criminals and prostitutes at the time – and also judged as mentally unstable – there wouldn't have been many places for her to go. She was living in *town redacted* at the time and she did have a sister there, so you'd have hoped that she would have taken her in. But apparently not. But I'm reluctant to judge on that because I don't know what the situation was. And I think that sister had lost a baby herself through an accident, so she may not have been in any fit state of mind.*

CO's mother was 19 when she gave birth to her first daughter. Conversations with a social worker that specialises in origin tracing have led CO to suspect that her mother's own parents were unaware of her first pregnancy. The same social worker has suggested that CO's mother might have been given assistance in heading to England after she had given birth. This form of exile from family and friends may well have been preferable to one of the alternatives. CO was aware that a Magdalene laundry was one possible destination after her mother gave birth and they did have a link with the workhouses. The first entrants to the Magdalene laundry opened by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Newry were former inmates of Newry Workhouse.[714]

Becoming aware of this aspect of her mother's life enabled CO to make more sense of some of the apparently confused utterances that her mother sometimes makes. She occasionally says, "Don't leave me in the poorhouse on my own". She has also made references to 'screaming with the pain' in the workhouse and CO assumes 'that was a reference to childbirth [because]. I'm not sure they gave them painkillers.' Her mother has also said "They put me in with the lunatics. I'm not mad". CO speculates that her mother was placed in the 'lunatic ward'. Two other things CO's mother has said are "It nearly destroyed me" and finally, "I didn't want to give it up". A reference, CO assumes, to the baby girl.

Two days after her birth, the girl was baptised at the local Catholic chapel. Having learned about the existence of her half-sister, CO travelled to Northern Ireland to view the legal records related to the adoption. CO explained that '[I] could see that my mum had signed away her parental rights the same month that she gave birth, and that a Catholic priest was involved in the process and acted as guardian ad litem for the adoptive parents.' CO notes that they 'were doing it all legally, I suppose. Because often it was done informally I think, wasn't it, the adoption?' It appears to have been the type of third-party adoption, usually arranged by GPs, priests, or a minister of religion, that are mentioned

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712 Ibid.

713 Interview with CO. Conducted with Olivia Dee

714 Good Shepherd Sisters, St Mary's Newry Register

in a number of other of the oral history testimonies collected for this report. There is no record of the underlying reason for the adoption and CO's assessment on this was: 'I think she probably had no money, or she wouldn't have been in the workhouse if she'd had any money.' CO also speculated that, if her mother was in the 'lunatics ward', agreeing to the adoption was something she thought would enable her to get out of the workhouse more quickly.

It is this element of her mother's story that motivated CO to offer testimony, although not without some internal debate. CO had contacted an activist group in Northern Ireland who had suggested that she should not cooperate with this research. Quoting from them, CO explained their view that the research 'is a stitch-up. The academics are naïve puppets of an attempted government cover-up. A fair process and fair outcomes for victims have been made impossible by a number of procedural issues'. CO remarked that:

> *I'm just saying that we shouldn't forget that there's a lot of birth mothers outside of this research process that are also seeking justice for the abuse suffered in the Magdalene asylums and other institutions just for being unmarried mothers. So I thought I should just give them a little bit of a voice as well ... I mean I didn't want to jeopardise anything for them, but I did point out that my mum is 92 - I want her to have a voice before she dies. And they were okay about that.*

CO did not want to remain silent because 'silence plays a big part in all of this ... they dumped all the shame on the women and yet, really, where did it belong?" She asks 'what about the state, the church, the family and the pathetic excuses for men who have taken no responsibility and have never been held to account?'

CO's mother is in her early nineties and 'there won't be any compensation for her'. Moreover, 'an apology would mean nothing for her, you know?' CO is uncertain about what she, herself, wants from any potential public inquiry. She explained that 'you know, in my fantasy world I came across this statue of a pregnant woman and it was put outside one of the Magdalene laundries. I can't remember where it was. I remember I put it on my Facebook page, and I thought 'I'd love to do that' and put it in the townland, I think it's called, where she was born. That would be what I'd like to do.'

Conclusion

The Board of Guardian's records reveal that unmarried mothers used the workhouse as a place to give birth, and that many of them then had babies nursed or boarded out through the workhouse authorities. There also existed a close relationship between the Belfast workhouse and mother and baby homes, with babies boarded out from the mother and baby homes through the auspices of the workhouse Board of Guardians. It is evident that the process of boarding out could be problematic. It is unclear how detailed the inspection process of families and homes was and what level of oversight there was for babies once they were placed in this way. Examples highlighted above indicate that there was the potential for babies to disappear from the supervisory view of the state. To understand fully the involvement of Boards of Guardians with unmarried mothers and their children, the records of all relevant Poor Law Unions should be examined. The sampled analysis of Belfast Board of Guardians reveals a complex picture and raises questions about the care of children and how closely monitored they were in families outside the workhouse.

Belfast and Coleraine Welfare Hostels

These were the new name given to the workhouses following their official closure. They continued to be maintained by welfare authorities and continued to house in Belfast, 'illegitimate and orphaned children, unmarried mothers, prostitutes, mentally handicapped and elderly' until other suitable accommodation was found.[715] In Coleraine the Hostel operated as a children's home prior to the building of the separate Dhu Varren children's home in Portrush. The County Londonderry Welfare, Children's Sub-Committee Minutes for November 1948 discussed a letter from the Medical Officer of Health who recommended the removal from the hostel 'of present occupants to properly equipped homes.' This coincided with a report from the home that said conditions were 'most unsatisfactory; all children were suffering from impetigo…and [there were] four cases of Scarlet Fever'. This led the sub-committee to make urgent representation to the Child Welfare Council for a new children's home. In December 1948, the Sub-Committee Minutes recorded their unhappiness that children were still being maintained in the County Hostel.[716] There is also a reference to a mother and a baby resident being sent to the 'Welfare Hostel Coleraine' by Kennedy House in June 1960.[717]

No further records could be identified relating to these hostels. However, there may be further references to them within the County Welfare/Local Authority Records. These records are extensive and given the limited research period allotted to the researchers, there was insufficient time for them to be reviewed.

715 Caul and Herron, A service for people, p. 81.

716 County Londonderry Welfare Committee, Children's Sub-Committee, 7/12/1948, LA/5/28AB/1, PRONI

717 Kennedy House Register, 1950

Chapter 10:

Belfast Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home, Malone Place

Founded in 1860, in Bradbury Place, as Belfast Midnight Mission this institution moved to purpose-built premises in Malone Place in 1926 where it operated as a rescue and maternity home.[718] Up to the beginning of the twentieth century it employed a missionary whose job it was to explore the streets at night and escort women, deemed to be morally at risk, to the rescue home. These women included many who had travelled to Belfast in search of employment and were often found wandering about near the city's transport termini. The founders of the Midnight Mission feared that naïve new arrivals to Belfast would be sucked into the city's vice trade. In 1944 the home's name was changed to Malone Place.

By 1944 most of those entering the institution to take advantage of its crisis accommodation rooms were described as 'Prostitutes who would arrive at 4 am - using the home as simply a place to stay after a night's work'. To discourage this practice, a decision was made to permit no admissions after 11 pm each night.[719] Generally, though, the home's rescue work involved women who needed emergency accommodation 'only for one night while looking for work'. For example, in 1937 the fourteen women who passed through the Midnight Mission rescue home were described as mostly 'young girls brought by the police.'[720] There were also women who were suffering from mental or physical illness: 'one woman was a mental case', according to the records, while another 'seemed to be suffering from loss of memory'.[721]

From the beginning of the twentieth century, the home operated a separate maternity facility. While from 1926 the focus was on unmarried mothers, rooms were set aside for married mothers as well.[722] Malone Place was purchased by the Northern Ireland Hospitals Authority in 1949 and continued to operate as a maternity hospital until 1981.[723] The focus on unmarried mothers continued and the majority of women from Hopedene, for example, gave birth in Malone Place before returning to Hopedene after delivery.

Between 1922 and 1944, 2,485 women entered the Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home. The average number of admissions increased during the years of the Second World War, with 156 women entering in 1943-44. (see **Appendix F - Figure 1**)

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718 H.G Calwell, 'Malone Place Hospital (1860-1981) (The Belfast Midnight Mission), Ulster Medical Journal (1986) 55(1) p. 47.

719 Minutes Belfast Midnight Mission, D/2072/1, PRONI.

720 Belfast Midnight Mission Minutes, June 1935, May 1947, Belfast Midnight Mission, D/2072, PRONI.

721 Belfast Midnight Mission Minutes, March, June 1937, Belfast Midnight Mission, D/2072, PRONI.

722 H.G Calwell, 'Malone Place Hospital (1860-1981) (The Belfast Midnight Mission, Ulster Medical Journal (1986) 55(1) p. 47.

723 Calwell, 'Malone Place Hospital', p.48

Profile of women entering the Midnight Mission/ Rescue Home and Maternity Home, Malone Place

The surviving records include registers that include data on women entering the maternity ward at this institution from 1922 onwards. These were sampled for 1922, 1932 and 1942. 97 women entered in 1922, 120 in 1932 and 128 in 1942. Of the women for whom age was recorded, over the sampled years, 23% were between 15 and 19 years-old; 66% were between 20 and 29 years-old and 10% were between 30 and 39 years-old. The remaining 1% were women over 40 years-old.[724]

For those for whom religion was recorded, 40% of women belonged to the Church of Ireland, 35% were Presbyterian, 8% were recorded as members of smaller Protestant denominations and 17% were Catholic.[725] From the information provided on the registers about place of residence, 29% of women in the sample had a Belfast recorded address, with addresses in other parts of Northern Ireland making up 55%. A further 13% of women came from the Republic of Ireland and 3% from Britain.[726] (see **Appendix F - Figure 2**)

One person who came forward to offer oral history testimony on this institution offers some insight into this matter. This birth mother (CD), who entered this home in the 1940s, recalled that the other unmarried mothers she encountered were from locations in Northern Ireland outside Belfast, and that there was also an English woman who became known as 'English Mary'.[727]

Referrals

The registers do not record who referred women to the Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity. It is known, however, that, when Hopedene opened in 1943, the majority of women from Hopedene went there to give birth and that women from other mother and baby homes also gave birth at Malone Place (as it was also known).

Entering the Midnight Mission

The sample suggests that the majority of women stayed in the Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home for around one month on average. However, some women did remain longer. For example, in 1922, a number of birth mothers resided there for around six months and one woman for eleven months. Some women may have returned to a mother and baby home after giving birth in the Midnight Mission, but others remained while arrangements were made for their babies.[728] After giving birth in Malone Place (as it was known by the time of her arrival), CD remained until her child was adopted from there. It is not possible to identify if her case was either typical or exceptional. She carried out unpaid work in the home, which included cleaning duties and washing nappies for mothers who were there as private patients.

724 Malone Place Hospital, Register of Admissions, HOS/4/3/1, PRONI.

725 Ibid.

726 Ibid.

727 Interview with CD. Interviewed by Olivia Dee, 18 Dec. 2018.

728 Malone Place Hospital, Register of Admissions, HOS/4/3/1, PRONI.

Living Conditions

CD's testimony also provided her insights of living conditions in Midnight Mission/Malone Place. Following the discovery of her pregnancy, at sixteen, CD's mother transported her to Malone Place. The journey was made by train, from the family home some distance away. As noted above, CD recalled a number of the other pregnant women there, one of whom had travelled from England presumably to have her baby in secrecy. CD's testimony has a good deal in common with testimonies collected from birth mothers from the other mother and baby homes; in particular she noted how privacy and secrecy were strictly policed. Everyone was known only by their Christian name. During her time at Malone Place, CD recalled, 'you had to vacuum all their rooms out [the rooms of fee-paying private patients] and clean … you did all the cleaning. You never were out.' She recalls only one outing, for ice cream, during the several months she resided there. There was no payment for the demanding daily work duties she was directed to carry out and CD remembers 'an auld matron, Miss *name redacted*, she was a bit of a boss'. In the kitchens, CD 'always had a job of peeling potatoes, and it was big bags of potatoes. And I can still see the wee knife you had'. The work was physically tough, especially for a pregnant woman, because the home was located in a multi-story building with lots of stairs: 'it was a very tall building Malone Place.'

Describing the other aspects of her time in Malone Place, CD recalled the religious meetings for the pregnant 'girls', which she does not think were compulsory but 'you never would've said no. Like, I wouldn't have, you know? But they used to play this hymn … like Come to the garden alone. I remember this as well. And, honest to goodness, it made you cry…. I don't know why they had meetings, because they depressed you.' One of the nurses preached at these gatherings. CD remembers that 'it was just like a wee hall, you know when you would go to a hall meeting, like a gospel hall? That type of meeting, you know. It wasn't like the church that I was in, you know?'

Reflecting further on Malone Place, CD said that 'I never felt lonely, or I never felt anything. I didn't even miss my parents. Isn't that awful?' CD does recall that the nurses were 'very good', but that the Matron in charge was one of the 'worst'. This Matron was 'the nastiest…she made my life a misery.'[729]

Birth Experience

Another interviewee, YN, had a much shorter stay in Malone Place after travelling there from Hopedene to give birth in the 1960s. She recalled that she was given a side ward 'because we weren't married.' She felt that 'you know, you were really singled out…it is hard to understand why they would segregate you like that, but that's just what they did.' Reflecting on these events many years later YN concluded that perhaps 'this was part of, you know, the grand plan to humiliate people. I've no idea.' Despite this, she recalled that on an individual level the staff the Malone Place maternity unit 'were grand'.[730]

CD also had her baby in Malone Place and explained that it was a very unpleasant experience: 'and I can tell you one thing, like, you didn't get anything for having this baby,' meaning she received no pain relief. CD continued:

729 Interview with CD.

730 Interview with YN. Interviewed by Olivia Dee, 2 Nov. 2018.

> *And I was in the bed and under the bed and up the bed and everywhere. Now that's the God's honest truth. And that went on and on and on, and then eventually it must've been ready to come, they took you by the feet and the head and they threw you on this table in this other room. And then you have the baby, and then, at that time you had to go to, you were in bed for about a week or so.*

During the labour, CD was on her own for long periods, seeing 'only the nurses now and again'. Sadly, she concluded that 'it was, I'd probably say the worst experience I ever had in my life.' After the delivery, CD remembers that her parents visited. Her mother saw the baby girl, but her father did not even enter the room. She was breastfeeding the baby, but CD's recollection is that she was expected to return to her duties in Malone Place after a week. Once again, this involved servicing the needs of the private patients who were also residents. This went on for the two further months she spent there. Recalling this period, CD said:

> *You'd all the nappies to do, and you had a rota, you had a whole rota. And you had to go down and, you see, with the private patients, I mean, you had to do all theirs as well. So you went down to this big laundry in, on, the basement. And there was big sinks .... And you had, of course, all the soiled nappies first of all. And then, that was, you did that for, probably a week or so. And then the next thing, I was on the rota for drying the nappies for the home. Well ... the lines were on the roof of the building. You had to climb up and up and up, and then went up a wee ladder out onto the roof, and the clothes lines were all there.*

Asked if this work regime was exhausting, CD reasoned that 'I was young I suppose.' However, she did recall feeling unwell in the days and weeks after delivery and this meant that she required examination by a doctor. CD's days were filled with work tasks and she was not sure how her own baby was looked after at this time: 'God only knows who was looking after her, because she must've been really good. Nobody ever seemed to be looking after babies, they seemed to just lie in their cot. Honest to goodness.'[731]

Infant mortality

As the Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home was a maternity hospital, it is unsurprising that a number of babies were stillborn or died shortly after birth. In 1922, 7 babies were stillborn, 2 died shortly after birth and, 1 died at three weeks old and another at ten months old. One other infant death took place for which no details were provided. In addition, one abortion occurred (in this context the term was used to refer to miscarriage as opposed to a 'criminal abortion'). In 1932, there were 5 stillbirths, 1 miscarriage and 2 babies died shortly after birth. In 1942, there were 6 stillbirths, 1 baby died shortly after birth and 2 babies died but had no details recorded about their deaths other than that basic fact.[732] At this time, figures were not recorded for total stillbirths in Northern Ireland and it is, therefore, not possible to assess how these figures compare with those for the general population.

731 Interview with CD.

732 Malone Place Hospital, Register of Admissions, HOS/4/3/1, PRONI.

Financial Affairs

The Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home received a grant from the Maternity and Child Welfare Committee of Belfast Corporation. In February 1920, it was explained that it was a condition of future contributions that there was to be representation from the committee on the management of the Midnight Mission.[733] In June 1920, the grant increased to £300 and it was a condition of this increase that the committee had a right, through the Medical Superintendent Officer of Health, to nominate cases for admission to the Midnight Mission.[734] By 1946, this annual grant had climbed to £550.[735] The following year it was reported that Malone Place was going through a 'bad financial patch at present' and was raising funds, via a bring-and-buy sale. One of the reasons cited for the debt was increased operating costs, due to increasing nurses' salaries.[736]

Exit Pathways

The maternity home register does not provide extensive information on the destinations for birth mothers who left the Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home. On occasion, it was noted that a woman had left to get married. More is revealed about what happened to the babies, although this was not recorded for every baby. For the sampled years (1922, 1932, 1942) 59 (44%), were recorded as returning home with their mother. 5 babies went to Nazareth Lodge and one to Mater Dei; the mothers of these children were Catholic. 17 babies (13%) were fostered and 19 (14%) were adopted.[737]

However, the Boarding Out Register of the Board of Guardians of Belfast Workhouse provides more information on the high numbers of babies born in the Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home, outside the sampled years, who were boarded out through the Guardians.[738] In 1939, 66 babies were boarded out from the Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home and 27 were adopted. This was in comparison to 5 boarded out and 1 adopted from the Belfast Workhouse and 29 boarded out and 4 adopted from Thorndale. In 1945, there were similarly high numbers of Malone Place infants who followed this exit pathway. 50 babies boarded out were from Malone Place, compared to none from the Belfast workhouse and 23 from Thorndale. The system of Boarding Out is described in **chapter 9** on workhouses.

Some of these children were fostered for short periods of time and returned to their mothers later, while, for others, boarding out was a stepping-stone to adoption. The relatively large number of boarding out cases for the Midnight Mission/Malone Place was achieved despite the fact that the institution's minutes for 1942 record that the 'matron was having great difficulty in getting foster mothers'.[739] After 1948, when Malone Place was absorbed into the National Health Service, it

733 Minutes Belfast Corporation, Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, 17 Feb. 1920.

734 Minutes Belfast Corporation, Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, 29 July 1930.

735 Belfast Telegraph, 19 Jan. 1946.

736 Belfast Newsletter, 26 Jan. 1947.

737 Malone Place Hospital, Register of Admissions, HOS/4/3/1, PRONI.

738 Belfast Board of Guardians, Children's Register, BG/7/I/2-4, PRONI

739 Malone Place Hospital, Register of Admissions, HOS/4/3/1, PRONI.

continued to provide maternity care for unmarried mothers (as well as for married women) but was not engaged in boarding out or adoption work. (see **Appendix F - Figure 3**)

The experience of adoption from Midnight Mission/Malone Place was described by one of the oral history respondents. CD explained that she was uncertain of how long she would remain in Malone Place because this depended on when and if her baby daughter was adopted. She explained being 'glad I had a wee girl, because*name of another resident redacted * had been in for so long, and her wee boy was a right size then, you know.' In CD's assessment, girls were adopted more speedily than baby boys because there was greater demand for them from adoptive parents. CD explained how she was struck hard by the reality of her daughter's adoption. She recalled that there was no discussion of options or any type of counselling. The first sign of the imminent adoption came when CD was instructed to cease breastfeeding her baby and to bottle feed her: 'you used to come in and just set all the bottles on this big table, and you just lifted your bottle, your name was on it, and you fed her, you know.'

CD remembers being told that "Oh, somebody's coming to look at your baby" and that she managed to have a conversation with the woman who adopted her baby. This provided an interesting revelation. The adoptive parents had been made aware that CD's baby was available for adoption by the consultant to whom she was referred during the early stages of her pregnancy. CD said that that 'he must've been in touch with Malone Place as well, there must've been something between them all.' The implication was that they may have had a financial interest in the matter. If this was the case, it was not illegal at that point in time for either of the medics involved to receive a payment for taking a role in passing on such information. It would, however, have been ethically dubious practice. CD's suspicions about this element of her baby's adoption deepened several years later when she met a school friend who became pregnant in her early twenties and had arranged an adoption through the same family doctor. However, when this unmarried mother changed her mind about adoption, the doctor 'near went berserk, into a real temper.' Reflecting on the role of this GP, CD said 'it seemed funny, him, me going to him and him being in touch with Malone Place. How did I ever get into Malone Place? You know what I mean? That's what I wonder.' As already stated, CD's family home was some distance from Belfast, but a number of the testimonies collected for this project indicated that the anonymity that the big city offered country 'girls' was a factor, and it is clear that doctors (as well as others such as priests and religious ministers) were frequently the conduits of information about mother and baby homes in Belfast.

Conclusion

The analysis in this chapter is limited by the fact that while the records for this home were only available up to 1944 the extensive material within the surviving files necessitated a sampling exercise. From 1949 when it was taken over by the NHS, Malone Place ceased to function as a mother and baby home and operated as a maternity ward. The evidence suggests that it exhibited many of the cultural practices witnessed in the other homes explored in this report. There was an emphasis on hard work and cleaning for pregnant women, like CD, who was expected to carry out duties on behalf of fee-paying patients. The adoption of her baby highlights the role of potential stakeholders in the process. In many cases, parish priests or ministers were influential actors in the adoption process. However, the family GP also had an influential role in many of the testimonies which were collected during this research. As the individual responsible for the physical confirmation of pregnancy, the GP occupied an important position: one from which to offer counsel on what should happen next. As CD's testimony suggests, this provided GPs with an opportunity to become involved in adoption networks. Whether or not many of them exploited that position for financial advantage is a matter for serious consideration.

Chapter 11:

Mount Oriel and Deanery Flats

Mount Oriel

Mount Oriel was opened by Down Welfare Authority in 1969 and appears to have been one of a number of new facilities which emerged as a result of organisational changes on the social welfare landscape produced by new legislative measures relating to adoption. No records have been discovered relating to the number of mothers and babies involved with Mount Oriel. However, it is apparent that they were relatively small in number. The home was modest in size and it operated for a much shorter period than the other mother and baby homes under scrutiny in this report.

Mount Oriel was equipped with accommodation for seven mothers and their babies. It was described in the *Belfast Telegraph,* on its opening, as a 'mother and baby home'. It cost £10,750 to build and mothers could stay post-birth while 'they decide what to do with their baby'. According to the article, there would be 'no pressure on them to adopt'.[740] A memorandum, sent to Social Services in 1976, discussing a request for an increase in Mount Oriel's charge for its services, reported that it had an annual budget of £6,358. The payment system at Mount Oriel appeared to be similar to other mother and baby homes, as the memorandum explained:

> If a mother had a private income the board would assess her ability to pay in accordance with supplementary benefit principles and she would be charged an amount between the minimum and the maximum. The majority of mothers are on supplementary or other benefit and pay the minimum as prescribed with the statutory addition for the baby when appropriate. In 1976, this was £10.65 and £2.75.[741]

A memorandum written in reply the following day by Social Services explained that it had not been 'very clear as to which branch should have responsibility for Mount Oriel'. The matter was discussed with Child Care Branch, which said it had no involvement with Mount Oriel. It was then accepted that it was Social Services' responsibility and an agreed alteration to the charge was made, increasing it to £17.30 per week.[742]

This correspondence represented the total records which were found in PRONI in relation to Mount Oriel. It is not clear when the facility closed as a mother and baby home, but it is believed that this was in the early 1980s. However, the researchers did receive testimony on this home from a woman who was resident there, during the 1970s, when she was a teenage mother-to-be. The insights of JQ allow some further details to be added on this short-lived and relatively small mother and baby home.

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740 Belfast Telegraph, 17 December 1969

741 Mount Oriel Home for Unmarried Mothers, HSS/13/33/10, PRONI

742 Mount Oriel Home for Unmarried Mothers, HSS/13/33/10, PRONI

The fact that Mount Oriel was not a voluntary home and received its finance in full from the Down Welfare Authority, may be a factor in JQ recalling the work regime in a very different fashion than the majority of birth mothers from Hopedene, Thorndale, Marianvale and Marianville. Aside from very basic cleaning, she recalled the work as being very limited. Much of her time was spent watching TV and doing jigsaws. She was one of only three expectant mothers residing in Mount Oriel when she first arrived. However, over her ten-week stay she shared the home with a total of ten others. JQ remembered that once a woman left to have her baby, she did not return to Mount Oriel.[743]

JQ was still a schoolgirl during her pregnancy and recalls that the other women were older. One was in a professional occupation and in her mid-twenties. The latter's presence in Mount Oriel surprised JQ, but she observed that even in the 1970s being a single mother 'was quite a stigma.' There was no physical barrier preventing JQ from coming and going from Mount Oriel, but she remembers leaving only infrequently for fear of being spotted by anyone who might recognise her. JQ has little recollection of the staff at Mount Oriel, but recalled correctly that it was not church-run. She described it as 'more like a health service-y sort of a thing. I'm pretty sure of that but I'm not 100%'.[744]

JQ had no complaints about Mount Oriel, but was upset about her experience during a hospital antenatal check-up where she had a very unpleasant, rough, internal examination during which coarse remarks were made about her enjoying herself 'nine months ago'. JQ concluded that that this was related to her status as a teenage unmarried mother-to-be. She believed that the doctor responsible considered this to be 'your punishment for doing this dreadful thing.'[745]

After the birth of her baby JQ was told by hospital staff that it was 'best' that she did not see her daughter, who was wrapped up and taken away. She understands that this was an attempt to ensure that no bond was created between mother and daughter, but considers this logic to be undermined by the emotional attachment created by a nine-month pregnancy. As a consultation of the appendix on oral testimonies from across all the homes reveals, JQ is representative of a large number of birth mothers whose 'consent' to their child's adoption was given only under the most stressful and traumatic circumstances. Like many of the other birth mothers, JQ felt that the decision was taken in a context in which no individual or organisation was offering an alternative. The trauma of the unpleasant internal examination she experienced at the hands of a male gynaecologist highlights the possibility that the youngest and most isolated unmarried mothers were vulnerable to unwelcome forms of disturbing behaviour.[746]

743 Interview with JQ: interviewed by Olivia Dee, 12 February 2019.

744 Ibid.

745 Ibid.

746 Ibid.

Deanery Flats, Barnardo's, 1973-1991

Deanery Flats consisted of six self-contained flats for mothers and babies and a day nursery for up to 25 children, supported by Barnardo's in Windsor Avenue in Belfast. The flats opened in 1973 and closed in 1991.

A newspaper article published on the opening of Deanery Flats described how two senior social workers with Dr Barnardo's Homes had come up with a 'pioneer scheme where unmarried mothers can be given both security and independence'. The report stated that the 'illegitimate child grows up to be deprived and backward' and that 'parents often reject daughters who "get into trouble" because of what the neighbours would say, so the young pregnant girls face months of fear and loneliness.' The flats were for 'unmarried girls who are expecting a baby soon, mothers of young babies who are at their wits end about day care, divorced and unsupported mothers'. The nursery would provide 'secure day care that won't fall through and endanger their job via them not turning up'. A social worker 'and his wife' will live in one of the flats to be 'on hand if needed'.[747]

Barnardo's were contacted about any existing records relating to Deanery Flats. While records have now been identified by Barnardo's this information was not provided until after the end of the project and these have not been examined. Moreover, no records relating to Deanery Flats were discovered in PRONI.

747 Belfast Telegraph, 20 Oct. 1972.

Chapter 12:

Good Shepherd St Mary's home/laundry, Derry/Londonderry

The records for the St Mary's Laundry and Refuge in Derry/Londonderry comprise a series of hand-written notebooks which serve as a register of entries and exits for the women and girls who worked in the laundry between 1922 and 1982. There is also a separate collection of notes and correspondence containing commentary on some of the women admitted to this St Mary's Home. This material also includes a small number of letters to and from the Good Shepherd Sisters and some of these individuals. There is also correspondence with the statutory agencies responsible for placing women and girls in the laundry. Some of the financial accounts for St Mary's Derry were also made available although these were patchy in terms of both their chronological coverage and detail. In the final weeks of the project, the Good Shepherd Sisters provided the researchers with the details of a number of women who died during their time in the St Mary's home in Derry or in a residential home after leaving it. This information indicated the location of their interment and the date on which the death occurred.

In addition, government documents, particularly files from the Northern Ireland Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, and the Ministry of Health and Social Services, have been used to explore the place of the St Mary's Home in Derry in the state's social care apparatus. The analysis and evidence offered here should be read in conjunction with that in **Chapter 15**, which use oral history testimony to probe the working and living conditions in the three Good Shepherd St Mary's homes in Northern Ireland. This includes testimony from witnesses at the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry and the oral evidence which was collected specifically in preparing this report on mother and baby homes and Magdalene laundries.

St Mary's Derry/Londonderry: outline history

In 1919, the Derry Journal informed readers that a local solicitor had arranged the purchase of the beautifully situated residence known as Bellevue on behalf of the Good Shepherd Sisters.[748] During her testimony, as part of our research, Sister 2 outlined the Order's institutional folklore on their arrival in Derry. She identified concerns about female sexuality in a port city that became temporary home to large numbers of military personnel during the First World War and the concern that this caused for the local Catholic hierarchy: 'if I remember rightly, 1919 we … we were asked to go to Derry by the local bishop because of the war situation and all the Army that were [there] and all the poor girls from the Bogside you know. So that is why they were asked to provide protection for these women'.[749]

748 Derry Journal, 6 Oct. 1919.

749 Interview with Sister 2, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 15 December 2018.

In 1920, the Good Shepherd Sisters built and outfitted a laundry at their premises on the Dungiven Road in Derry/Londonderry's Waterside. The cost of construction and installation of machinery for washing, drying and ironing was £15,333.15s.4d (an investment equivalent to around £500,000 today).[750] Newspaper advertisements, placed in October 1921, made the city's inhabitants aware that the laundry opened at the end of that month: although as noted above records of first girls and women arriving at the St Mary's home only begin in 1922. Potential customers were advised to 'notify at once as only a limited quantity [of washing] can be arranged for'.[751]

The local Catholic community was urged to mobilise its resources to help recoup the investment the Good Shepherd Sisters made in the facilities. The Derry Aonach (or Fancy Fair) of 1922 raised funds for the convent and 'the Waterside Parochial Building Funds'. As part of the Fancy Fair there was a baby show in the 'magnificent hall attached to the Convent', where babies aged from two months to two years were judged by a local doctor and a nurse.[752] Speaking about the work of the Good Shepherd Sisters, in 1923, the Bishop of Derry, Charles McHugh, said 'it was not possible to withhold admiration for their wonderful spirit of charity in keeping those who were friendless and wayward from falling into sin and raising up and placing them in the friendship of God'. The Bishop described a visit he had made to the convent, to celebrate an early morning mass, where he was impressed by the devotion of the 150 'penitents' who attended. He noted the significant expenses the Good Shepherd Sisters incurred 'in order to establish an industry for the employment of the inmates and to help in maintaining the institution'.[753]

Middle class society in the city appears to have responded to appeals for financial support of the Good Shepherd Convent (GSC). The Board of Guardians gave one ton of coal to the convent in 1926.[754] More frequently, however, financial support came from Derry's most affluent Catholics. Weekly meetings in support of the Good Shepherd Convent were held at the Catholic Benefit Room, St Columb's Hall.[755] Events in support of the convent, included a 'monster whist drive' at the City Cafe 'towards the advancement of that splendid institution – the Good Shepherd Convent, Waterside'.[756] Affluent Catholics across the border, in Donegal, also assisted. In February 1926, the organisers of a Letterkenny concert on behalf of GSC Waterside thanked 'those that lent their motorcars'.[757]

The convent itself hosted the city's more influential Catholics for concerts and comic operas. In 1929, the Derry Journal praised the 'girls' of the Good Shepherd for their musical performance in a concert. Readers were assured that their theatrical efforts did 'not interfere with their regular labour'.[758] In 1930, a comic opera featured at least thirty 'inmates'. A series of speakers thanked the convent and praised its entertainment as the 'last hold out in Derry against the mechanised productions of Hollywood'.[759] This became a yearly event as a report on the 'annual entertainment' given by the

750 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Accounts, 1920.
751 Derry Journal, 26 Oct. 1921.
752 Derry Journal, 17 June 1921; 16 Sept. 1921.
753 Derry Journal, 25 Oct. 1923; 26 Oct. 1923.
754 Londonderry Sentinel, 26 July 1926.
755 Derry Journal, 19 Feb. 1926.
756 Derry Journal, 26 Mar. 1926.
757 Derry Journal, 26 Feb. 1926.
758 Derry Journal, 6 Feb. 1929.
759 Derry Journal, 20 Jan. 1930.

‘girls of the Good Shepherd Convent on Sunday evening’, revealed in February 1932. The convent’s hall was ‘tastefully decorated’ and the operetta *The Princess of Poppyland* was performed by ‘girls’ who ‘reflected great credit on their musical teachers’.[760] Some of the performers were drawn from the younger girls who were housed in the Sacred Heart home that was based in a new wing built in the 1930s and operated, as such, until 1958. In later years, from the 1970s until 1994, accommodation for sixteen teenage girls was available on the convent site within the Bellevue Hostel.

The Good Shepherd Convent in Derry maintained its early strong connections with the Catholic hierarchy and its reputation for hosting musical events throughout its history. BBC Radio Ulster broadcast services from its chapel in 1980 and 1981. The first transmission was ‘a special ministry to the handicapped’, involving ‘the parents and the helpers of the handicapped people in a service’. The Carnhill Folk Group provided the music.[761] The last of these broadcasts took place eighteen months before the ‘the oldest laundry in Derry’ was closed in November 1982. The *Ulster Herald* explained that its closure came after all ‘the other commercial laundries in the city have closed down’ and that at this point ‘the Good Shepherd laundry employed about 15 people’.[762] It is not clear if this was a reference to paid workers or the number of St Mary’s residents providing free labour in the laundry at this point. The laundry operated for sixty-one years in total.

The tradition of visits by the Bishop of Derry also continued. In 1975 Bishop Edward Daly preached at a mass, held in the Good Shepherd Convent, for the Catholic Nurses Guild. Taking up the theme of ‘questionable medical ethics’, the Bishop opined that Catholics needed to take a stance against abortion and sterilisation.[763] Nine years later, during a Mass in the same location on the tenth anniversary of the Diocese’s Catholic Marriage Advisory Council, he offered another sermon on the ‘danger of more liberal and permissive values’.[764]

Financial Records

The historical financial records retained by the Good Shepherd sisters for their three Northern Ireland convents are difficult to interpret because they are incomplete. Overall, they do not suggest that extensive profits were made from the laundries. However, one file does reveal that an extensive bank balance was amassed in the Derry/Londonderry convent by the early 1970s.

Based on the limited financial records that were available to the researchers, it appears that the Derry St Mary’s home/laundry recorded a profit in only four years between 1920 and 1940. However, during the Second World War, lucrative military contracts resulted in a major increase in profits. In 1938, the laundry generated a total income of £4,119.11s.6d (the equivalent of about £160,000 today). In 1942, this had more than doubled to £11,437.8s.3d (the equivalent of about £450,000 today).[765] In September 1942, between sixty and seventy St Mary’s home women and girls worked unpaid in the laundry.[766]

760 Derry Journal, 10 Feb. 1932.

761 Belfast Telegraph, 15 July 1980; 18 Apr. 1981.

762 Ulster Herald, 27 Nov. 1982.

763 Ulster Herald, 22 Nov. 1975.

764 Ulster Herald, 20 Oct. 1984.

765 St Mary’s Derry/Londonderry Accounts, 1938 and 1942.

766 Northern Ireland Ministry of Commerce Survey of Laundries, 1942, PRONI, COM/35/16.

The St Mary's home had forms of income other than its laundry. This included money generated by needlework and embroidery carried out in the sewing room. In 1940, the *Derry Journal* reported that Derry were to play Sligo in the National Football League wearing a new team shirt with a crest 'artistically done by the sisters of the Good Shepherd Convent'.[767] St Mary's residents also worked on the small farm and garden in the convent. In 1935, produce from these earned £219.1s.10d.[768] Other income streams included charitable donations and Christmas gifts. These amounts generally came to several hundred pounds a year. In 1923, for example, the proceeds of a Bazaar came to £1,055. As the convent became more established a number of bequests were made, ranging from £10 to £100 between 1922 and 1948. However, the level of detail recorded on these legacies in the Good Shepherd records varies from year to year and often provides limited detail. For example, in 1925 the *Belfast Telegraph* noted a bequest of £100 (£4,100 in today's terms) from the will of Robert McAlister, a Justice of the Peace, yet the Good Shepherd's accounts for that year simply record 'charity' – £237.1s.1d.[769] However, individual bequests from four other individuals are identified in the 1927 accounts, ranging from £300 (£12,300 in value today) to £20. These donations continued over the years: in 1959, for example, Alexander Donnelly, the former Nationalist MP for West Tyrone left £100 (£2,100 in value today) to the Good Shepherd Convent in Derry.[770] The available financial records also recorded an income stream listed under 'pensions', which must have been received on behalf of the women living in the St Mary's home who had reached the state's retirement age.

The financial records also include the outgoings of the St Mary's home in Derry. Typical expenditure involved insurance, taxes, plus the costs of laundry supplies, sacristy and pharmacy supplies. In 1935, £1,165.2s.5d was spent on food for the convent's residents while a further £305.4s.10d was spent on clothing.[771] The income and expenditure for 1935 can be seen in **Table 1**. The total income and outgoings for 1935 can be converted, respectively to £159,500 and £164,700 in today's values.

Table 1: Income and expenditure at L/Derry St Mary's Home in 1935

Income	£ s d	Expenditure	£ s d
Laundry	3182.16.4	Rent	7.10.5
Pensions	40.2.6	Insurance/Tax	289.0.0
Dividend	40.10.0	Sacristy	158.9.0
Charity	132.11.9	Pharmacy	28.0.6
Appeal	92.4.8	Food	1165.2.5
Gifts	336.14.2	Clothing	305.4.10
Bequests	10.10.0	Fuel/Lighting	1542.18.0
Donations	10.10.0	Repairs	335.3.0
Garden/ Farm	209.1.10	Garden/farm Wages	354.19.1
Total	4054.7.3		4186.17.6

767 Derry Journal, 15 Mar. 1940.

768 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Accounts, 1935.

769 Belfast Telegraph, 20 July 1925.

770 Belfast Telegraph, 12 Mar. 1959.

771 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Accounts, 1935.

The impact of laundry contracts acquired for military service personnel during the Second World War are revealed by **Table 2,** which charts income and expenditure at St Mary's Derry between 1937 and 1945 and indicates a cumulative profit of £13,859 between 1941 and 1945.[772] Assuming that the surviving financial records accurately record all financial income and expenditure, the home began making a profit in 1941 and continued to do so until 1945. A small profit of £133.19s.7d was made in 1946, and £141.9s.8d in 1947 falling to £43.9s.1d in 1948. It was not possible to calculate annual profit and losses after 1949 because the surviving records do not allow this, although some surviving correspondence provides insights into financial matters.

Table 2: Financial records of L/Derry St Mary's Home 1937-1948[773]

Year	Income (£)	Expenditure (£)
1937	5,841	6,545
1938	5,679	7,296
1940	5,657	6,859
1941	9,639	9,599
1942	12,307	10,691
1943	14,070	11,019
1944	16,868	11,588
1945	15,841	11,969
1946	14,835	14,701
1947	14,455	14,314
1948	15,364	15,588

Following the development of the Welfare State, after 1948, regular payments were also received by St Mary's Derry for girls placed in the institution by the state. In 1961, for example, M. was placed there by Omagh Welfare. A payment of £5 per week was noted in the entry register.[774] By 1973, this charge had risen to £8 per week. M.H., a 14-year-old, was referred by Fermanagh Welfare and this charge was noted in the entry register.[775] In 1968, P.L., aged 15, was placed by Omagh Welfare, which made payments totalling £90.17s.2d during her placement in St Mary's Derry.[776] In their closing statement to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI), the Good Shepherd Sisters observed that sums received for girls sent to the St Mary's homes in Northern Ireland were not sufficient always to cover the cost of maintaining an individual in one of the homes. It cited an example, from 1963, where the welfare authority payment was £2 10s per week for the maintenance of a teenage girl, whereas the Good Shepherd Sisters calculated that £5 was a more realistic cost.[777]

772 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Accounts, 1937-1945.

773 No accounts were discovered for 1939.

774 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

775 Ibid.

776 Ibid.

777 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI), Module 12, Good Shepherd Closing Statement, p. 20.

Money was also received for adult women placed in the care of the Good Shepherd Sisters by the state. The registers show that a payment of £5 per week was routinely recorded for these admissions. Such was the case with G., a 20-year-old woman who was confined to St Mary's Derry by a court order in 1926. The same payment was noted in the case of S. who was admitted in 1957, aged 36.[778]

The McAleese committee's discussions about the finances of the Magdalene laundries proved to be amongst the most controversial elements of its final report. As outlined in **Chapter 1**, McAleese concluded that the Magdalene laundries 'were operated on a subsistence or close to break-even basis rather than on a commercial or highly profitable basis'.[779] Academic James Smith has queried this aspect of the McAleese report, drawing upon his own research in archives related to the Galway Magdalene laundry operated by the Sisters of Mercy. Smith maintains that it was much more financially profitable than the McAleese investigators appear to have realised and observes that finances were raised through donations, bequests and collections.[780] The exploration of the records made available in relation to the three Good Shepherd laundries in Northern Ireland suggest that profits were limited. However, there was one piece of evidence which suggested that the Good Shepherd convents were capable of accumulating large cash reserves. As stated above, the files dealing with the finances of the Good Shepherd convents were patchy but one that offers detail on the financial status of St Mary's Derry, for 1973, reveals it held bank reserves of £41,000 (around £320,000 in today's values). It indicates that over £1,000 was earned that year from interest on investments made by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Derry. It is not possible to assess whether this money was accumulated over several decades or whether there were particularly rewarding financial periods in which the Good Shepherd Sisters were in a position to build up the Order's cash reserves.

The two Good Shepherd Sisters who offered testimony for this research observed that that the laundries did not make large profits and that earnings from these commercial enterprises were necessary to meet the cost of feeding, clothing and housing the women and the Sisters who lived and worked within them. Sister 1 and Sister 2 both believe that there was insufficient capital from which to pay the women who worked in the laundry. They laboured unwaged because there was no other source of finance through which to maintain females placed in the St Mary's homes without financial support from the state or their families. Sister 2 gave us her opinion on this matter:

> *Yes they did work in a laundry, so did we. And that was their only source of income, there was no government subsidy for them, so we couldn't … we wouldn't have … we had no way … where would we get the money to do that, you know? So like, I know looking back on the laundry story, you know, you kind of wish it was different, but look it was part of the story at the time. It was worldwide, it wasn't just in Ireland, it was worldwide, you know?*

By the 1970s she feels there was a change in attitudes:

> *And that happened in all our houses, I mean then … in the St Mary's … I mean there were teachers in Derry came in, Belfast they went out to night classes, and all the, you know, the*

778 Ibid.

779 Report of the Interdepartmental Committee to establish the state's involvement with the Magdalene Laundries (2013), Chapter 20, Summary of findings.

780 Irish Examiner, 1 November 2017.

> *younger folk. So, I mean leadership would have been very keen that the younger people coming into care would have got education and opportunities. That was … that's … I'm very aware of that. And then there were some sisters who were very musical … and they used to put on plays and operettas and the people from … the Bishop would come and a whole flock of priests and you'd have the Lord Mayor coming in all that so like it was all part of the culture of the time, you know? And … and then you'd have maybe an odd group coming in to give a concert to them, you know … so … but … and our Sisters worked very hard, that's … I find so difficult when they start criticising this. Sisters worked so hard, day and [night] … because it was the only source of income we had to keep the women, and that was the reason for it.*[781]

As is discussed below, significant numbers of girls and women were sent to the St Mary's home in Derry under the authority or direction of those acting on behalf of the state. In those cases, where the source for an individual's referral was identified, 31% were sent by those in this broad category (police, courts, hospital, doctor, welfare). There are very many other cases where individuals were referred by religious orders (Good Shepherd Sisters, Sisters of Nazareth) in which it is not known if the costs of their upkeep could be claimed from the state. In the absence of detailed financial records, charting precise monies received from welfare authorities and other state bodies, it is impossible to assess fully the financial history of this institution and offer an informed contribution to the debates about the controversial issue of the unpaid labour that the Magdalene women and girls carried out.

Analysis of the financial history of the Good Shepherd laundries in Northern Ireland are based on chronologically incomplete data that offer only glimpses into the economic management of these institutions. The limited records available are erratic in what they include in terms of fundraising within the local community or bequests to the institution. Judging by the records available to the research team, the Good Shepherds Sisters in Belfast, Derry and Newry had only a basic accounting system in place. In terms of potential other sources of funds, oral testimony does indicate that the Good Shepherd Sisters made collections in at least one of the communities in which they operated, and newspaper searches reveal a number of donations made to the various Good Shepherd Convents, as was identified earlier in this chapter.[782]

Criticisms about the nature of the work carried out by unpaid girls and women in the Good Shepherd laundries are not just a matter driven by contemporary notions of human rights. This critique has a long history. While the state's wartime surveys focused on the Good Shepherd Sisters' Derry laundry's 8,000 lbs washing capacity and the technology in place,[783] those carrying out this technical assessment of the laundry's capabilities were not concerned with questions about the nature of the work carried out in the laundry and remuneration (or lack of it) for that labour and the state's utilisation of these 76 unpaid female labourers. However, this matter was raised by representatives of the relevant trade union and employers' organisations. It is likely that both were motivated by the question of unfair competition rather than any concern for social justice. By 1942 laundries in Northern Ireland were employing 3,181 and had an annual turnover of £700,000 (equivalent to about £27.5m today). At a meeting to discuss the wartime organisation of the industry, a representative of the National Union of General Municipal Workers asked 'whether Convent laundry wages were

781 Interview with Sister 2.

782 Interview with HT and DT, conducted by Ida Milne, 8 June 2018.

783 Northern Ireland Ministry of Commerce Survey of Laundries, 1942, PRONI, COM/35/16.

governed by Trade Board Regulations'. If so, he continued, 'such laundries should be asked to observe them'. The reply he received was that 'the kind of labour employed in such laundries was necessarily exclusive and specialised' although it was promised that the matter would be referred to the Ministry of Labour. There is no record that it ever received any consideration at that point or any other time by government officials at Stormont. At the same meeting, a representative of the Laundry Owners' Association claimed that 'Good Shepherd Convent Laundry in Londonderry had under-cut prices for both civilian and military contracts'.[784] This was an issue, however, that the wartime authorities chose not to explore.

Historian Peter E. Hughes concluded that the *modus operandi* of the Good Shepherd laundries had been critiqued on the grounds of social justice since, at least, the 1890s. Philosophical attacks on the laundries did not come solely from non-Catholics. Criticism of the system arose first in France, which was home to the Order's 'Motherhouse', which had been established in Angers in 1829. From there, Mother St. Euphrasia Pelletier issued instructions on how each of the Order's houses should operate (there were 110 across the world by the time of her death in 1868). From the 1890s, these rules were published as Practical rules for the use of the Religious of the Good Shepherd for the direction of the classes. This source provided the model and structures for all activities associated with the 'penitents' who entered the Good Shepherd homes.[785] It was also in the 1890s that controversy around the Good Shepherd laundries emerged. The Catholic Bishop of Nancy claimed that the Good Shepherd Sisters were 'obliged in justice and charity to pay fixed rates of wages to the inmates' of their French laundries. The Bishop alleged that 'they give no help ... to the young women and persons who leave the house having worked there for five, ten, fifteen and twenty and thirty years'.[786] The matter was debated in England also, where the Good Shepherds first established a convent and laundry in 1841. Having observed the debate in France, liberal Catholic thinkers in England urged the Good Shepherd Sisters to pay wages to the 'penitents'. One such plea was made by Virginia Crawford. Among her arguments was the claim that the welfare of the women was subordinated to that of the institution; with commercial laundry operations requiring a steady supply of free labour to maintain their economic viability. She was concerned that keeping the 'penitents' in the laundry for long periods risked institutionalisation. Moreover, as they became more skilled laundresses, their value to the Sisters increased, creating an incentive against consideration that they be trained more broadly for life outside the convent. Crawford's arguments won the support of many influential Catholics, particularly those with more liberal inclinations. It formed one strand of the wider argument under which voluntary homes operating commercial laundries (including those run by the Good Shepherd Sisters) were included in the Factory and Workshop Act 1907. From that point, Good Shepherd laundries were inspected but not their adjacent living quarters. Moreover, the social justice issues related to the girls and women who laboured without pay in the laundries remained unaddressed.[787] It is important to acknowledge this debate because the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry commented on what it judged to be progressive elements of the Good Shepherd Sisters' *modus operandi* with regard to the Order's ban – imposed in 1897 - on the use of physical punishment. It is clear, however, from this discussion of wages that the Good Shepherd Sisters were far from

784 Laundry services: minutes of the meeting of the advisory panel (1942-43), PRONI, COM35/18.

785 Finnegan, Do penance or perish, p. 22. For the history of the order see also their website - http://rgs.gssweb.org/en/node/11

786 Peter E. Hughes, 'Cleanliness and Godliness: a sociological study of the Good Shepherd Convent refuges for the social reformation and Christian conversion of prostitutes and convicted women in nineteenth century Britain' (PhD thesis, Brunel University, 1985), p. 259.

787 Hughes, 'Cleanliness and Godliness', pp. 270-20.

progressive in their use of unpaid labour by the women placed in their care. The claim by the Good Shepherd Sisters (and other religious orders that operated laundries) that this unpaid labour was necessary for the economic viability of Magdalene laundries and the support of the women who worked in them has drawn attention from the United Nations Committee against Torture.[788] As is indicated above, the evidence demonstrates that at one point the bank account for St Mary's Derry had significant cash reserves and this is a significant discovery in the context of this contentious debate. This evidence must be juxtaposed with the Good Shepherd Sisters' argument that the use of free labour was a regrettable and unavoidable economic necessity that enabled the St Mary's homes to provide food and shelter for girls and women without alternatives. **Chapter 14** includes more of this perspective from the Good Shepherd Sisters who offered testimony for this Report.

Number of entrants to St Mary's Derry

The method of recording entrants and exits to and from the St Mary's Class, as the laundry was referred to by the Good Shepherd Sisters, makes an exact count difficult to compile. Between the foundation of the Northern Ireland State in 1922 and the last recorded entry, in 1979, it appears that 992 girls and women entered St Mary's Derry. **Figure 1 - Appendix G** charts the number of entrants by decade. The highest number of entrants was recorded in the 1930s – a total of 252.[789] The highest number of entrants in any one year was 1941; at 32 entrants. This was at a point when the laundry was experiencing high demand for its services due to the military contracts that increased its profitability.

Numbers of new arrivals declined slowly in the 1950s and 1960s before dropping sharply in the 1970s.[790] It is difficult to pinpoint societal trends which might account for the fluctuating numbers of women and girls sent to the laundry. Individuals arrived for a variety of reasons. **Chapter 15** offers analysis of those oral testimonies that discussed the laundries operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters, adding insights on these issues.

Length of Stay

Figure 2 - Appendix G details the periods in which girls and women lived and worked in the Good Shepherd laundry in Derry. It includes only those for whom there is a departure date indicated and therefore does not include those who died in St Mary's Derry or in the follow-on residential home. The issue around deceased laundry women will be discussed below.

There was no typical period of confinement either for women sent to the St Mary's Home or the small number who are recorded as having self-referred. Often, no term of confinement was noted on the admissions register in the cases of women referred by statutory agencies or the medical or religious institutions that sought their admission. Those women sent by the courts were most likely to have a clearly stated period of detention prescribed. For example, in the case of B.B., who was

788 United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 'Committee against torture considers report of Ireland' (28 July 2017) - https://www.ohchr.org/en/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=21923&LangID=E

789 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

790 Ibid.

admitted under a court order in 1968, two probation officers discussed her situation: 'Needless to say, B is anxious to work outside the convent again and we cannot legally hold her there any longer.'[791] This exchange provides evidence of probation staff supervising those placed in the laundries by the courts.

Analysis of the 787 cases between 1922 and 1982 where dates for an individual's entry and exit were recorded in the register, suggest that 155 (20%) stayed for under one month. A further 278 (35%) remained for between one month and one year. Another 78 (10%) stayed between thirteen months and two years. 67 (8%) remained for periods between two and three years. 95 (12%) remained for periods between three and up to six years. 37 (5%) remained for six to ten years. A further 17 (2%) for periods between eleven and twenty-five years. Finally, 60 (8%) women are recorded as having made multiple entries and exits from the laundry at unspecified periods.[792]

Some of these women appear to have lived in the community outside for significant periods in between their spells within St Mary's Derry. The reason for these recurring entries was noted, in some cases, as the result of alcohol abuse or persistent domestic violence directed against them. Notations by the Good Shepherd Sisters on some cases of repeated entry and departure were attributed to the inability of some individuals to assimilate to life outside the institution.

Figure 2 - Appendix G does not include those who died in St Mary's Derry and they are discussed more fully below. As will become apparent, adding them to the discussion considerably increases the numbers who lived in St Mary's Belfast and worked in its laundry for several decades.

In the case of longer-term residents, it appears that some pursued the process of consecration. After two years of what the Good Shepherd Sisters assessed to be exemplary conduct and evidence of sincere conversion, 'penitents' could be considered by the Sister in charge for a two-year probation. If they completed that satisfactorily, they were allowed to make a renewable annual vow, or consecration, to remain in the convent for the following year. Known variously as Auxiliaries, Trustees or a Child of Mary, one historian has explained that, in practice, 'very many stayed in for life. They were to be the really white sheep ... the trustees'.[793] Discussing long-term residents in general, investigations of the Magdalene laundry system argue that the paths followed by these women suggest a process of institutionalisation. For example, this was an issue raised by retired doctors and a religious Sister in their testimony to the McAleese report in the Republic of Ireland.[794] Others have suggested that many years of unstimulating work in the enclosed space of the laundry and St Mary's home took their toll on the mental health of many women.[795] This was a perspective shared with the researchers by a number of individuals whose work brought them into regular contact with former Good Shepherd laundry women after they resettled in residential homes. One of these homes was

791 St Mary's Derry: Notes and Documents. Case No 834.

792 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

793 Hughes, Cleanliness and godliness, pp. 76-7.

794 Report of the Interdepartmental Committee to establish the state's involvement with the Magdalene Laundries (2013), Chapter 19, columns 77; 91-99.

795 See, for example, Claire McGettrick, 'Death, institutionalisation and duration of stay: a critique of Chapter 16 of the McAleese Report'.

subsequently in the running for an award for its work with former St Mary's home women which offered them 'a new caring and supportive environment where choice and control were encouraged for the first time in their adult life.'[796]

Age Range

Figure 3 - Appendix G indicates the proportion of women resident in St Mary's Derry, in a range of age groups, for the lifetime of the institution. Teenage girls made up the largest age-group in terms of entrants to the Derry St Mary's Home. There were 265 girls aged between 15 and 17 admitted to the institution between 1922 and 1979. This represented around 33% of the total number of entrants for whom age was recorded. 226 entrants were between 18 and 23 years of age (28%). There were 75 admissions of women between the age of 24 and 28 (9%); 40 between the ages of 29 and 33 (5%); and 57 between the ages of 34 and 40 (7%). In the oldest age groups, there were 32 admissions of women between 41 and 50; and 31 between the ages of 51 and 78, each representing 4% of the overall total.[797]

In addition, 77 girls aged between 10 and 14 were sent to St Mary's Derry. This was 10% of the admissions for which an age was recorded in the registers. Their presence meant that St Mary's Derry was required to register as a voluntary children's home under the Children and Young Persons Act (Northern Ireland) 1950.[798] This produced some data on child residents for some years only. The numbers of residents under the age of 18 between 1960 and 1973 is revealed in **Table 3**, which draws from a Ministry of Home Affairs inspection report published in 1973.[799]

Table 3: Numbers of St Mary's Derry residents aged 11-14

1960	1962	1964	1965	1966	1968	1969	1971	1972	1973
5	6	7	8	3	7	7	8	8	2

Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI) debated evidence relating to whether or not these young girls had worked in the laundry. It concluded that their accommodation in the St Mary's home was inappropriate and that there were instances where they worked in the laundry. The HIAI report concluded that this should not have been permitted by the Good Shepherd Sisters and considered it 'to amount to systematic abuse'.[800] The HIAI's concerns about the presence of girls under 18 in the Good Shepherd laundries in Northern Ireland may have been more firmly stated if the committee had access to the age data discussed here. The HIAI assumed that girls under 18 years-old represented a small proportion of those confined in the St Mary's homes. It commented that the

796 In assessing the possibility of interviewing former St Mary's women who now live in residential homes, the researchers had a number of discussions with individuals who had worked with them. 'Best Housing Story': Beechway House – Apex Housing Association, 2014. http://www.cih.org/resources/PDF/niawards/9.%20Beechway%20House%20-%20Best%20housing%20story.pdf

797 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

798 Northern Ireland Ministry of Home Affairs, Voluntary Homes Registration, PRONI, HSS/34/6A.

799 Northern Ireland Health and Social Services, Inspection Report by J. Hill, Sept. 1973, PRONI, HSS/34/13A.

800 HIAI, Inquiry Report, Volume 1: Findings, column 320; Volume 6, Chapter 21, column 69.

Good Shepherd Sisters informed the Inquiry that that approximately 4,287 women and girls 'were cared for in their communities in Northern Ireland between 1922 and 1995'. The HIAI concluded that 'it is clear that the majority were women over eighteen'. However, the data available for the Derry St Mary's home indicates that this age group represented 43% of all entrants.

Catchment Area

The largest single group of referrals to the Derry St Mary's Home was from its host city (see **Figure 4 - Appendix G**). 246 women and girls were sent there from Derry; 28% of the total. The border with the Republic of Ireland was no impediment to the placement of girls and women in the Derry laundry. In fact, the overall total for girls and women sent to St Mary's Derry from the Free State/Irish Republic was 259 (30% of entrants), slightly more than the number from Derry City itself. By far the biggest number of women amongst this cross-border cohort (208) were from County Donegal. Their significant presence provides one explanation for the high profile role of Donegal Catholics in fund raising for the Good Shepherd Derry convent in its early years.

Women and girls sent from other institutions managed by religious orders accounted for many of the referrals from the Free State/Irish Republic, but women were also sent by priests in border counties. A further 32 women (4%) came from Britain. In terms of Northern Ireland, County Tyrone sent 131 (15%), County Londonderry provided 82 (9%), Fermanagh 17 (4%). Antrim, Down and Armagh referred only 1%, 2% and 3% of the total respectively, reflecting the proximity of other Good Shepherd laundries (Belfast and Newry) in respect of these counties.[801] **Table 4** illustrates this information.

Table 4: Locations providing entrants to St Mary's Home, Derry

Antrim	13
Armagh	27
Belfast	56
Rep of Ireland	259
Fermanagh	17
Londonderry	82
Tyrone	131
Derry City	246
UK	32
Down	11

Source of Referrals

In 653 cases, the records provide information on the individuals or organisations that referred girls and women to the Good Shepherd laundry in Derry. The calculations included here are based on this data, but it should be noted that a few short words in an entry book reveal very little of the unfortunate personal histories that led to the confinement of hundreds of girls and women in the

801 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

St Mary's Home. Comments in the entry register suggest that the largest single source of referrals to St Mary's Derry was the family of the females involved. 130 individuals (20%) were placed by their families. Of these, 46 are reported to have been sent by their mothers, 17 by their fathers and the rest by other family members – aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers.[802] 101 women (15%) were referred by priests. This category included referrals from outside Northern Ireland. 39 (6%) women were sent to St Mary's Derry from other Good Shepherd institutions: 29 from St Mary's in Belfast, 6 from Newry and 4 from Good Shepherd convents in the Free State/Irish Republic.

Other religious congregations also sent women and girls to St Mary's, Derry. Referrals from religious orders accounted for 160 of the total number of cases. The largest number of these, some 83 cases (13%), were sent by the Sisters of Mercy who ran the County Home in Stranorlar in Donegal as well as other institutions. In addition, when the courts in Derry/Londonderry appointed three probation officers in 1916 they included a Salvation Army officer, a representative of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children and Sister Mary Joseph from the Sisters of Mercy convent in the city. It is highly likely that this sister was the source of a number of entrants to the Good Shepherd laundry.[803] The Sisters of Nazareth, who ran the children's home on Bishop Street in Derry, sent 53 cases (8% of total referrals). Most of these were girls and women between the ages of 14 and 20. The St. Louis Nuns, who ran institutions in Monaghan and Donegal, sent 23 (4%).[804] 15 women were sent to St Mary's Derry by the courts (approximately 2%). However, this figure is an underestimate because it does not include the unknown number of girls and women brought from the courts by Sister Mary Joseph of the Sisters of Mercy in her role as probation officer. A further 49 girls and women arrived in the company of police officers (7%) and 11 cases were referred by doctors (approximately 2%). Hospitals also sent 2%. The Legion of Mary referred 26 women (4%), while 21 (3%) cases were recorded as self-referrals. A further 66 (10%) women and girls were sent to St Mary's Derry by statutory agencies. These included county and city welfare authorities, child welfare officers, or the Northern Ireland Health Boards that were established in 1973.[805] This information is presented in **Figure 5 - Appendix G**.

Reasons for Referral

The reason why a woman or girl was admitted to St Mary's Derry was not always recorded in the registers. However, some of the entries contain a commentary from which it is possible to determine entry pathways. The separate collection of notes and correspondence from St Mary's Derry also shed light on how and why women and girls entered. Around 30 women were recorded as having a learning disability or other physical or mental health problem. These include women described as having a 'low IQ', a mental 'deficiency' or being 'weak-minded'.[806] There were six women designated as being 'socially inadequate'. In many of these cases, the admitting authority was a priest or one of the religious orders, rather than a medical professional. For example, in 1934, B. was sent by the St.

802 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

803 Brendan Fulton and Trevor Parkhill, Making the difference: an oral history of probation in Northern Ireland (Belfast, 2008), p. 8. The probation officers were re-appointed by Derry Petty Sessions on an annual basis. See, for example, Derry Journal, 24 January 1919.

804 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

805 Ibid.

806 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

Louis Nuns in County Monaghan and was described as being socially inadequate and having a low IQ. In 1948, the Sisters of Nazareth sent M. to St Mary's Derry. She was 22 at that time and noted as suffering from nervous debility.[807] In 1950, K. aged 13 was sent to St Mary's Derry from her convent school. She was described as having a low IQ and being socially inadequate. She was the child of a single mother who had married subsequently.[808] In 1957, J. was admitted under the authority of a priest in Donegal because she was 'very backward'. The records contain little evidence of any medical or psychological examination that was carried out on these individuals through which they were categorised in this manner.

A small number were admitted because they were prone to alcohol abuse. 12 residents were recorded as being 'inebriate' and this group featured heavily among those cases who experienced multiple entries and exits from over a protracted period. 11 women were recorded as unmarried mothers, though the registers do not show what happened to their babies.[809] The limited number of cases in this category suggests that much of this data requires careful treatment. Everything that is understood about the historical relationship between the Magdalene laundries and the confinement of women who had given birth to illegitimate children creates the expectation that this figure was, in reality, much higher.

Other entrants appear to have gone through some form of personal crisis that led to their placement in St Mary's Derry. In 1933 Brigid M., described as a '38 year old dress maker who resided with her parents at Argyle Street Derry' was found dead in Lough Foyle. She had recently had a 'nervous breakdown' and went to stay at the convent before leaving it in the hours before her apparent suicide.[810]

In terms of referrals by the courts, police and statutory agencies, St Mary's Derry was viewed as a place of correction where those prone to morally questionable or illegal behaviour might be reformed. In this respect, it was also viewed as a place of safety to which women and girls in moral or physical danger could be confined. This frequently led to the detention of girls whose domestic life was deemed to be in crisis or who were the victims of physical and/or sexual abuse. The belief that St Mary's Derry offered a place of correction for women is evident in the remarks of the presiding judge in the case of Jane K. In 1934, Jane K. appeared in court charged with stealing purses from a recreational hall in Donegal. At Killybegs District Court, the judge declared that 'it is absolutely essential' that she should be placed 'where she would receive instruction and be under discipline'. The Mother Superior of the Good Shepherd in Derry had agreed to accept her, but Guard Cawley told the court that Jane K. would rather go to jail than to the laundry.[811] This case is of interest because it demonstrates that the border was no barrier to the use of Good Shepherd laundries in Northern Ireland by magistrates and police in the Irish Free State in their efforts to secure institutional discipline for women and girls labelled as wayward.

As the Jane K. case demonstrates, St Mary's Derry was used as an alternative to prison by the courts. In 1924, L.C. from Eglinton was arrested for vagrancy. The court allowed her to go to the Good

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807 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence.

808 Ibid.

809 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

810 Derry Journal, 23 January 1933

811 Derry Journal, 19 Feb. 1934.

Shepherd Convent in Derry instead of Armagh Jail.[812] In March 1926, Rose G., 'a girl of the servant class', was brought before the court charged with infanticide. She was ordered to be confined to St Mary's Derry for a period of two years.[813] In 1932 Nellie D., of Claudy, was charged with the theft of wellington boots by deception. She was already awaiting trial on similar charges. On the first occasion she was released on bail but had not gone home as she told the magistrate she feared a 'beating by her mother'. She agreed to go the Good Shepherd Convent and was 'remanded on personal bail'.[814] In 1950, Kathleen R., was confined to St Mary's Derry for 12 months by the court as a condition of her probation. She had been arrested for cashing money orders, stolen from her family.[815] The police also used St Mary's Derry to deposit women arrested for vagrancy, public order offences or those stranded by circumstance in Derry/Londonderry.[816]

The Troubles brought new examples of the usefulness of St Mary's Derry for the RUC. Political and civil unrest brought new kinds of referrals. Police dropping off women or girls or attending a call-out at the Good Shepherd Convent needed a military escort. Viewed as a place of safety by statutory and other agencies, a number of girls and women deemed to be in a crisis situation arising from the Troubles were be sent to St Mary's Derry. In 1972, A., aged 18, was brought to the Good Shepherd Convent by the police who had rescued her from being tarred and feathered. It is not clear why she was under threat of this communal rough justice.[817] In 1973, R. arrived at the convent accompanied by a Protestant clergyman. She had a Catholic boyfriend and the UDA had threatened her. In 1976, 16-year-old C. was placed in St Mary's Derry by her Parish Priest because an army officer had complained to her mother that she had been frequenting an army base.[818] Other referrals arose from the breakdown in family relationships brought about by the Troubles.

With the establishment of the Welfare State in Northern Ireland, in 1948, statutory agencies responsible for the care and welfare of children increasingly used St Mary's Derry as a place to confine girls whose behaviour was deemed delinquent or 'beyond control'. The home was also designated as a safe space or 'Fit Person' to care for girls under the age of eighteen who were in moral or physical danger or were the victims of neglect. Between 1950, the year the Children and Young Person's Act (Northern Ireland) was introduced, and 1979, statutory agencies sent 66 girls to St Mary's Derry.[819] Those making decisions on these matters included child and county welfare officers, social workers and, after 1973, the Health and Social Services Boards. Girls who were identified as having learning difficulties were also sent to St Mary's Derry by Social Services. In 1953 and 1962, for example, two girls identified as being Special Care Cases under the Mental Health Act (Northern Ireland) 1948 were placed in St Mary's Derry. In the case from 1962 the girl was to be visited by a medical officer, social worker or other officer several times per year.[820] Statutory agencies

812 Derry Journal, 15 Jan. 1924. She ran away from the laundry but was taken back. She was consecrated in 1940 and died in Good Shepherd in 1977. See, St Mary's Derry/Londonderry registers.

813 Londonderry Sentinel, 17 Mar. 1926. G. stayed beyond her sentence and was consecrated in 1931. There is no leaving date for her in the register. See, St Mary's Derry/Londonderry registers.

814 Londonderry Sentinel, 18 Feb. 1932.

815 Londonderry Sentinel, 23 Feb. 1950.

816 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

817 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers, 1972.

818 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence, 1973, 1976.

819 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

820 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence.

also carried out assessments on women confined in St Mary's Derry by other admitting authorities. In 1978, M., a 16-year-old, was sent to St Mary's by her parish priest in Donegal. In a report written by the Good Shepherd Sisters, M. was identified as being 'at risk' because her father was physically abusive towards her when drunk. It was also claimed that M. liked working in the laundry. In December 1978, an educational psychologist with the Western Education and Library Board reported that 'if her mental age were extrapolated from her verbal IQ, it would be about 11 years and 1 month. 'In view of her low IQ and previous difficulties', the report's author continued, 'she would certainly be at moral risk in unsupervised circumstances'.[821]

Girls were also removed by statutory agencies from unsafe home environments via Fit Persons Orders obtained from the courts. Under Section 99 of the Children and Young Person's Act (Northern Ireland) 1950) statutory agencies could remove a child and place them with a person fit to take care of and protect them. In 1961, for example, A. was admitted to St Mary's Derry at the age of 13. A report written by the Londonderry County Borough Education Authority found that she was four years below the educational level for her age group and seemed anaemic and undernourished. Her moral awareness was not normal, the report opined, and she was untruthful and easily led. Her parents were deemed to be completely disinterested in her whereabouts and conduct, and were considered incapable of taking charge of her.[822] In 1968, P. was taken away from her home, by Omagh Welfare, via a Fit Persons Order because her mother was encouraging her to commit thefts. She was removed from St Mary's Derry, by Omagh Welfare, in 1971.[823] In October 1974, C. was removed from her home under a Fit Person's Order. Her relationship with her mother had broken down and she had begun stealing. The Good Shepherd report stated that 'C. appears to look on her future as now being rather fatal. She feels she will remain in the convent until she is 18 and regards it as a punishment for stealing. Her parents have been to see her but they continue to scold and criticise. Sister P. would rather their visits were curtailed'.[824]

Statutory agencies also sent teenage girls to St Mary's in cases of delinquency. The Good Shepherd Convent was seen as a place where their 'bad' behaviour could be corrected. In 1964, B. aged 17, was admitted to St Mary's Derry. She left in 1967 but was sent back in 1968 under a probation order for a year. Her Probation Officer wrote to her in June 1967 saying, 'I had a long talk with your mummy ... and she is going to write to you and answer any letter. She says that she hopes that you are making some progress and that you are doing your best to fit yourself to eventually live in the outside world'.[825] Behaviour leading to the designation 'beyond parental control' covered theft, staying out late, running away from home, keeping bad company, frequenting pubs and using alcohol. The belief among statutory agencies that the Good Shepherd Convent could act as a reformatory was shared by some of the parents of such girls. In 1970, M. was sent to the Good Shepherd Convent by Derry Welfare for running away. Her mother wrote to the Mother Superior saying, 'please, Sister, I am asking you in God's name to ask M. to stay with you if it will help her as I love M. very much and would like M. to turn out like her oldest sister'.[826]

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821 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence.

822 Ibid.

823 Ibid.

824 Ibid.

825 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence. B. left St Mary's in 1970.

826 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence.

Girls who were the victims of incest and other forms of sexual assault were also sent to St Mary's Derry. In 1956 a 16 year old girl was admitted under a fit person order after it was alleged that 'an offence of Unlawful Carnal Knowledge' had been committed against her. She was 'committed to the care of the Good Shepherd Convent until she attained the age of 18.'[827] In the early 1960s two girls, who were sexually abused by a group of men, were made a ward of the County Welfare Committee and sent by the court to St Mary's Derry. Another girl, aged 15, who had been raped by her father was brought to St Mary's by police. She remained for a month before a court order placed her in the care of another family member.[828]

Few Ministry of Home Affairs inspection reports for St Mary's Derry have survived, but the Department of Health Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) statement to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry acknowledged that while registered as a voluntary children's home, St Mary's benefited from the assistance and attention of the designated inspector, Miss Kathleen Forrest. In 1955, Forrest reported that the Good Shepherd homes offered training to girls who were in need of 'reformation'. In its evidence to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, the DHSSPS interpreted this as Forrest acknowledging the Good Shepherds' view of their role being that of specialists 'in a "moral" framework for children, which aimed to repair the damage of "immoral or morally dangerous experience"'.'[829]

Exit Pathways and Outcomes

Exit pathways for women and girls are not always made clear in the registers. **Figure 6 - Appendix G** represents the available data on this issue. Of cases where there are any jotted notes on an individual's departure from St Mary's Derry, 225 (28%) were recorded simply as having 'Left/Sent out'. In principle, those over 18 years-old were free to leave if not subject to a court order enforcing their detention (see **Chapter 15** for oral testimony on this issue). 186 (24%) 'went to family', meaning that they were taken out of St Mary's Derry by, or handed over to, a family member. 104 (13%) women and girls were 'dismissed' from St Mary's Derry, but rarely did the notes on these instances include an explanation for their expulsion. In some cases, these individuals appear to have caused the Sisters difficulties in terms of managing their behaviour. In 1946, M. was sent back to the County Home in Stranorlar, County Donegal, for proving 'very troublesome'.[830] Other women proved unsuitable for work in the laundry, due to a physical or mental disability. Individuals in this category were often sent back to the source of their referral, usually an institution managed by another religious order. There is nothing in the registers to indicate what happened to these women once they left St Mary's Derry. Another factor that could lead to expulsion by the Sisters was violent conduct, for whatever reason. Violence could take a variety of forms. In 1965, P. threw a chair through a window. In 1966, B. struck another laundry worker and put her own hand in a laundry press.[831]

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827 St Mary's Derry Case no. 847.

828 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence.

829 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, Module 12, Closing Submissions on behalf of Department of Health, Social Service and Public Safety. 3.4

830 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

831 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

56 (7%) girls and women were sent from St Mary's Derry to Catholic orphanages, convents and other Good Shepherd homes. Overall, 80 women and girls (10%) were sent by St Mary's to hospitals and other medical facilities. 19 women, for example, went from St Mary's Derry to long-term care in Gransha Hospital. 26 women were noted as having gone to 'mental' hospitals or asylums.[832] The very limited commentaries on these cases does not allow for any analysis on the nature or causes of the psychiatric illnesses involved.

31 (4%) women left the laundry to work elsewhere. Some went of their own accord, others were sent by the nuns to positions in hotels, hospitals and parochial houses.[833] A further exit route was taken by 40 (5%) women recorded as running away and not returning. These include K., aged 15 who, in 1956, ran away, having been in the home for only a month. In 1956, M., aged 18, 'ran away to Welfare' after a year in the Good Shepherd Convent. R., aged 18, ran away in 1957 having been in St Mary's Derry for two years. P., who had been placed by Welfare in 1959, was caught whilst attempting to escape by climbing down a drainpipe. Often these girls were returned to the Good Shepherd convent by the police. There has been debate about the role of the police in such cases and the legal grounds under which they pursued run-aways. The McAleese Report maintained that this was only the policy in the Republic of Ireland in cases where the girls or women concerned were incarcerated in the laundry under a court or probation order.[834] Notes on one case from the Derry laundry, in the early 1970s, suggests that police involvement with a teenage run away may have led them to conclude that the girl should not have been in St Mary's Derry. B.C., aged 14, had 'continually run away' and was on one occasion 'brought back by Army with RUC.' However, eventually, 'the police took her home as we had no legal right to keep her and had no guarantee she would not run again'.[835] Although not conclusive evidence of how these interactions worked, this example suggests a degree of negotiation between the police and the Good Shepherd Sisters around the legality and practicalities of cases.

However, not all runaways were caught. In 1971, A.A. was placed in St Mary's by Derry Child Welfare. It was noted in the register that she had been reared in Nazareth Lodge in Derry. She had been sent to the Good Shepherd Convent because of deteriorating relationships in her family home. After running away, A.A. was apprehended by the police having led a group of boys in stone-throwing at the police. Having been returned to Good Shepherd Sisters, she ran away again and despite there being a warrant out for her arrest, the police were unable to apprehend her.[836]

The researchers' analysis of the St Mary's Derry records placed 39 (5%) women in a category marked 'unknown', because there was no clear indication of when, or if, they had departed the laundry. These individuals entered the laundry on dates between 1922 and 1958. However, many of these women do not appear on the list of former St Mary's Derry women buried in Ardmore cemetery (see below).

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832 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence.

833 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

834 Report of the inter-departmental committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen laundries, Chapter 9.

835 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry. Notes and Documents. Case 870.

836 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Notes and Correspondence.

The St Mary's Derry entry register does record deaths in 29 cases (4%). These deaths occurred between 1925 and 1958. In addition, the Good Shepherd Sisters burial list identified 49 of the Derry laundry women buried in Ardmore Cemetery on dates between 1941 and 2019. Some of the 49 named on this burial list are from the 52 women in the 'never left' category created by the researchers for those whom no exit date or date of death is recorded in the registers. This goes some way to explain the discrepancies between the deaths recorded in the admissions entry register and the larger number of names on the burials list for St Mary's Derry. However, the researchers identified a number of deceased individuals who are not on the Good Shepherd Sisters' list of burials but whose deaths appear in the St Mary's Derry admissions register. In addition, two women who are recorded in the Belfast and Newry admission registers, as having passed away after they were relocated to the Derry laundry, do not appear on the burial list.[837] Following completion of the research the Good Shepherd Sisters indicated that the remains of some women were taken home for burial by their families.[838]

Those missing from the Good Shepherd list include a number of relatively young residents who died after they entered the St Mary's Derry. A 25 year-old died in 1925, during her third year working in the laundry: this was marked as 'first funeral from the house'. In 1926, a 20 year-old Tyrone woman, sent by the Mercy Nuns, died in Omagh Hospital after only eight months in St Mary's Derry. A 14 year-old Derry city girl, placed by her family, entered in 1930 and died in 1943 after a period in hospital. A 16 year-old from the Irish Free State arrived in 1934 and died in St Mary's Derry in 1937. A 17 year-old was placed in the laundry by her Donegal family in 1936 and died in 1939. There are also some older women whose deaths are recorded in the entry register who do not feature on the burial list compiled by the Good Shepherd Sisters. The first of these is a 44 year-old, admitted in 1925, who died the following year. A 30 year-old, who entered the laundry in 1934, died at an unspecified date in Stranorlar Hospital. A third woman, whose age is not recorded, died in August 1941. A 71 year-old died in 1958: she is recorded as having come to St Mary's Derry, on her own volition, at a date that is not included in the register. A woman who entered in 1932, aged 62, died at an unrecorded date. A woman, whose age is not recorded died in hospital, from tuberculosis, in 1935 after over two years working in the laundry.

One further death recorded in the admissions registers, that is not on the burial list provided by the Good Shepherd Sisters, was that of a woman who died in March 1945. According to the admissions register for St Mary's Derry this was six weeks after she 'met with an accident' in the laundry. The woman had worked there for nine years, having been brought from her home in County Tyrone to St Mary's Derry by a family member.[839] This particular death occurred during a period when the state was taking a heightened supervisory role in the laundry, due to its wartime function dealing with large quantities of military laundry. Despite this, no commentary on this young woman's death appeared in official sources. The Good Shepherd laundry in Derry was visited, at some point in 1944, by government officials but the only significant comment they made was related to problems with bleaching laundry, which might have been due to 'a lack of thermometer'. There was no mention of the laundry workforce.[840] Moreover, no discussion of the death of this unfortunate woman appeared in either the *Derry Journal* or the *Londonderry Sentinel.* A search at GRONI provided no evidence of

837 St Mary's Belfast Register; St Mary's Newry register.

838 Communication from Good Shepherd Sisters to the IDWG.

839 St Mary's Derry/Londonderry Registers.

840 Minutes of Laundry Conference, 6 May 1944, PRONI, COM/86/1.

a death certificate issued in the name provided on the admissions register. There is also no trace of an inquest in this case. The one further unexplored line of enquiry in this case would involve requesting any copies of annual reports sent from the Good Shepherd Belfast to the hierarchy of the order.[841] If any such document exists for 1945, it may include further details that explain the nature of the accident that caused this woman's fatal injuries. On a related note, the researchers discovered correspondence from 2004 seeking advice on whether or not the Good Shepherd Sisters had insurance to cover injuries to any girl or woman working in the laundry. This apparently related to an incident that took place in 1965 or 1966.[842]

In the case of the unknown woman who died after the accident in 1945 and those others who do not appear on the Good Shepherd burial list, their burial location remains unknown at this point. Information from the Good Shepherd Sisters indicates that the only site of burial for women who died while working in the Derry laundry was at Ardmore cemetery and that there were no burials 'on the St Mary's site.'[843] The researchers worked only from the burial list and did not see any historical records related to arrangements with undertakers or concerning the purchase of cemetery plots at Ardmore.

From the burial list provided by the Good Shepherd Sisters it was possible to source 30 death certificates at GRONI relating to girls and women from St Mary's Derry. Based solely on the names and dates of death supplied by the Good Shepherd Sisters, it was not possible to find 19 certificates. Those that were discovered were examined for details about causes of death. Common causes of death were various cancers, bronchopneumonia, strokes and heart problems. The majority of women for whom death certificates were traced lived into their 70s and 80s with an average age for this group of 77. This point must be absorbed with a cautionary reminder that the death certificate sample does not include the young women who died in the first two decades of St Mary's Derry and who are not recorded on the Good Shepherds' burial schedule. Nor is it possible to incorporate those women recorded as 'unknown' in this particular calculation. As noted above, no death certificate has been traced for the woman who died following an accident in 1945.

Burials of the former laundry women at Ardmore followed a similar pattern to those at St Mary's Belfast (see **Chapter 13**). The Good Shepherd Sisters explained that requiem masses took place in the chapel at the Good Shepherd Convent and other oral testimony supported this statement. The women were laid to rest in unmarked graves at Ardmore. A number of plots contain the remains of St Mary's women buried in groups of four. A larger plot hosts headstones recording the names of 19 women who died between 1978 and 1999. On the smaller plots, it appears headstones were added in more recent years to mark deaths that took place in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s. One family member told the researchers that their relative's name was incorrectly recorded on the relevant headstone when first erected.[844]

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841 These reports (or Annals) were used extensively by Frances Finnegan in research for her book Do penance or perish: a study of Magdalen asylums in Ireland (2005).

842 St Mary's Derry. Notes and Correspondence. Letter dated 22 September 2004

843 DoH Research project – Mother & Baby Homes. Statement No.1 – Good Shepherd Sisters – Preliminary and Generic Background Information.

844 Interview with HT and DT.

The *Derry Journal* was examined for evidence that these deaths were marked in its memorial and death notices section. This was an acknowledgement that many Derry Catholics received in the event of their death in order to alert friends, relatives or associates to the funeral arrangements and give them the opportunity to pay their respects to the deceased. Such notices often included requests to pray for the soul of the deceased. During the mid-to-late twentieth century death notices became 'part of the funerary practices of the Irish urban and rural working classes.'[845] Local newspaper death notices offered particular importance in the cases of those individuals who had lived apart from their family for decades. There was no evidence of the insertion of death notices for St Mary's Derry women until the mid-1990s, which was a decade later than equivalent insertions appeared in the *Irish News* for women associated with St Mary's Belfast (see **next chapter**). It is not clear why death notices emerged at this point or why there was a difference in Belfast and Derry cases.

Death certificates reveal a further factor about these women's lives: how was their occupation recorded, given their indeterminate status. Were they perceived as unpaid employees or inmates? The answer appears to be that, at least for this purpose, they were recorded as employees. The two most common entries on the death certificates were laundress (retired) or a blank space. Other answers to the occupation question included 'laundry stacker convent'; 'factory worker'; 'needlewoman'; and 'housekeeper'.

Issues arising from limitations placed on use of the records

The data collected from the Good Shepherd admissions register was difficult to interpret because of the limitations placed on the use of the information within it. The Good Shepherd Sisters are dedicated to preserving the privacy of those women who passed through their St Mary's homes, as well as the mother and baby homes that they operated. As explained in the Introduction to this report, their caution increased after BBC journalists gained access to baptismal records associated with the Good Shepherd Sisters' former mother and baby home, Marianvale. The Sisters fear that these records were circulated. Partly as a result of this development, the researchers were not permitted to employ digital cameras when working on the Good Shepherd Sisters' records. Moreover, all the names of girls and women entering the St Mary's homes were anonymised on the researchers' spreadsheets. Only in cases where a woman's death was recorded in the admission register was permission granted for the name to be formally recorded by the research. This was to enable further research with other sources, such as death certificates. Whilst this research restriction has ensured the privacy of surviving former laundry women from the Belfast, Derry and Newry St Mary's homes, it imposed limits on related research tasks that could have been carried out. For example, it prevented the cross-referencing of all names against other sources. Whilst the researchers did make a number of discoveries in such sources, through which they expanded their knowledge of the St Mary's homes, this knowledge would have been greatly enhanced by permission to collect the names of all those who spent time within the laundries.

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845 Ciara Breathnach and David Butler, 'Death notices and obituaries in provincial Irish newspapers, 1820-1900', in James Kelly and Mary Anne Lyons (eds.), Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: historical perspectives (Dublin, 2013), p. 252. See also Lindsay Prior, The social organisation of death (Belfast, 1987), p. 134, which discovered only 39 of 415 deaths sampled for Belfast in 1981 were not marked by a death notice.

The example of L.C is indicative of this point. L.C. appeared in the admissions register but without any date of death. This meant that she appeared on the researchers' database in anonymised format only and research to ascertain further details of her personal story was not possible. However, L.C's name was provided on the burial list that the Good Shepherd Sisters provided for the researchers as the research drew towards a close. At that point, it was possible to identify her from the 1911 census as a general labourer's daughter, from just outside Derry. She had also featured in the local newspapers. In 1923, at the age of 22, L.C. was one of three 'young women' who appeared at Derry Sessions charged with vagrancy. They had 'left the Good Shepherds Home at the Waterside', at which point Sergeant McCartney of the RUC said 'a phone message was received from the home by the police to say that the girls were out'. Later they were located at Simpson's Brae and 'B men brought them to the barracks on the charge of vagrancy.' The same newspaper report explained that L.C. had been sent to the laundry at an earlier court hearing as part of a two month probation order (the Good Shepherd records suggest she was sent from Armagh prison where she was serving a sentence for theft). The magistrate at L.C.'s court appearance in 1923, asked if she and the two other run-aways were 'prepared to go back to the home' but was told by a police officer that 'They won't be taken back again.' The magistrates discussed the case 'for some time' and one of them, Mrs Semple, 'interviewed the defendants in the magistrates' room'. At the conclusion of the hearing, L.C. was sentenced to three months with hard labour. However, it appears that she did, instead return to the Good Shepherd Convent because, a couple of months later L.C. appeared before the court charged with vagrancy once more. On this occasion, the police had found her taking shelter in an old shed. The Mother Superior at the convent was said to be ready to 'give her another chance' and the newspaper report stated a police officers' observation that 'the girl said she would go, but they could not rely too much on what she said.'[846] On this occasion, L.C. does appear to have remained in the laundry until her death, which occurred fifty-four years later, in 1977. While this information on L.C. provides only minimal detail on her life, it provides more information than is available in the limited entry in the St Mary's Derry admissions book. Her case offers insight on the relationship between the laundry and the criminal justice system, indicating the relationship between the Good Shepherd Sisters and the local police and courts.

Conclusion

Conclusions related to the Good Shepherd laundries appear at the end of **Chapter 15**.

846 Londonderry Sentinel, 23 October 1923 ; 15 January 1924

Chapter 13:

Good Shepherd St Mary's home/laundry, Belfast

The records for St Mary's Belfast took the form of two ledgers which covered the period 1932-1982 and included the names of entrants in alphabetical order. Some women who entered prior to 1932 appear in the ledgers as readmissions. Given the time constraints on the research team and the prohibition of digital photography, a decision was taken to sample the entries for the Belfast laundry by examining in full all the data for women with surnames beginning with the letters A through to F. This sample is compared and contrasted in this chapter with the complete dataset collected for St Mary's Derry/Londonderry. Work in the laundry terminated with its closure in 1977 although the files record entries to St Mary's Belfast until 1982.

The financial records for St Mary's Belfast included ledgers with details of income for the 1960s. In addition, government documents – files from the Northern Ireland Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Commerce, Health and Social Services – were used to explore the place of all three St Mary's homes in the state's social care apparatus. As is the case for the analysis of the St Mary's homes in Derry and Newry, the experience of work and living conditions in St Mary's Belfast is discussed in a separate chapter (**Chapter 15**) that features evidence from witnesses at the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. This material is added to the valuable insights offered by individuals who came forward to offer testimony on the St Mary's homes for this research project.

The Good Shepherd Sisters came to Belfast in 1867 taking over a 'Home for Destitute Penitents' from the Sisters of Mercy in the city centre.[847] They moved to premises on the Ormeau Road in 1869 where, in addition to the convent, a church and St Mary's home (as the institution was known throughout the period) with laundry facilities were built. The numbers working the laundry were around 100 in 1890 and the 1911 Census suggest numbers climbed to 135 by that point.[848] Numbers fell to between 60 and 70 by the 1940s.[849] In evidence to the HIAI, the Good Shepherd Sisters explained that up until the 1960s the 'ladies slept in dormitories'. At that point, renovations 'divided the sleeping arrangements into smaller, more cosy bedrooms each containing between three or four beds.' These bedrooms 'each had its own hand basin/vanity unit and the usual furniture.' In addition, one of the Sisters 'slept on the same floor as the ladies to be "on call" during the night in case someone needed assistance or was feeling unwell.'[850]

The laundry closed in 1977, and the St Mary's home was registered for 'Persons in Need' and cared for 'ladies who still lived with the Good Shepherd Sisters'.[851] By 1980, 'old ladies' in the St Mary's home

847 Luddy, Prostitution and Irish society p. 81.

848 HIAI, Module 12, GSC-377: Witness statement of Sister Ethna McDermott RGS, 11 January 2016: 6.5.2.; Census of Ireland, 1911 accessed at http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie

849 PRONI, COM 35/16: Laundry and cleaning services: survey of facilities available and used by armed services, 1943-1945.

850 HIAI, Module 12, GSC-377: Witness statement of Sister Ethna McDermott RGS, 11 January 216: 6.10.2.

851 Ibid., GSC-379, 2.1.3.

were engaged in 'light work' provided by the Northern Candle Company in Belfast.[852] On the Good Shepherd convent site today is the Greenvale Residential Care Home, where a number of women who once lived and worked in the St Mary' home currently reside.

Financial records

The Good Shepherd Sisters provided access to financial records for St Mary's Belfast, but these related only to the 1960s. The records itemise payments to the laundry. These include money coming in for laundry work from a range of hotels in Belfast such as the Russell Court, the International and Robinson's. Cafés and restaurants that sent their laundry to the Good Shepherd Convent included the Carleton and the Abercorn and they were joined by other businesses, such as the Anderson and McAuley department store. A number of local schools were among the customers, including Dominican College and St Patrick's and they were joined by two other educational establishments, Queen's University Belfast and St Mary's College. A range of religious orders, such as the Redemptorist Fathers, Bon Secours Sisters and Sisters of Nazareth also had their laundry services carried out by the women who worked without wages at the Good Shepherd Convent Belfast. The Belvoir Park Golf Club and the Ulster Club were two well-known Belfast social establishments making use of the laundry's services.

A number of individuals either made donations or payment for laundry work to the Good Shepherd Sisters. They included Lord O'Neil, Lady Sinclair, Lord Antrim and the Clandeboye Estate.[853] Calculations show an income of around £21,950 for 1968, but there is no record of outgoings and it is not possible to assess the financial contribution of the laundry to the overall exchequer of the Good Shepherd Convent in Belfast. As was the case with St Mary's Derry, the financial records available for St Mary's Belfast do not provide the necessary detail, scale, scope or chronological sequencing through which to offer a precise determination about profits or losses at the Belfast laundry. Unlike the Derry records, those made available for the St Mary's Belfast did not include any glimpse into the financial reserves held locally by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

Payments were received from statutory authorities for some of the women resident in St Mary's Belfast and the available records for the 1960s record payments from the Antrim, Armagh, Down, and Belfast Welfare bodies. There are several payments recorded as Special Care Management, which must have been for women in St Mary's Belfast. There were also payments made by the Ministry of Home Affairs and the Ministry of Pensions; the latter were presumably for the older women resident in the home. In cases where a woman was committed to St Mary's by the courts, her local county council or welfare authority was responsible for paying the Good Shepherd Sisters for her maintenance. It also clear that on occasion individual families made payments towards the upkeep of girls or women. A discussion in Ministry of Home Affairs records, concerning a 13 year-old who, in 1952, was committed to the care of the Good Shepherd Convent in Belfast until she was eighteen under a 'Fit Person Committal to Care or Protection Order', recorded that her father was to pay Antrim County Council 7s a week for her maintenance and that this was to be paid to the Good Shepherd Convent.[854]

852 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, Visitation Report, Good Shepherd, Irish Province, Mar. 1980, Footnotes, p. 111.

853 St Mary's Belfast, Financial Records.

854 Internal Ministry of Home Affairs Memorandum, 26 June 1952, Children's and Young Persons Act, HA/13/178, PRONI.

Number of entrants: St Mary's Belfast

The overall number of women admitted to St Mary's Belfast between 1933 and 1982 was 1,358. The entry registers made available by the Good Shepherd Sisters began in 1933 and therefore the number of girls and women who entered the laundry in the first ten years of the new state of Northern Ireland is unknown. The records for St Mary's Belfast were sampled, which involved deciphering the, often difficult to read, hand-written records for each of the 328 individuals with surnames beginning A to F. All text was typed onto a computer and spreadsheets prepared for analysis. Based on this sample, a clear decline took place in the number of girls and women referred to the home during the 1960s and into the 1970s. This replicates the pattern witnessed at St Mary's Derry. It is difficult to pinpoint specific societal trends which might account for the fluctuating numbers of women and girls sent to the home. Women arrived there for a variety of reasons, which were most often personal, and it is difficult to attribute these to wider social or economic factors.[855]

Length of Stay

Figure 1 - Appendix H charts the periods over which girls and women in the sample remained in Belfast St Mary's. There was no typical period of residence either for women sent to work in the laundry or the small number who are recorded as having approached the Sisters to ask for accommodation in the home. Often, no specific period of confinement was recorded in the admissions register in cases of those women referred by statutory agencies or medical or religious institutions. Those women sent by the courts were most likely to have a clearly stated period of confinement prescribed.

Sampling the register and using those women with surnames beginning A to F provided details on the duration of residence for 113 women who had, at some point, left St Mary's Belfast to return to the community. Of these 9 (8%) stayed for less than one month; 57 (50%) were resident between 1-6 months; 19 (17%) for 7-12 months; 16 (14%) stayed between 2 and 8 years; 4 (4%) remained between 9 and 19 years; 2 (2%) stayed beyond twenty years. In these two cases, one woman entered in 1925 (aged 27) and left in 1945 and the second one entered in 1890 and is marked as leaving in 1940 (when she would have been 64). Finally, 6 (5%) individuals in this sample had multiple entries and exits from the St Mary's Belfast home. These figures do not include those who died in St Mary's Belfast who are discussed more fully below. As will become clear adding them to the discussion increases considerably the numbers who lived in St Mary's Belfast and worked in its laundry for over twenty years. Thus, several individuals were identified who worked in the laundry for several decades. For example, one woman entered in 1890 and died in 1947, another entered in 1894 and died in 1949, while another arrived in 1899 and was buried in 1946. A further entrant arrived in 1908 and died in 1963 and a woman who died in 1949 had arrived in 1906. Later entrants included a woman who arrived in 1929 and died in 1980 and another who passed away in 1966 after entering in 1933.

The records include incomplete details on the length of residence in a significant proportion of cases. In many instances, no departure date is noted in the admission register and it is not clear whether one was simply not recorded or if the woman concerned never left. As is discussed shortly,

855 St Mary's Belfast Registers.

it is known that a significant number of women died either in the St Mary's home or in the residential home to which the women were moved. Among those who did not leave St Mary's Belfast and stayed for the rest of their lives, were the 'consecrated penitents'. Their position in the hierarchy of the Good Shepherd Convents is explained in the chapter on St Mary's Derry. In the Belfast home, one woman who was recorded as being a 'consecrated penitent' died in 1947 having entered St Mary's in 1890. Another woman who was similarly described entered in 1906 and died in 1974. Other women remained for the vast majority of their lives without being recorded in the registers as consecrated penitents. This included a woman admitted in 1926, aged seventeen, who was still in St Mary's Belfast when it closed in 1985. She eventually died in 1990 but the only remarks about her in the register were 'No friends', alongside the date and location of her death. The term 'no friends' was also to be found in similar cases of young women referred to the Salvation Army's Thorndale House Industrial Department. In this sample of Belfast St Mary's entrants the term was used in twenty cases, as shorthand, to explain why the woman concerned was taken into the home.[856] As this term was used most frequently in the 1920s and 1930s it was likely a reference to women who were homeless or destitute. This was not an irregular experience in interwar Belfast given the dire social and economic situation in those years. These women may well have been destitute and facing extremely limited options. The workhouse may have been their only option, other than entering the Good Shepherd home. For other women, they may have been abandoned by their families following an out-of-wedlock pregnancy. In the era before the welfare state, women on their own without a support network were vulnerable and such unfortunate circumstances could result in their admittance to these institutions.

Age Range

In the St Mary's Belfast sample, age was recorded in 306 of the 328 cases. The results were placed in the same age categories as those for St Mary's Derry to enable an element of comparison between these two Magdalene laundry populations in terms of their age profile on arrival. As can be seen in **Figure 2 - Appendix H**, 3% of our sample were in the very youngest category (10-14), although the youngest children in the sample were thirteen. Three girls were placed in St Mary's Belfast at this age. One of them arrived from County Wexford at an unknown date (the register only recorded March 7th but no year) and there are no details on length of stay. Another thirteen-year-old arrived from County Antrim in 1962 and remained until she was eighteen. A Belfast thirteen-year-old stayed for four months in 1962. Over a quarter (26%) of the Belfast sample were in the 15-17 age range. Just over a third (34%) were aged between 18 and 23 when they first passed through the doors of the St Mary's home. A further 13% were aged 24 to 28; 3% were 29-33; 8% were 34 to 40; 5% were 41-50; and 8% were 51-78. That around a fifth of entrants were aged over 34 again indicates the range of socio-economic and personal factors that could lead to a woman's referral to a Good Shepherd St Mary's home. These could include issues such as a lack of financial support, failed family networks, domestic abuse, problems with alcohol, or mental health issues.

St Mary's Belfast included females under 18 years-old among its population of laundry workers. For this reason, the home came under inspection because it was registered as a voluntary children's home in 1956 under the name 'The Good Shepherd Girl's home', along with Marianville and the Sacred Heart Home.[857] However, the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry Report (HIAI) revealed the difficulties

856 St Mary's Belfast, Registers.

857 Northern Ireland Ministry of Home Affairs, Voluntary Homes Registration, PRONI, HSS/34/6A.

in identifying the number of girls under 18 who were in St Mary's Belfast, as not all were welfare authority registered, but gave figures of ten in 1964, six in 1965, 16 in 1966 and 13 in 1967.[858] It also suggested that 'the great majority who lived and worked in St Mary's [Belfast] were over eighteen'.[859] However, the sample constructed from the St Mary's Belfast entry register for this research report suggests that that teenage girls (under 18) represented almost a third (30.6%) of those who entered the doors of the Belfast laundry between the 1930s and its closure in 1977. As noted, in the chapter on Derry St Mary's, the HIAI concluded that to expect young girls under the age of eighteen to carry out industrial work in the Good Shepherd laundries was unacceptable.[860] The Belfast sample analysis added to the full data from St Mary's Derry records (where those in the 10-17 age range totalled 43% of entrants) indicate that large numbers of girls were required to do this work, without wages, during the lifespans of these institutions.

Catchment Areas

Within the sample group, the Good Shepherd Sisters recorded a previous place of residence for the entrants in a total of 206 cases. It suggests that the majority of women who entered St Mary's Belfast did not travel far in so doing. As **Figure 3 - Appendix H** demonstrates, the highest proportion, 40% were recorded as being from Belfast. A further 40% were from other parts of Northern Ireland. Another 14% were originally from the Irish Free State/Republic of Ireland. This is a smaller proportion than was the case for St Mary's Derry, which drew large numbers of girls and women from neighbouring County Donegal. A further 5% arrived in St Mary's Belfast from Great Britain. Entrants from GB included a forty-eight-year-old woman, sent by Woolton Prison, Liverpool, in 1933. She left after a month. The final 1% in this sample were three women from more unusual destinations. Two of the three were from New York. Of these, one arrived in 1945 at the age of twenty-eight and died in 1963; the other arrived in 1890 and became a 'consecrated penitent' at some point before her death in 1947. The third woman in this group arrived, aged fifty-one, from Cape Town, South Africa, in 1959 and left in 1962.[861]

Sources of and reasons for referrals

Referral information was not provided in all cases. Some of the record entries were very brief and did not indicate how the girl or woman concerned was referred. In this respect, the same depth of detail that exists for the St Mary's home in Derry is not available for Belfast. It is clear that, like the other St Mary's homes, there were a range of referrals into the home. Most commonly, these included being placed by families, referral by priests or by members of various religious orders, or being sent by courts, the police or other statutory welfare agencies. Alcohol abuse was a feature in a small number of cases. For instance, a forty-year-old woman in 1959 was recorded as being 'given to drink' and a woman admitted in 1970 was recorded as being an alcoholic, returning from a period in a mental hospital.

858 HIA Inquiry Report, Volume 6, p. 17.

859 HIA Inquiry Report, Chapter 21, Module 12, Column 44.

860 HIA Inquiry Report, Volume 6, p. 35.

861 St Mary's Belfast, Registers.

Exploring other sources, in addition to the registers, it was possible to identify a number of women sent to St Mary's Belfast via the courts. From the first decades of the twentieth century several institutions, identifying themselves as refuge or reform homes, employed court visitors who attended legal sessions and offered their services as an alternative to prison. Known as court missionaries they were recognised as part-time probation officers both before and after the Probation of Offenders Act 1907.[862] The Salvation Army's Thorndale House and the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes (and their laundries) were among them.[863] A letter from Cardinal MacRory, Catholic Archbishop of Armagh, in 1944 to the Ministry of Home Affairs regarding the work of the Good Shepherd Sisters explained that their 'mission and life work is to reclaim, care and train young girls who have fallen or are in peril of falling into evil ways of life'. The Archbishop observed that 'these sisters have intensive, specific and lengthened training … the girls are given courses in cooking, laundry, housewifery, needlework, poultry, keeping arts and crafts'. He explained that in England the Good Shepherd Sisters received a grant of 30s per head per week for those placed under their supervision and that the Sisters in Northern Ireland were 'willing and eager to receive and be responsible for the care and custody of Catholic girls who may be committed by the courts, if reasonable aid is granted by your government'.[864] Under Section 11 of the Probation Act 1951, St Mary's Belfast was formally registered for the 'reception of women and girls who were on probation [and in] whose cases the court deems it necessary to include a condition of residence in an institution'.[865] However, newspapers recorded the direct involvement of the Good Shepherd Sisters in court proceedings prior to this date. In the case of a woman who was charged with stealing money in 1935, a RUC Detective Inspector explained to the court that 'two ladies of the Good Shepherd Convent, Belfast, would take the girl provided she agreed to stay there for twelve months'. The defendant agreed and the 'Bench did not proceed with a conviction'.[866] Twenty-five years later, a similar situation was reported in 1960, as a pair of teenage girls were placed on probation for two years for shoplifting. The first year on probation involved their confinement in St Mary's Belfast.[867] The Good Shepherd Sisters also took in women who had previously spent time in St Mary's Belfast. In 1939, a woman who pleaded guilty to obtaining four shillings by deception, had previously been in the Good Shepherd's Belfast home and 'they said they would take her back if she was not sent to prison'. The defendant agreed to this proposal and the magistrate said 'if she went to the convent there would be nothing more said about it, but if she failed to do so he would send her to prison'.[868]

The records of Armagh Prison also reveal a number of women who were sent from there to St Mary's Belfast; again, this was as part of a probation agreement. In 1953, a twenty-year-old woman who had been convicted of larceny was placed under the care of the Probation Officer 'for one year, on condition she becomes an inmate of the Good Shepherd Home Belfast'.[869] In 1955 a twenty-year-old woman from Belfast, also convicted of larceny, was placed on probation for two years, with a condition of

862 Brian Fulton and Trevor Parkhill, Making the difference: an oral history of probation in Northern Ireland (Belfast, 2009) p. 13.

863 Ibid., p.8; For more on the Salvation Army's work see Chapter 16 of this report.

864 Letter to Ministry of Home Affairs, 25 June 1944, religious, Box 9, 'B' – relating to Convents, Cardinal MacRory Archive, Cardinal O'Fiaich Library and Archives Armagh.

865 Circular No. TC11/1951, 30 May 1951, CYPA Circulars on Training Schools and Borstals, HA/13/184, PRONI.

866 Belfast Telegraph, 4 Oct. 1935.

867 Belfast Telegraph, 30 Mar. 1960.

868 Belfast Newsletter, 4 Feb. 1939.

869 Registers Armagh Prison, HMP/1/1/2/2, PRONI.

her probation that she reside in the Good Shepherd home.[870] In 1962, a twenty-three-year-old, whose address was given as the Legion of Mary in Belfast, was convicted of being drunk and disorderly and given a conditional discharge as she agreed to go and stay in the Good Shepherd Convent.[871] In the most serious case, a woman convicted of the murder of her sister's child was given life imprisonment in 1944, but secured an unconditional release to the Good Shepherd Convent in 1950.[872]

A count of the court referrals in the entire St Mary's Belfast Register found 68 (5%) instances among the 1,358 entries: the respective figures for St Mary's Derry suggested court referrals were around 2%.[873] The St Mary's Belfast referrals included a number of women sent for specific periods of time. However, exit dates are not always recorded so it is difficult to know whether the women remained in the home for longer than the time allotted by the courts.

A number of women were transferred from Marianville to St Mary's Belfast following the birth of their babies. There were 30 references to such referrals in the available records. One 18 year-old, who made the short journey from Marianville to the adjacent St Mary's home in 1962, stayed for two years. A nineteen-year-old, who entered in 1962, stayed for three months. There is no record of what, if any legal authority, was involved in these movements. Nor does the superficial detail in the archival records offer any insight on how, or if, formal consent was given by these young mothers to their move to the St Mary's home. However, the discussion of the oral testimony on the Good Shepherd laundries offer a deeper insight into several examples of these movements between the various homes within the Good Shepherd convents (see **Chapter 15**).

There were eight teenagers (aged between 15 and 19) admitted first to St Mary's Belfast who were then 'sent' to Marianville, at various points during the 1950s. It is unclear from the records if it was known they were pregnant on admittance or if this was discovered afterwards. For three of the young women, two aged 15 and one 16, it is recorded that they were re-admitted to St Mary's Belfast from Marianville, following the birth of their baby. The two 15 year-olds remained for two years and three years respectively and the 16 year-old for one year. In two of these cases their admittance to St Mary's Belfast was authorised under a Court Order, although it is unclear from the records whether this was a Protection Order or whether they had been convicted of a criminal offence.[874]

Girls and women were also sent from other institutions to St Mary's Belfast. The frequency with which transfers took place between children's homes and industrial schools to Magdalene laundries in the Republic of Ireland was identified by the McAleese report.[875] The sample of the St Mary's Belfast records included the cases of eight teenagers (five of whom were under 18) who were sent from Nazareth House and a 22 year-old who had been in Marianville after leaving Nazareth House and was then relocated to St Mary's. Three teenagers were admitted from the

870 Registers Armagh Prison, HMP/1/1/2/3, PRONI.

871 Ibid.

872 Ibid.

873 St Mary's Belfast Registers.

874 Case notes Marianville, 1952, 1954, 1957.

875 Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries, chapter 10.

Sacred Heart Home, on the Good Shepherd site in Belfast and one eighteen-year-old was admitted from Middletown Industrial School in 1955.[876]

At the other end of the spectrum were a number of older women who appear to have entered St Mary's Belfast to see out the end of their days. It is not clear if they were placed by family or if they chose this option independently. In the latter case, this may have been to escape domestic violence or poverty. In 1933, a 50 year-old woman entered and was given the 'class name' Ignatius. A 58 year-old, who entered in 1938, was recorded as 'No Friends. Widow's pension'. However, some of those in the older age categories did not remain for very long. A 60 year-old who arrived in 1938 and on her the records note 'Mind affected. Did not keep her overnight'. A 69 year-old arrived in October 1948 and 'Left at her own request', the following month. In July 1951, a 66 year-old was sent by the court on a three-month sentence. In 1938, the oldest woman in this sample, a 69 year-old with the 'class name' Mercy, '[r]emained a few months' before leaving.[877] These cases suggest a degree of complexity around admissions to the St Mary's home, but the sparse written records do not enable them to be understood in full.

Exit Pathways and Outcomes

While information on this element of the women's personal journeys is not available for all those in the sample, this element of the data is richer than that for the women's entry pathways to St Mary's Belfast. A number 'left at own request', with one woman who entered in 1945 leaving 'for her own home' in 1965. Five women, in the sample, left for employment and one woman left 'for a fortnight on business', at some point during 1941.[878] Others were 'taken out' by relatives or friends, including a 16 year-old who was 'taken out by her father' after a week in 1934.

What the Good Shepherd Sisters deemed as bad behaviour could result in an individual being expelled. Among the entire 1,358 records for women in St Mary's Belfast there were forty-four references to expulsion. One woman who was expelled in 1944, was described as 'no good' and a 17 year-old who had come from Nazareth House was expelled after six months in 1948.[879] If women were considered to be 'troublesome' they could be dismissed or sent elsewhere, like one 37 year-old sent to Purdysburn Hospital in 1934.[880] Purdysburn dealt with psychiatric cases. Another woman who was 'very troublesome' stayed for only two days in 1933.[881] A 16 year-old who arrived in 1942 was described as 'very weird, walking on roofs'; the result being that 'the police had to take her'.[882] Other women are recorded as running away, and for those who had been placed in St Mary's Belfast under a court order this involved the police being called to apprehend them. In one such case in 1964, a mother was fined £1 for 'harbouring her daughter' who ran away from the Good Shepherd Convent Belfast having been placed there by a court order.[883]

876 St Mary's Belfast, Register, 1955.

877 St Mary's Belfast Register, 1938.

878 St Mary's Belfast Register, various dates.

879 St Mary's Belfast, Register, 1944; 1948.

880 St Mary's Belfast, Register, 1934.

881 St Mary's Belfast, Register, 1933.

882 St Mary's Belfast, Register, 1942.

883 Belfast Telegraph, 25 Sept. 1964.

A number of women had complex histories of entering and leaving St Mary's Belfast multiple times. One girl was admitted as a fourteen-year-old in 1935 and did not leave until 1966; she returned after three weeks and stayed for over a year, before leaving again to take up a post in a nursing home as a domestic in 1967.[884] Movement between institutions was also a factor in entries and exits, as in seen in the cases of several women sent to the Good Shepherd in Derry/Londonderry and Newry.

There are 34 references to deaths of women in the entire St Mary's Belfast register. In some cases, it is indicated that death took place in a hospital. As well as the information from the register, a separate source on deaths was provided by the Good Shepherd Sisters. They compiled a list of the names of women who died either in the St Mary's home or in the follow-on residence at Greenvale, which is on the site of the convent. The figures provided by the Sisters suggest a total of 80 deaths. These involved 52 burials in Milltown Cemetery and 28 interments in the City Cemetery. These burials took place between 1934 and 2019. Using this information, copies of 55 death certificates were traced at the General Register Office Northern Ireland (GRONI). Relying solely on the names and dates of death offered by the Good Shepherd Sisters, the death certificates of 21 women were not located.

The 55 death certificates that were traced were examined for any issues that might give rise to concern about the women's cause of death. None were identified. The youngest age at death (among those for whom a death certificate was sourced) was that of a 35 year-old woman who died due to pulmonary disease. However, most other deaths occurred when the women reached their sixties, seventies and eighties. The average age of death for St Mary's Belfast residents (and former residents) whose death certificates were sourced was 76. In registering this factor, readers should be aware that a significant number of women have been identified whose deaths were recorded in the entry register but who do not feature on the burial list supplied by the Sisters. There appear to be 15 such cases. These include the following individuals: a woman (age unknown) who died in 1958; a 40 year-old who died in 1928; a 19 year-old whose death (but not its date) is recorded; a woman who entered as a 35 year-old in 1937 and died in 1963; a woman who arrived from the USA in 1945, aged 28 and died in 1963; a woman who arrived as a 20 year-old in 1928, became an auxiliary and died in 1957; a woman who arrived in 1921, aged 21, and died in 1978; a woman who arrived from the USA in 1890 and became a 'consecrated penitent' at some point before her death in 1947; a 27 year-old, with no recorded entry date, who died in 1967; a woman admitted as a 28 year-old who died at an unrecorded date; a woman who was admitted in 1899, aged 34, who died in 1946; a woman who entered in 1908 and died in 1963; a woman who died in 1942, for whom no age or date of entry is recorded; a woman who entered, aged 34, in 1933 and died in 1966; a woman who died in the City Hospital in 1980, aged 71, after 51 years in the laundry; a woman who entered in 1894, aged 32, and died 55 years later; and a woman who died in the Union Hospital, in 1947, who first entered the laundry in 1906 and had exited and entered it 'at least thirteen times'.[885] Following the completion of the research the Good Shepherd Sisters indicated that some women may not have been on the burial list they supplied because they were taken home for burial by their families.[886]

884 St Mary's Belfast, Register, 1935.

885 St Mary's Belfast, Register.

886 Communication from the Good Shepherd Sisters to the IDWG.

As these women do not appear on the burial lists provided by the Good Shepherd Sisters, the location of their interment cannot be confirmed. As noted above, the former Belfast laundry women who appear on the burial lists were buried in a number of plots in Milltown and City cemeteries in Belfast. Those that have died since the 1980s are interred in marked graves with their name and date of death engraved on a headstone: with up to four names on each headstone.[887] Those buried up to the 1980s were placed in larger communal graves that are marked only by a reference to the fact that the grave holds individuals from St Mary's Good Shepherd Convent Belfast and the Greenvale residential home.[888]

The researchers examined death notices in the *Irish News* to ascertain if the deaths of any of these women were marked in this fashion. Such an insertion followed the demise of the vast majority of Belfast Catholics in order to inform friends, relatives or associates of funeral arrangements. Such insertions often included requests for prayers for the soul of the deceased.[889] This process might have been particularly significant for individual women whose ties to family and friends had been broken by a very extensive period in St Mary's Belfast. It appears that after 1984 the deaths of women who had been resident in St Mary's Belfast were marked by death notices. Prior to that, only one death notice was discovered in relation to one woman's death in 1971.[890] It seems possible that there was a change in policy in this regard once these women left St Mary's Belfast and moved into residential homes. Commenting on this matter once they were made aware of it the Good Shepherd Sisters suggested that the families of the deceased women may not have wanted a death notice published due to what they referred to as societal stigmas regarding the St Mary's homes.

Conclusion

Conclusions on the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes/laundries appear at the end of **Chapter 15**.

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887 Visit to City Cemetery to photograph graves, 13 June 2019.

888 Visit to Milltown Cemetery to photograph graves, 25 May 2019.

889 Previous academic research suggests that death notices were common amongst the Irish working classes by the mid-to-late twentieth century. A detailed study of Belfast (conducted in 1981) found that only 39 of 415 sampled deaths were not marked by a death notice in the local newspapers. See Ciara Breathnach and David Butler, 'Death notices and obituaries in provincial Irish newspapers, 1820-1900', in James Kelly and Mary Anne Lyons (eds.), Death and dying in Ireland, Britain and Europe: historical perspectives (Dublin, 2013), p. 252. See also Lindsay Prior, The social organisation of death (Belfast, 1987), p. 134.

890 Irish News various dates, 1960-2000

Chapter 14:

Good Shepherd St Mary's home/laundry, Newry

The St Mary's Newry home was opened by the Good Shepherd Sisters on the Armagh Road in Newry in 1946, but does not appear to have received any girls or women until the following year. It was the smallest of the three St Mary's homes, housing around thirty girls and women at any one time with a maximum capacity of thirty-six. It was registered as a voluntary children's home in 1951 and operated alongside the Marianvale mother and baby home. There was a small farm and garden on the site. From 1973, there was also a hostel for female victims of domestic violence.[891] In 1984 the Good Shepherds sold the site and it became a centre dealing with victims of alcohol abuse, operated by the Mercy Sisters.[892] The Sisters told the HIAI that at the point of closure, St Mary's Newry was home to around nineteen women mainly aged over 55.[893]

Initially, the women and girls at St Mary's Newry were accommodated in four prefabricated huts. Two were dormitories, one contained the kitchen and the final hut housed the dining room. A new building was completed in the 1960s and renovated a few years later to provide modernised sleeping and living quarters. Although Marianvale was on the same site, its residents were not allowed to interact with the girls and women working in the nearby laundry and living in the St Mary's home.

The records of St Mary's Newry take the form of a series of books and cards which served as a register for entrants. There was also a collection of notes and correspondence. The time constraints placed on the researchers, together with the fact that researchers were unable to employ digital cameras when working with this archival collection meant that the records for St Mary's Newry were not be mined as extensively as was the case for the St Mary's home Derry/Londonderry.

An overall count of entrants to St Mary's Newry was undertaken and the notes and correspondence were scrutinised for examples and factors to be discussed in this chapter or in the broader analysis of the three Good Shepherd laundries that operated in Northern Ireland. Some financial records related to St Mary's Newry were also made available, but this material was limited in content and mainly covered income and expenditure from the last five years of the home's lifespan. In addition, government documents – files from the Northern Ireland Ministry of Home Affairs, Department of Health and Social Services – have been used along with newspaper reports to explore other evidence relating to the operation of this particular institution. Testimony offered to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI), along with new oral histories generously offered by individuals who responded to this project, is analysed in **Chapter 15** where living and working conditions in all three of the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes / laundries in Northern Ireland are examined.

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891 HIAI, Chapter 21, Module 12, Column 88.

892 Irish Independent, 24 Apr. 1984.

893 HIAI, Module 12, GSC-377: Witness statement of Sister Ethna McDermott RGS. Citing the memory of two Sisters approached by her in advance of the statement, 11 January 2016. 6.5.

Financial Records

The available financial records are extremely limited for St Mary's Newry. In many respects, they overlap with those for Marianvale. From these minimal records, it can be observed that in 1977 the combined income for Marianvale and St Mary's was £48,282.77. Expenditure was £42,530.15, leaving a surplus of £5,752.62. However, in 1978, the situation was reversed with income of £49,483.76 and expenditure of £56,049.18; creating a deficit of £6,565.42. The combined contribution of the laundry and donations to profits appears to have been £7,900. A further £2,556 of income came from the farm attached to this St Mary's home. In 1978 a sum of £509 was paid in 'Farm/Garden Wages.' It is possible that this was for employees who came from the local community to carry out specialist or seasonal tasks on the farm.[894]

There was also financial input into St Mary's Newry from statutory agencies. In February 1956, for example, Tyrone County Welfare Committee agreed to make a payment to the Good Shepherd Covent of £50.00. Previously, this welfare committee had rejected applications for funding and this sum was lower than the £96 the Association of Welfare Committees suggested that each county welfare committee contribute to the Good Shepherd Sisters at Newry for their work. The following year, the Good Shepherd Sisters asked the same committee for another £50. It was reported that Tyrone's Children's Officer 'found the convent very helpful.' But a decision was postponed pending further 'information on its use for Tyrone women and children.' These insights are from contemporary newspapers and frustratingly, it is not clear if it this referred to the Marianvale mother and baby home, the St Mary's home, or perhaps both.[895]

Numbers of entrants and length of residence

Although the researchers were not able to commit as much time to the St Mary's Newry records as was the case for the Belfast and Derry/Londonderry laundries, it was still possible to mine a great deal of insightful information from this source. Between 1947 and 1982, 482 women and girls were placed in St Mary's Newry. Of these, sixty were sent to the laundry from Marianvale mother and baby home. The Good Shepherd Sisters also sent seventy-five women to the Newry laundry from their network of institutions in the Irish Republic.[896]

Like Derry and Belfast, the duration over which girls and women remained within St Mary's Newry varied greatly. Those sent by statutory agencies and the courts were most likely to have an assigned period of confinement. In 1958, for example, a court sent DM to St Mary's Newry for a period of six months.[897] Similarly, in 1967, F was placed in the laundry for a period of two years. P was sent to St Mary's in 1971 and spent three years there.[898] In numerous cases where girls and women arrived under the authority of statutory agencies the register did not record whether or not there was a proscribed period for which they were to be kept within St Mary's. A twenty-six-year-old woman who arrived in 1958 only left at Christmas 1968, at which point she was 'was placed in employment

894 St Mary's Newry, Account Books.

895 Strabane Chronicle, 25 Feb. 1956; Fermanagh Herald, 29 June 1957.

896 St Mary's Newry, Register.

897 Belfast Telegraph, 31 Jan. 1958.

898 St Mary's Newry, Register.

by “Special Care.’” On 30 August 1960, a fifteen-year-old girl was sent to the Newry laundry by Miss Thompson (a Welfare Officer). This girl departed one month later for the Good Shepherd convent in Belfast, again under the direction of a Welfare Officer. In July 1972 Derry Welfare sent a woman to the Newry laundry who was described as ‘very unsettled … Anxious to help the IRA.’ She must have left shortly thereafter because a further note explains that she was readmitted in August. There is no recorded departure date for this woman.[899]

As the last case suggests, like the other St Mary’s homes, Newry was viewed by the authorities as a suitable location to bring girls or women in need of crisis accommodation. For example, in 1959 when a solider was imprisoned for abducting a fifteen-year-old girl, his German wife and their child were ‘looked after in the Good Shepherd Convent, Newry.’[900] In 1975, when an ex-British soldier from the Falls Road in Belfast was threatened with death by the Official IRA, his wife and children were also sheltered there.[901]

As was the case with the Belfast and Derry records, the Newry laundry women included a number for whom no departure date is noted: 24 in this case. It is not known if they returned to their family, found a place in the community outside of the Good Shepherd convent, or were placed in residential care once the Good Shepherd Sisters closed the laundry at Newry. The Good Shepherd Sisters informed the researchers that only one woman, OA, died in the St Mary’s home in Newry during its existence. In her testimony, Sister 1 recalled that she died in 1980 having spent several decades in the home. She is buried in a nearby cemetery, in a communal grave that also holds the remains of a number of babies connected with the Marianvale mother and baby home. There is small headstone marking OA’s resting place.[902] The records reveal that she was one of the first entrants to what was, in 1947, a new Good Shepherd laundry. At that point, she was already in middle-age, having been born in 1898. Her previous address was a residential home in Warrenpoint.[903] The Sisters’ memory of her death was supported by the Order’s burial list for St Mary’s Newry, which included only the details for OA.[904] However Priest 2 recalled a number of funerals of laundry women taking place in the convent chapel.[905] His memory is corroborated by a number of entries in the admissions register for St Mary’s Newry which indicate that two other women passed away during their time as laundry workers. BT, who was born in 1914 and arrived in the Newry St Mary’s home in 1948, died in November 1978. It appears that she was sent from the Newry Workhouse at the point of its closure in 1948; one of three women sent from the workhouse at that point. Another woman, FB, was recorded as a ‘voluntary admission’ in 1957 and returned to relatives at Christmas 1962. At some point, unrecorded, she returned to the Newry St Mary’s home and died in 1973. According to the Newry register, FB was laid to rest in Ardmore Cemetery where women from the Derry St Mary’s home were interred.[906] However FB’s name does not feature on the list of Ardmore burials prepared by the Good Shepherd Sisters. It is not known where BT was laid to rest. Priest 2 also provided

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899 St Mary’s Newry, Register.

900 Belfast Telegraph, 6 Apr. 1959.

901 Belfast Telegraph, 23 Sept. 1975.

902 Visit to cemetery to photograph grave, 23 September 2018

903 Interview with Sister 1; St Mary’s Newry, Register.

904 DoH Research project – Mother & Baby Homes. Statement No.1 – Good Shepherd Sisters – Preliminary and Generic Background Information.

905 Interview with Priest 2.

906 St Mary’s Newry, Register.

details of a young woman who, aged 18, was sent to St Mary's Newry following the birth of her second illegitimate baby. While working in the laundry, it was noted that she was unwell, apparently suffering from heart problems. She subsequently died in a nearby hospital, in 1974.[907] No death certificate could be located for this young woman but evidence of her passing was discovered in a local newspaper. Finally, the St Mary's Newry register indicates that another women, OP, was sent to Newry from the Derry Good Shepherd Convent in July 1947 and died only three months later. However, no record of her death was discovered in the St Mary's Derry register. There are no further details on her age or background in the Newry records.

Age Range and catchment areas

The available records for St Mary's Newry indicated that a similar mixture of young girls and older women worked side-by-side in the laundry as was the case in Belfast and Derry. The Newry admissions register did not record age of entrants until August 1955, but from the available data it is apparent that at least 63 entrants were under 18 years old. Once again, the HIAI's conclusion that the admission of girls into the laundry was inappropriate should be noted. However, state observations of St Mary's Newry carried out during the 1970s provide the impression that it admitted only a limited number of the very youngest girls (those under fifteen). One inspection report, written in 1976, included the comment that the Sisters at St Mary's Newry 'would not normally take in school age girls because of travel difficulties.'[908] However, cases discussed below do include those of two girls who were fourteen years old when they arrived. In addition, Witness HIA387, who gave testimony to the HIAI was also under fifteen (by one month) when she arrived in 1964.

Girls and women arrived via the same pattern of referrals that included self-referrals, family referrals, referral by parish priests and various Catholic institutions, place of safety orders and remand or probation orders. The very youngest age group was generally small in number. In 1950, for example, a report to the Ministry of Home Affairs noted that there were 'only five or six girls under 18 who are employed in the laundry.'[909] In 1973, an inspection by J. Hill for the Department of Health and Social Services noted that there were five girls in the 15-18 age range working in the laundry.[910] All of the 'girl' entrants mentioned in the notes and correspondence from St Mary's Newry were aged between 14 and 18.

The majority of St Mary's Newry entrants were from across Northern Ireland. As was the case for St Mary's Derry, there were also a number of women from the Republic of Ireland. Dundalk, Limerick and Cork were among the towns and cities that women travelled from.[911]

907 Interview with Priest 2.

908 16 Feb. 1951, Inspection Report by K.B. Forrest, PRONI, HA/13/108.

909 7 Sept. 1950, G. Sherry, NI Council of Social Services to W.A. Willis, Ministry of Home Affairs, PRONI, HSS/34/6A, CYPA (NI), Registration of Voluntary Homes.

910 28 June 1973, Inspection Report by J. Hill, PRONI, HSS/34/14.

911 St Mary's Newry, Register; Interview with J.P; and Witness Statement of HIA359.

Referrals/Reason for Entry

The type of in-depth analysis of referrals and reasons for referral which was carried out in the case of St Mary's Derry was not possible with this dataset. However, the notes and correspondence in the St Mary's Newry records make clear the role played by statutory agencies in confining women and girls to this home. In September 1950, G. Sherry, of the Northern Ireland Council of Social Services, noted that the girls working in the laundry were 'either homeless or ex-delinquents or in some way unfitted for life in the outside world.'[912] It was noted by the HIAI that the Good Shepherd Sisters were a respected part of the voluntary community in Northern Ireland.[913] Thus, as was the case with its order's institutions in Belfast and Derry, St Mary's Newry was viewed by statutory agencies, and the courts as a place where perceived delinquency and bad behaviour could be corrected, as well as being a place of safety for women and girls in moral or physical danger.

Thus, in 1967 a court placed, D., aged seventeen, in St Mary's Newry after ruling that she was 'a young person having a parent not exercising proper care and guardianship and is beyond control.' D. kept 'company with pop-groups' and had been staying in 'undesirable flats.' She was confined to the laundry for a year. In correspondence, the probation officer in this case, Miss Shields, informed the Mother Prioress at the Good Shepherd Convent Newry that she would not be able to visit again 'for some weeks.' This indicates that the probation service did carry out visits to the Good Shepherd laundries.[914] Our interviews with three retired probation officers suggests that this practice ceased during the 1970s due to the dwindling use of the Good Shepherd convents in probation and remand cases.[915]

In 1971, L. was referred to St Mary's by her local welfare authority. It was noted in a report written by the Good Shepherd Sisters that L. was 'very much' the product of a broken home. She and her siblings were removed from their family home, by the NSPCC, in 1957. She had been boarded-out in 1963 but 'became disagreeable and cheeky.' In August 1971, a report on L. by a social worker was forwarded to the Good Shepherd Convent by the Acting Chief Welfare Officer in her district. 'L. is a girl of sub-average intelligence', the report noted, who, in the past year, had 'shown an inability to function adequately in an adult setting. She tends to be stubborn and at times is not amenable to reason. As she is just 16 now I think L. might benefit from a short period of training in a residential setting.'[916]

P. was also admitted in 1971. A report from a social worker identified her as having a low IQ and being partially disabled by poor eyesight. Her home environment was not good and she was sent to St Mary's having run away from home. P. was reported to be doing laundry work. It was recorded that she had made a few friends in the laundry and that contact with her family was being encouraged. However, it was noted that P 'requires supervision … She is inclined to let others do the work for her. She needs a firm hand coupled with kindness and the awareness that she is wanted and can be a person like other girls her own age.'[917]

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912 7 Sept. 1950, G. Sherry, NI Council of Social Services to W.A. Willis, Ministry of Home Affairs, PRONI, HSS/34/6A, CYPA (NI), Registration of Voluntary Homes.

913 Health and Social Care Board Closing Statement, HIAI, p. 16.

914 21 Mar. 1968, Probation Report to Good Shepherd Sisters Newry, St Mary's Newry Notes and Correspondence.

915 Interview with Probation Officer 1, 2 and 3.

916 St Mary's Newry, Notes and Correspondence.

917 Ibid.

That St Mary's Newry was judged to be both a place of safety and correction is demonstrated by the case of B. and M., aged fourteen and fifteen, who were detained there at the direction of their local county welfare committee in 1972. This was after 'intensive casework' by a social worker had failed to prevent the two girls causing distress to their family and gaining some notoriety in their local community. The girls had been experiencing problems at home with 'bad behaviour', causing their parents to approach Social Services. They had been frequenting soldiers' discos and that, together with other alleged delinquent behaviour, had placed them 'in some danger in their home area', which was a Republican stronghold. T. had been threatened by 'extremist elements.' She had also had her hair shaved as a final warning for being in the company of British soldiers. After this, T. stole a sum of money and ran away to England. She returned, however, and was sent to St Mary's Newry (along with E.), under a Place of Safety Order.

E., who a psychologist ruled could 'function in either a top stream of a Secondary School or in a Grammar School,' had earlier been sent to the Good Shepherd convent in Belfast. However, she had persuaded some of its other younger residents to accompany her to a soldiers' disco and this led the Good Shepherd Sisters to eject her from the convent. Matters came to a head when E. and T. helped a girl from the Good Shepherd Belfast to abscond and the RUC and British soldiers began calling to their family home to search for them. The girls' father brought them to a local RUC station and explained that he wanted no more to do with them and it was unsafe for them at home. It was at this point that they were then despatched to Newry.[918]

Girls were also sent to St Mary's Newry by priests and member of other religious orders. For example, a priest played a central role in a case from 1958. A fifteen year old girl was the subject of a *habeas corpus* application from her mother that was directed towards her parish priest and the girl's father, who was a farmer. The application was adjourned by the court 'as mother and father agreed the child could enter Good Shepherd Convent in Newry.' In a revealing newspaper report on the case, it was stated that the priest informed the court that he had decided to place the teenage girl in the care of the Good Shepherd Convent because he considered her to be in 'moral danger.' On the same date, an older woman (aged twenty-four) with the same surname also arrived at the Good Shepherd laundry in Newry, and was presumably a sister of the teenager. The older of the two was at some point transferred to the Good Shepherd Convent in Limerick. The following year the girl's mother returned to court, to apply for custody of her daughter and to secure her release from the St Mary's home. The mother's lawyer offered legal arguments that were opposed by a lawyer representing the parish priest. The presiding Judge decided that he wanted to speak to the girl privately, which was 'not usual practice.' The girl 'was brought to court by a Good Shepherd nun and interviewed in the Judge's chambers after which the case was adjourned, for two weeks, because the Judge wanted a second interview with the teenager. Eventually, the mother was refused custody of her daughter as the welfare officer working on her case concluded that 'he was not satisfied that the girl should be sent back to the family.' The girl's county welfare authority was asked to decide on the course of action that should be taken. The court heard that it had the power to place her in care until she was eighteen and the Judge ruled that the Authority's decision on this was not to be a public matter.[919] Unfortunately, there are no surviving legal records related to this case that might explain the priest's ability to gain authority over the child's mother in this case.

918 St Mary's Newry, Notes and Correspondence.

919 Belfast Telegraph, 14 and 28 May 1959.

The role of the priest in the case above was based on the moral protection of a teenage girl, but at least one other case involving a priest was a result of Catholic ideologies surrounding sin and female sexuality. In 1968 a priest advised that a young mother who had just given birth should be taken from Marianvale and 'received into the classroom for a short time after the baby's adoption in order that she may have an opportunity to reorient herself and prepare herself properly for her return to the outer room and a more orderly life from now on.'[920] The 'class' was a term often used in association with the St Mary's homes at Belfast, Derry and Newry and in the Good Shepherds wider network of homes.

In 1969, E. was sent from the Republic of Ireland by the Sisters of Mercy to St Mary's Newry in response to alleged disruptive and delinquent behaviour. A report sent to the Good Shepherd Sisters stated that at school E. had given 'such trouble to every teacher in each successive class that in May 1967 they refused to allow her to attend any more classes.' She ran away to England with her sister and was subsequently found 'wandering' and was returned by the Legion of Mary. Having been sent to a convent school, E. assaulted one of the teachers. 'The teachers in secondary school ... all agreed that she had plenty of brains' but that it was a 'pity she didn't use them the right way.'[921]

A witness speaking at the HIAI described how she was also sent to St Mary's Newry at the instigation of a priest. HIA202 recalled how, one day, the parish priest called to her home and told her mother that HIA202 should go to St Mary's 'for training.' She told the HIAI 'I have never known the real reason why I was put into the Good Shepherd. I may have been talking to soldiers innocently and my mother might have worried.'[922] Their suspicion that a young woman was in 'moral danger' was confirmed for parish priests or the Sisters of the Good Shepherd whenever a woman was found to be pregnant. This was particularly true when the woman concerned became a 'second offender', as was sometimes noted in the records. This was the case for one young woman who, following two pregnancies, was placed in St Mary's Newry at the age of eighteen.[923]

Exit Pathways and Outcomes

Scrutiny of the exit pathways for the St Mary's Newry girls and women suggest similar patterns to those experienced at St Mary's Derry. Perhaps the most fortunate appear to have been those women who returned to live with their families. This group included a woman who left the St Mary's Newry in June 1962 'to go to her sister in USA.' She had worked in the laundry for seven months. Her age, or other details, were not recorded. Another was a sixteen-year-old girl who arrived in 1956 from a rural area. She entered from the neighbouring Marianvale mother and baby home and was recorded as 'returned to relatives', following a period of six years during which time she had worked in the laundry.[924]

In other cases, the statutory authorities arranged a girl's or woman's departure. In 1964, a thirty-year-old woman left the Newry laundry when 'welfare secured employment.' She had worked there for two

920 Marianvale Correspondence, 1968.

921 St Mary's Newry, Notes and Correspondence.

922 HIAI, Witness HIA202, p. 1.

923 Interview with Priest 2.

924 St Mary's Newry, Register.

years. In 1974 a thirty-six-year-old rural woman was 'returned home at the request of Welfare' after a nine year stay in the St Mary's home.[925]

Just as the legal system and/or the police were the source of entries to the Newry laundry, they also served as an exit route for some girls and women. In January 1947, a thirty-two-year-old woman, described by the nuns as 'mentally deficient and troublesome' was removed by the police. It is not known where she was taken. On New Year's Eve 1965, a court sent one woman to St Mary's Newry and when she returned to court twelve days later she 'was not sent back.' Two women were sent separately to St. Joseph's Training School in Middletown, Country Armagh, during 1973.[926]

For other women in the records, the traces they have left behind in the Good Shepherd archives reveal next to nothing about their lives before, during or after their stay in St Mary's Newry. Examples in this category include a woman who was estimated to be fifty when 'sent by Special Care Service' in February 1955, who left for an unknown destination in April 1959. Another was the seventeen-year-old girl 'collected by Miss Carson' in May 1967 after a seven month stay.[927]

Information discovered in the St Mary's Derry files reveals that a number of women were relocated to the convent there from Newry in 1984 when the latter closed its doors.[928] Other residents appear to have left as part of the closure of the Good Shepherd facilities in Newry. Often, they were found new accommodation in residential homes. One example in this category was a woman interviewed about her life by a local newspaper in 2010. She revealed that the happiest day of her life involved coming 'back to the outside after 9 years (from when I was 16 until I was 25) being placed in the Good Shepherd Convent in Newry where I worked in the laundry.' Asked what made her angry in life, she replied, being 'away for so long in the Convent without getting home for even a day.'[929] The short article does not record any further details on the reasons that led to her placement in the laundry.

Other arrivals at the Newry laundry were despatched subsequently into the wider networks of Irish Catholic institutions with individual women transferred from one jurisdiction to another. For example, in May 1963 a seventeen-year-old girl, who had been sent to St Mary's Newry two years earlier by a County Tyrone priest, was transferred across the border to the Sisters of Charity in Donnybrook. Another woman, with the class name 'Elsie', entered in 1950 and was 'sent to Waterford' at an unrecorded date. This was a reference to the Good Shepherd laundry in Waterford. The sparse comments on her relocation do not allow any assessment of the level of input 'Elsie' had in her transfer. **Chapter 15**, which analyses oral testimony on the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes and laundries offers some further evidence on this issue. These cases are two of many similar ones in the Good Shepherd registers for Belfast, Derry and Newry.[930]

Conclusion

See the end of **Chapter 15** for conclusions on the Good Shepherd laundries.

925 Ibid.

926 Ibid.

927 St Mary's Newry, Register.

928 St Mary's Derry, Notes and Documents.

929 Details of article withheld to protect the identity of the woman.

930 St Mary's Newry, Register.

Chapter 15:

Oral testimony on the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes/laundries: experiences and conditions

This chapter deals primarily with the experiences and conditions within the three Good Shepherd St Mary's homes in Northern Ireland. This allows for an extensive use of the oral history testimony that was offered by a range of individuals, as well as enabling that evidence to be utilised in a format which provides a maximum level of anonymity for our participants. By placing their perspectives and experiences within a general discussion of the Good Shepherd laundries we reduce the possibility of any individual being identified: these include the interviewees themselves and others who feature in their testimony.

Moreover, the controversial debates about the fundamental philosophy that justified the existence of the St Mary's homes, and the working and living conditions within the laundries, is a theme which is common to all three under examination. Breaking the analysis of this oral history of the research into three separate sections (one on each home) is both unnecessary and potentially confusing. Furthermore, the collection of this testimony in one stand-alone chapter also provides an appropriate space for the inclusion of the witness testimony on the Good Shepherd laundries, previously offered to the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI). This chapter begins with that evidence and then presents the new oral testimonies collected for this report.

The Good Shepherd laundries in Northern Ireland: The HIAI

The HIAI was chaired by the late Sir Anthony Hart, and submitted its findings in 2013. As part of its much broader agenda, the committee investigated the experiences of girls (aged under 18) who were sent to the three Good Shepherd Convents in Northern Ireland. This section analyses this testimony and the conclusions of the HIAI report, including experiences of women who worked in the laundries as young girls and the HIAI response to these testimonies. Hart also received testimony from a number of Good Shepherd Sisters and that is also included here. Where it enhances the analysis in this section of this chapter, extracts from testimonies collected for this research report are included. The testimony given to the HIAI offered many examples of the loss of autonomy that young girls experienced upon entering the St Mary's homes. The report outlined that it was common practice for entrants to the St Mary's institutions to be given a new name and to have their 'outside' clothes taken away. Girls were assigned a 'class name' and this was used throughout their time at the convent. As recorded in the registers for the Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Newry St Mary's homes, the practice ended in 1970.[931] HIA211 was sent to the laundry aged 17, in the early 1960s and remained until the mid-1970s. Giving testimony to the HIAI, HIA211 recalled that on arrival at St Mary's Derry girls 'were thrown in the bath and a uniform put on us'. She remembered that the nuns 'cut my hair and

931 St Mary's Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Newry Registers.

changed my name. They called me [redacted] … I was known as [redacted] all my time there'.[932] The St Mary's Derry registers reveal the unusual class names given to new arrivals, including Perpetua, Camillus, Dominic, Scholastica, Alphonsus, Borgia, Bernard, Pelegia, Celsus and Cyrille. These names, often linked to saints, perhaps reflected the education of the Sisters, but served to confuse the girls and women who were renamed. The practice was a daily reminder of their loss of autonomy. The class names allocated to new arrivals became more commonplace by the 1960s. For example, the final names recorded, in 1970, were Cissie and Gwyneth.[933]

This issue of autonomy featured in the testimony of HIAI witness HIA211. She recalled that as a teenage girl she was unaware that she was in a laundry until an older resident explained this to her. HIA211 also described the work she carried out washing, drying and pressing laundry. She recalled being one of the youngest in the laundry and described the conditions as poor. Her recollection was that there was never enough food and there was limited entertainment or leisure activities. She remembered that 'after lunch we just went out to the yard and we used to walk up and down. There was nothing else to do'.[934]

Witness HIA107 was sent to St Mary's Derry in the early 1960s and remained there until the age of eighteen. She had been the victim of a serious sexual assault. Her age on entry was redacted in the HIAI witness statement. She, too, recalled being given a bath and having her clothes taken away on arrival. She worked as a seamstress, sewing vestments for priests and observed that she 'never got any schooling … We just worked'.[935] The HIAI, however, concluded that she was taught within the convent by visiting teachers and the Sisters.[936] HIA107 described the Good Shepherd as being 'worse than a prison' and explained that she was not allowed to see her family 'without a nun present'.[937] She was also critical of the quality of food provided.[938] In its final analysis the HIAI did not support claims that the food was of an unacceptable standard or quantity.[939]

Witness HIA202 was sent to St Mary's Newry, aged 15, in the early 1970s and was later relocated to the St Mary's Derry. She was sent to Derry after running away from Newry. She recalled that: 'I felt like I was brainwashed in the Good Shepherd. There was a regimented routine and I had to follow it. It was like being in the army except with constant religion forced on you'.[940] Sister 281, who spent some time in the Good Shepherd Convent in Newry provided evidence that corroborated elements of HIA202's comments. She remembered that the Good Shepherd Sisters imposed silence at meal times, which was only interrupted by one of the nuns reading aloud from a chosen text. This practice continued until the late 1960s.[941]

932 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA211, p. 1.
933 St Mary's Derry, Register.
934 Ibid., p. 3.
935 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA107, p. 3.
936 HIAI Report Chapter 21, module 12, column 126.
937 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA107, p. 4.
938 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, module 12, column 133.
939 Ibid.
940 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA202, p. 4.
941 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, module 12, column 103.

No details of disciplinary procedures or action taken against women and girls in St Mary's homes are recorded in the Good Shepherd archives, except for cases where women were 'dismissed' from the home or removed by the police. The testimony offered to HIAI did feature some comments on disciplinary measures within the laundries. Some witnesses gave evidence of being 'slapped' by nuns for a particular infringement of the rules. Although HIA202 explained that she experienced no physical abuse during her time in Newry, she did recall being slapped during her time in St Mary's Derry. She explained that this occurred after she had left the convent to visit a friend in the Creggan area of the city.[942] This event occurred during the early 1970s and indicates that, by this point at least, some of the younger and more independently minded girls and women were leaving the convent for short periods of time during a period when the regime had become less regimented. Witness HIA211 also recalled being slapped, in this case for not knowing the words to 'The Bells of St Mary's'.[943] HIA107 recalled a woman having her hair cut off as punishment for a transgression.[944] HIA359 (sent to Newry from Good Shepherd Limerick as a teenager in the mid-1950s) remembered being hit across the knuckles with an object during lessons. She also recalled being locked in a dark room, being slapped for 'giggling' and being beaten with a cane during her time in St Mary's Newry.[945] Other former St Mary's women offered alternative perspectives. HIA387 (who arrived, aged 13, in the early 1960s and remained for 18 months) suggested that the nuns 'weren't too bad. They would shout and scream at us but I don't recall them ever hitting me'.[946]

In offering its conclusions on the Good Shepherd Sisters and physical abuse of the teenage girls in the laundry, the HIAI ruled that there was 'some justification' to the Good Shepherd Sisters' claim to be 'enlightened' in this regard. In 1897, the Order issued a directive forbidding its Sisters to strike a child.[947] At this point the Good Shepherd Sisters referred to all those girls and women working within its laundries as children, making this directive a proscription of corporal punishment for all. In their closing statement to the HIAI, the Good Shepherd Sisters reiterated that there was no corporal punishment regime in place in any of their institutions in Ireland. Drawing on this statement, the Sisters urged the Inquiry not to impose revisionist standards on institutions which operated many years ago.[948]

Yet, this directive did not exclude other forms of routinised punishment in the Good Shepherd's three St Mary's homes in Northern Ireland. The evidence of witnesses to the HIAI indicated that punishment more commonly entailed being made to scrub floors or to eat meals while standing up. HIA211 also recalled a method of punishment using a 'black book'. She explained that 'on Sunday, we went into a big room and sat down on chairs. Sister 312 read out the names of the girls noted in the black book and what they had done wrong. We had to stand when our name was read out and then kneel down and say sorry'.[949] The Good Shepherd Sisters accepted that this was the practice from the

942 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA202, p. 4.

943 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA211, p. 4.

944 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA107, p. 5.

945 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA359, p. 5

946 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA387, p. 8.

947 Sisters of the Good Shepherd, Practical rules for the use of the Religious of the Good Shepherd for the direction of the classes (Angers, 1898)

948 HIAI, Module 12, Closing Submission on behalf of Good Shepherd Sisters, p. 22.

949 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA211, p. 3.

1950s until the mid-1970s. The HIAI ruled that the policies of 'reading out misdemeanours in front of others and making the offender kneel, or making an offender stand to eat her meal, were a form of deliberate humiliation and amounted to emotional abuse'.[950]

Several witnesses discussed instances of girls and women running away from the St Mary's homes. In 1967, D. absconded a total of four times from Newry.[951] P. ran away to Limerick, in 1973, with another girl from the laundry. Witness HIA202 ran away from St Mary's Newry to Liverpool with two other girls and was brought back by the police.[952] In this case it is not recorded under what legal authority the police returned them to the Good Shepherd Sisters, but as HIA202's childhood was spent in a children's home it is likely that she was the subject of a Fit Person Order at this point.

Recollections of hard work were common in evidence given to HIAI. All the witnesses who had spent time in St Mary's Newry recall working in the laundry. HIA387 and HIA377 told the inquiry that work in the laundry was 'hot, physically demanding and tiring'.[953] Witness HIA359 described working in the laundry from 9am until 7pm. She also recalled sewing priests' vestments and being directed to pick potatoes on farm land adjacent to the convent.[954] None of the HIAI witnesses received a wage for the work that they did, although HIA202 explained that she received pocket money for her work in the Derry laundry. This was during the 1970s. The origins of the provision of pocket money were discussed by Sister 1 in her interview for this current report (see below).

The evidence of two Good Shepherd Sisters to the HIAI on the daily routine during the 1960s at St Mary's Belfast indicated a regimented timetable. Everyone got up at 6:30 or 7:00 am. Following breakfast, work in the laundry began at 9:00 and was halted for a mid-morning tea break. They recall that lunch was at 12:00 or 12.30 pm and involved 'a full and nutritious meal'. An hour's lunch break was followed by work until 5:00 pm, which also included an afternoon tea break. The St Mary's women had their evening meal at 6.30 pm and could then use their recreation room where they 'played games, knitted, embroidered, and chatted'. Everyone 'retired to bed before 10:00 pm'.[955] It appears that the girls and women at St Mary's Newry may have been more fortunate as the recollection of a Good Shepherd Sister who worked there in 1956 is that they 'purchased a television so that the Sisters, ladies and teenagers could all watch the marriage of the Hollywood actress Grace Kelly to Prince Ranier of Monaco.'[956] Taken together, the evidence from across the three St Mary's homes suggests that given that the women had no holidays or formal outings from the home, work in the laundry was the central point of their lives. From the late 1960, conditions improved somewhat. The HIAI noted the arrival of holidays to destinations such as Rossnowlagh in Donegal for the St Mary's Derry women.[957] As explained below by Sister 1 and Sister 2, these were one-week annual holidays to houses rented by the Good Shepherds for the purpose.

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950 HIAI, Report, Chapter 21, module 12, column 136.

951 St Mary's Newry notes and correspondence.

952 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA202, p. 3.

953 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, module 12, column 69.

954 HIAI, Module 12, Witness Statement of HIA359, p. 2; p. 6.

955 HIAI, Module 12, GSC-395, Witness statement of Sister Ethna McDermott RGS. Citing the memory of two Sisters approached by her in advance of the statement, 11 January 2016. 6.9.2.

956 Ibid. GSC-461; 6.6.

957 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, Column 147.

Testimony emerged of, what the HIAI would rule to be, the flawed policy of placing very young teenage girls alongside much older women in the St Mary's homes. HIA7 was only fourteen when admitted to St Mary's Derry by her mother who also took her daughter to the local GP for a virginity test before the trip to the convent. During this period in St Mary's Derry she continued to go to school. When she was returned by her mother a second time to St Mary's Derry aged 16, she was put to work in the laundry and recalls that she was bullied by some of the older women. Thereafter, she was moved first to the kitchen and then to a children's home where she was much happier. [958]

Overall, eleven witnesses came forward to the HIAI to offer accounts of their time in the St Mary's homes/laundries. Two were children who spent time in the Sacred Heart homes that were housed in two of the Good Shepherd convents and they offered accounts that included positive memories. The other nine testimonies that dealt with issues around poor food and long hours of tiring (unpaid) work and the regimented nature of life in the convent and the harsh disciplinary regime that was imposed on the girls and young women.

The HIAI made a number of observations about the Good Shepherd laundries and reached several important conclusions in its final report. The 'systemic failures' it attributed to the Congregation of the Good Shepherd Sisters included:

- forcing girls (under eighteen) to perform industrial work in the Good Shepherd laundries;
- punishing St Mary's girls and women for 'misdemeanours in front of others and making the offender kneel, or making an offender stand to eat her meal';
- accepting children under school-leaving age into an 'institution that was not completely child-centred' and failing to ensure that proper care was provided for these children;
- failure to put in place a system of monthly visitors.[959]

In addition, it found that the Ministry of Home Affairs/Department of Health and Social Services and the Social Work Advisory Group were also responsible for systemic failings:

- failure to carry out inspections of the Good Shepherd Homes;
- failure to take steps to ensure that school-age girls were not in Good Shepherd homes for long periods;
- failure to detect the absence of a system of monthly visits to the Good Shepherd homes.[960]

Amongst its observations on the practices of the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes, the HIAI accepted the Sisters' evidence that educational classes were introduced in the late 1960s and that a recreation room and a summer holiday was provided for girls and women working in the laundries.[961] For example, the Sisters told the HIAI that literacy classes were offered in St Mary's

958 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, Column 145
959 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 155.
960 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 156.
961 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 147.

Newry as well as 'cooking and baking classes, craft classes including knitting, crotchet, cane work ... to ensure that the teenagers acquired the necessary domestic and life skills to ensure they would be independent and self-sufficient when they left.' [962]

Discussing the existence of the laundries in the three Northern Irish Good Shepherd convents, the HIAI noted that they 'generated a reliable source of income to pay the costs of care in the absence of state maintenance payments prior to the development of the Welfare State, or inadequate maintenance payments following the development of the Welfare State'. In their 'heyday' they were 'substantial enterprises, taking in laundry from commercial and domestic customers'. The report noted that those customers included the state. This was the case during the Second World War when the Good Shepherd laundries in Belfast and Derry secured contracts to wash items for the massive influx of military personnel who arrived in Northern Ireland. The HIAI erroneously claimed that 'the Good Shepherd laundry in Londonderry secured the contract for all the military laundry in Northern Ireland, including that of the Americans at the local naval base'.[963] Government files dealing with the extensive matter of laundering the clothes and kit of hundreds of thousands of military personnel reveal that the relatively small Good Shepherd laundries in Belfast and Derry secured a minor proportion of what was clearly a financially lucrative business.[964]

While the HIAI condemned the practice of teenage girls working in the laundries, it suggested that a 'very large proportion' of 'each community' in the laundries were over eighteen years of age.[965] This assessment appears to draw on the limited evidence from inspection reports that recorded relatively small numbers of teenagers amongst the St Mary's homes residents. However, the analysis undertaken for this research project, using the admissions registers for the three St Mary's homes, suggests that the proportion of entrants to St Mary's Belfast who were aged under eighteen was just under a third at 29%. The figure for St Mary's Derry, which is based on a full examination of all the individual records, indicates a figure of 43%. This discovery suggests that elements of the HIAI's criticism of the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes and their laundries are more significant than previously recognised.

The HIAI also noted that the Good Shepherd Sisters had a commendable policy of never turning away an individual who needed shelter. It cited a Department of Health and Social Services official who wrote in 1973 that the 'Good Shepherd (as has happened in the past) have a policy whereby they will not refuse people in need no matter what their religion is'.[966] The HIAI cited, as an example, the case of a young Protestant girl who was taken in during the early 1970s, because her relationship with a Catholic boyfriend placed her under threat from the UDA.

The HIAI also identified that there were occasions where the St Mary's home was clearly not an appropriate residential institution for vulnerable young girls. The HIAI discussed, in detail, the case of three 12 year-old girls who were confined in St Mary's Derry after they were sexually abused by a group of men in the 1960s. The HIAI wondered why the Juvenile Court had not taken the 'sensible course' by sending them to children's homes and concluded that 'either the police or the court

962 HIAI, Module 12, GSC-464: Witness statement of Sister Ethna McDermott RGS, 11 January 216: 6.11.

963 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 28.

964 Northern Ireland Ministry of Commerce Survey of Laundries, 1942, PRONI, COM/35/16

965 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 28; column 131-2.

966 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 34.

approached the Good Shepherd Sisters in Londonderry to take the children because they knew that the Sisters looked after teenagers and unmarried mothers'. This might have made the convent seem 'the appropriate place to send children who had been exposed to some form of sexual behaviour'. This decision was judged 'wholly inappropriate' by the HIAI, which was:

> in no doubt that the Good Shepherd Sisters should have refused to take the children on a permanent basis. By accepting them on a long-term basis, which turned out to be over four years in the case of HIA107, the Good Shepherd Sisters failed to ensure that proper care was provided for these children and that was a systemic failing on their part.

It was cases such as this that fed into the HIAI's most serious critiques of the Good Shepherd laundries.[967] A victim of incest or sexual abuse (such as the three young girls discussed above), arrived traumatised, then went through several alienating processes. They had their names changed and were expected to remain silent during meals whilst a nun read from religious tracts. Moreover, the Good Shepherd Sisters 'discouraged the girls in their care from leaving their premises' which the HIAI would later describe as 'a practice of containment'.[968] The HIAI was critical of this 'poor and outdated practice', noting that it continued until the late 1960s.[969] The HIAI also ruled that changing women's names 'caused considerable distress and confusion to those affected. We considered that the practice continued longer in Londonderry than it should have done and represented poor practice on the part of the Sisters'.[970]

The HIAI was not tasked with exploring the role or experiences of adult (over eighteen) St Mary's homes residents and the nature of their entry to the institutions. Nor did it investigate the issue of the (unpaid) work that the girls carried out in the laundries. Many of the concerns raised by the HIAI in relation to teenage girls were also relevant to older entrants to the laundry. In the next section, oral history testimony collected for this research report is presented to further explore the experiences of the adults in the St Mary's homes in Belfast, Derry and Newry.

New Oral Testimonies

As was the case with the use of material from the HIAI, the analysis of the new oral history discussed below will, where appropriate, be interspersed with insights from other sources that enhance the discussion. This section includes evidence from two Good Shepherd Sisters who have experience of the laundries that date back to the 1960s. It also includes testimony from two Catholic priests who discussed their experiences of meeting the girls and women of the Good Shepherd laundries. This section also narrates the experiences of women who spent time in these institutions and includes testimonies from their relatives and others who have a connection with these women and the laundries. In each case, the names of specific St Mary's homes are not included to reduce the likelihood that any of those giving testimony be identified.

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967 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, columns 120-23; 150.

968 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 65.

969 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 103.

970 HIAI Report, Chapter 21, column 138.

The Good Shepherd Sisters

Two Good Shepherd Sisters offered their perspectives on the role of the laundries within the three convents in Northern Ireland. Their views corroborated the evidence that was offered by the Good Shepherd Sisters to the HIAI.

Sister 1 (S1)

S1 offered a number of insights into working in one of the Good Shepherd Sisters' St Mary's homes and its laundry.[971] This included the holidays and outings that she recalled being provided for the St Mary's girls, the role of 'auxiliaries' within the convent, the impact of enhanced state funding of the St Mary's homes in the 1970s and issues around the death and burial of long-term laundry workers.

S1 travelled to Northern Ireland in the late 1960s and found herself working in one of the Good Shepherd laundries in the St Mary's home to which she was attached. She recalls that she 'was introduced to the St Mary's ladies and I got a great welcome from them, they were really very loving really to me … they were so delighted to see a young nun'. The laundry had just been renovated and she described it as bright and open. S1 was assisted by the women in the laundry as she learned her new role and was allocated the job of supervising the laundry that came in from local hotels.

S1 acknowledged that on arrival in the St Mary's home women were given 'class' names, but her view was 'they seemed to take up their names fine'. S1 explained the context of this requirement, suggesting that it was about the privacy of individuals and keeping their secrets hidden so that 'when they left nobody would know anything about them'.

In S1's view work in the laundry 'wasn't so difficult', although she acknowledged that the temperature could be very high in the laundry. She argued that training given to new arrivals meant that the women did not experience any workplace accidents. Moreover, she maintained that new arrivals were assessed by the Sister in charge and allocated to appropriate tasks. They might, for example, begin by 'just folding clothes'.

S1 did not recall the laundry work being carried out in silence, which might be related to her arriving at the St Mary's home in the late 1960s when practices were changing to some extent. Her own memories of this work are of 'great craic … I certainly remember them [the women in the laundry] … having good chats themselves'. Although work was not carried out in silence, she agreed that there was 'a level of quiet, yes'. She felt that this prepared the women for future work outside the convent and suggested that many St Mary's women later found employment with dry-cleaning companies. For this reason, she felt that 'a lot of girls … seemed to think that their time with us was worthwhile and they valued and they had good relationships with us, and they always kept in touch'.

S1 explained that the St Mary's residents were taken away on holiday, for one week each year, to various seaside villages. She remembered that 'they loved it … a full week away at sea'. In addition to this, there were other outings. This included trips to evening classes, which she thinks included 'English, I think, and cookery'. This took place after work in the laundry finished for the day. The

971 Interview with Sister 1, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 8 December 2018.

classes took place in a local technical college. S1 recalled also daytrips to seaside towns. On these occasions, S1 remembered 'they'd usually have a meal out in a hotel, or a restaurant ... The Sisters looked after them that day, they paid for everything'. The trip might also include a visit to 'a shopping centre somewhere' and the St Mary's women would 'do their own shopping there'. The women had some cash for this shopping as 'they got some money every week anyway' but 'not a whole a lot I think'. When asked to clarify whether or not the women were paid a wage for their work in the laundry, S1 replied that 'it was more pocket money I would say'. At a later meeting, S1 revealed that she had made enquiries about this and understood that in the 1970s the Sister in charge had enquired with Social Services about what weekly pocket money was paid to individuals in residential care homes. The Sister in charge then paid the St Mary's women the same amount. This level of detail from S1 confirmed that the St Mary's girls and women performed unpaid labour in return for one week's annual holiday and occasional outings, plus (from the 1970s) limited 'pocket money'.

S1 was not in the company of the St Mary's women in the evenings, but believes that their activities included board games, table tennis and television. S1 also revealed that occasionally entertainers visited from outside the convent and this included some well-known singers. The St Mary's women were given access to books but not to newspapers. Nor was there a phone from which to contact friends or relatives. The women were expected to attend Mass in the convent at least two or three times a week, but S1 did not recall what penalty might occur if one of the women did not comply. In her view, the spiritual element of life within the convent was its most beneficial aspect. The women arrived in 'a time of crisis' and the Sisters offered to pray with them to offer support.

Many St Mary's women did not receive visitors. S1 recalled examples of people who 'befriended' the women and visited the St Mary's home. In some cases, the women took weekend breaks in the homes of these befrienders. S1 maintained that this occurred in groups and only involved those over 18 years-old.

S1 argued that there were a number of educational opportunities aside from the evening classes mentioned above. There were morning classes in the 'education room' and women were free to leave the laundry to attend them. She thought these took placed between 11.00 and 12.30pm. This was separate from the educational provision offered to a younger group of girls who 'had lessons the whole day really'. She thinks 'they were never in the laundry; no girl could work in the laundry unless she was over fifteen'. There was also, according to S1, a 'great emphasis on music, and a great emphasis on plays and play clothes and doing little sketches'. S1 claimed that it was a means of teaching them 'elocution and good English and ... maturing them really and giving them a sense of confidence'.

S1 was asked about the process by which a woman could leave the St Mary's home, revealing that it was not straightforward. She explained that they had to discuss this with 'the Mistress' [Sister in charge] in her office and she 'would decide whether she could go straightaway or, you know, that she'd have to find employment or what she wanted'. The social worker and/or family would also be consulted if they had been involved in the woman's referral to the St Mary's home. Very often, however, 'they had no family support'.

S1 described the types of women she encountered. Some came from a particular hospital and were registered 'special care', others 'were put in by their parents and some were under court order'. In cases where someone was placed in the St Mary's home by their parents, S1 reflected that 'they were put in by their parents because the parents really didn't want to ... there was a stigma attached to a

child with disabilities and they didn't want to care for them'. Another cohort of laundry women were 'former children's home girls who hadn't … made it to independent living in the community, and they were returned back to Good Shepherd, to keep them'. In S1's view, young women in this category were often not ready to live independently. She remembered an example of one woman like this who had not settled into a hotel job that had been found for her and was sent back to the St Mary's home, against her will. She then worked in the laundry from 'sort of November until August, and … I don't think she was that happy staying on, but what could you do? Because there was no … she had no employment'.

S1 does not recall encountering a probation officer visiting a client in the laundry and this tallies with the testimony offered by the three retired probation officers that appears below. By the 1970s, it appears that there was limited interaction between the Probation Service and the Good Shepherd Sisters in Northern Ireland. None of the oral testimony from the two Good Shepherd Sisters or the retired probation officers takes much earlier than that historical period.

S1 was asked to explain the category of 'moral danger' and what it meant in the context of a female being referred to the St Mary's home. She felt this was a term applied to women who 'had a baby or two babies', although she also linked it to those in the 'special care' category. Another group of women were referred from the Republic of Ireland, often via the Legion of Mary or a doctor. S1 thought that domestic violence and homelessness were factors in some of these cases. Other women had been working in Northern Ireland and 'things didn't work out for them so they were referred … to us'.

S1 explained the role of 'senior girls', who were also known as Auxiliaries or a 'Child of Mary' by the nuns. This was an individual who 'had made a commitment to help the girls and to support the Sisters in their work'. An Auxiliary committed to spending the rest of her life in the convent. These individuals were mentioned in a number of other testimonies. Amongst other responsibilities, they were entrusted to escort other laundry women or girls to hospital or dental appointments. They also made visits to the shops.

Discussing state financial support for the women in the laundry, S1 said she was not entirely sure but thought that the Good Shepherd Sisters received some maintenance payments for the 'younger girls', but not for the 'elder girls' or those 'who came in without social services' support'. In her view the Seebohm Report of 1968 was a turning point as, thereafter, the Sisters received more grants and were 'able to do more for the girls'.[972] It was during this period that the evening classes and trips out, cited in the HIAI Report (and mentioned above by S1), became a feature of life in the St Mary's homes. S1 also believed that extra income from the state enabled the Sisters to pay employees to come in from outside to work in the laundry (on this point see testimony of JP below). S1 explained that in the 1970s 'a manager came in and that there were employees that came in as well', so the Sisters were 'able to do more for the girls'.

This was clearly a significant moment historically for the laundries. It indicated the extent to which the unpaid labour of the laundry girls and women both helped sustain the Good Shepherd convent complex (and all those who lived and worked there). Moreover, it makes clear that before this period,

972 The Seebohm Report examined the organisation of and responsibility for social service functions among local authorities.

this unpaid labour absolved the state of financial and social obligation for individuals who might otherwise have become its responsibility.

As was demonstrated in the chapters on the Belfast, Derry and Newry laundries, in a significant number of cases women stayed in the St Mary's home until their death. S1 offered her thoughts on deaths and burials, explaining that after someone passed away, she was laid out and prayers were recited over the remains before the coffin was taken to the convent chapel for 'full funeral rites and the burial'. These women were laid to rest in one of the plots purchased by the Good Shepherd Sisters in one of four cemeteries across Northern Ireland.

S1's concluding thoughts on the Good Shepherd laundry was that 'it was difficult' because, in her opinion, there was no alternative. Social Services was not developed enough and did not have the community services that 'came on board later you know, when girls could stay out and society changed too'. S1 concluded: 'I'm sorry about the laundries alright but what could we do? It was only when Social Services came on with grant aid … that the laundries didn't work, we didn't need the money as much. And they came forward to help and there was more collaboration'.

Sister 2 (S2)

S2 is another Good Shepherd Sister who offered testimony and included her own experience of working in one of the laundries.[973] S2 is originally from the Republic of Ireland but has over two decade's experience of work in Northern Ireland. She first worked in one of the northern Good Shepherd convents in the 1960s. S2 believed that birth mothers who were themselves raised in children's homes represented 'a totally different scenario all together' because they had no family support. She recalled that some individuals in this category became pregnant soon after starting to live independently and described the pre-emptive actions that the Sisters took with these young females: 'if we felt that this young person was going to be back in another year or two, we would maybe recommend to her that she might go to one of our own houses in … into St Mary's the adult place, for her own protection'. Some young women accepted this direction and 'stayed there a year or two and then went' after the Sisters found them employment outside the convent. However others 'maybe stayed their all lives, because they … they would've obviously have had maybe, what's the word I would use? They weren't capable of independent living. And, they wouldn't have the ability to make choices'. S2 gave the example of one woman, a mother of three, who accepted the advice to go into a St Mary's home. Subsequently, she moved to a Good Shepherd convent in the Republic and 'spent the rest of her life there. Very happy and content, but I mean she was a very vulnerable young person, you know?' S2 also described another 'very vulnerable little woman' who had been raised in an institution. She felt that women like this were 'lost' and felt the support the Sisters could offer her was the reason why 'we kind of saw Good Shepherd ministry in a very special way'.

S2 worked in one of the laundries for some time and her memory was that 'the craic was great'. Describing the ironing room, S2 explained that there were elderly women employed there but that they were permitted to sit down while carrying out their duties. S2 also explained that the women were free to leave the St Mary's home. As outlined by S1, she explained that the process involved negotiation with the Sister in charge who remained in control of the woman's exit from the laundry:

973 Interview with Sister 2, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 15 December 2018.

> *if they wanted to leave like they would talk to the Sister in charge … And she would, if they insisted and wanted it, and she'd get a job for them if they had nowhere to go as most of them wouldn't have had family you know? But she would get a job for them then, maybe a live-in job or many of them went to work in the hospitals, you know?*

Towards the end of her testimony S2 was asked if she had any regrets about the laundries, given the controversy surrounding them. She felt that they were 'very much part of the culture of the time'. Moreover, before the early 1960s there had not been very much appropriate social work training for the Sisters. Like S1, she felt that was a lack of alternatives to the laundries. S2 argued they were a 'place of protection' for a lot of very vulnerable women who were not capable of independent living. In her view there 'was a great atmosphere among them'. S2 is conscious that 'it wouldn't obviously be accepted' today but pointed out that, at the time, everybody 'knew that it was part of the story, welfare people were there'. She recalled inspections taking place:

> *I suppose we were saying that these women are being … they have a home … they're being fed. Yes, they did work in a laundry; so did we and that was their only source of income, there was no government subsidy for them, so we couldn't … we wouldn't have … we had no way … where would we get the money to do that, you know? So like, I know looking back on the laundry story, you know, you kind of wish it was different, but look it was part of the story at the time. It was worldwide, it wasn't just in Ireland, it was worldwide, you know?*

S2's testimony was delivered with great sincerity and passion and she has a strong conviction that the Good Shepherd Sisters carried out good deeds.

Priest 2 (P2)

P2 was raised in a Catholic family in a rural district and was ordained in the 1960s, after which time he found himself serving in a number of parishes in Northern Ireland.[974] He began his testimony with an explanation of the shroud of secrecy that was wrapped around any woman who became pregnant outside marriage. He made it clear that many priests assisted in the concealment of pregnancies from the wider community, or even from a young woman's own family.

P2 had experience of one Good Shepherd convent in his diocese which he visited to offer pastoral care to both the expectant mothers and to the women who had been placed in the adjacent laundry. Reflecting on his knowledge of the laundry, P2 discussed a number of individuals. One was a woman who had died after a number of years working in the laundry and was buried in the graveyard plot owned by the Good Shepherd Sisters. He did not know how she came to be a resident in the convent. She had been there for over thirty years by the time of her death. Another tragic story was that of a young woman who 'went to the laundry after her second pregnancy at seventeen'. While working there 'they felt she became unwell and she died at eighteen'. She died in *redacted* Hospital, apparently from an enlarged heart in 197*. Research in a local newspaper confirmed her death, although it has not been possible to trace the death certificate in this instance.

974 Interview with Priest 2, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 13 February 2019.

P2 discussed another woman with a more positive conclusion to her difficult personal journey. She 'came there after the baby was born, she worked in the laundry and then they were trying to get them out into the community, and she went out into the community. She worked for a family – a very good family – in fact I was talking to her last week, and she has now bought her own house … and has done very well'.

Discussing the conditions for the women in the Good Shepherd laundry, P2 concluded that the 'girls had a good life'. He remembered that they formed a folk group and that there were dances in the convent hall. A number of men worked for the laundry as van drivers and delivery men and 'they and their families would have come into the dances'. P2 described these women as 'vulnerable'. When asked to define what he meant by that, he replied 'well, I mean there was *name redacted* at seventeen and she had become pregnant. The father was an alcoholic … I think they had personality difficulties and they weren't able to look after themselves'. P2 felt this was a reason why, from his observation, 'none of them seemed to stay a short time. They all stayed quite a while and a number of them died there and the nuns looked after them'. He remembered a number of funerals for the laundry women, which took place in the chapel within the convent. Asked who attended these funerals, P2 recalled that it was 'mainly' the women and nuns from the laundry: 'we'd have very little input from families at all. Very little'.

When asked to reflect if he felt the Good Shepherd Sisters could have handled matters differently in terms of the laundry, P2 commented that 'they seemed to get that right', for the fifteen to twenty women that he remembers living and working there. However, he believed 'they should have tried harder to allow to them to live in the community. I mean a number of them have done that and have done very well. Done very well … I think they should have needed more encouragement … I felt that they should have tried to get these girls out into houses in the community'. At this point, P2 referred again to the example of the woman who bought her own home after departure from the laundry and who is obviously capable of independent living. His view in this regard echoes long-standing observations that the Good Shepherd laundries institutionalised many women, confining them for long periods due to paternalistic attitudes rather than promoting their early return to the world outside the convent.[975]

Priest 1 (P1)

P1 also offered testimony on his experience of one particular Good Shepherd laundry.[976] As a child, he brought his family's own washing to his local Good Shepherd convent. Decades later, as a priest, he became chaplain to the same convent. P1 explained that, like most other Catholics in the past, he felt that when a young woman was referred to the Good Shepherd Sisters it was 'the end of the affair' because 'we trusted them … They were competent and honest'. He never heard 'any word of worry coming from the chaplains' assigned to these institutions. His own personal sense of this was shaped by positive childhood memories. P1 explained that he visited that laundry many times with his families dirty washing and witnessed:

975 On institutionalisation caused by long stays in Magdalene laundries see the discussion in Chapter 1 and Chapter 12 on liberal Catholic critiques of the laundry system. Also the reflections of retired doctors and a religious Sister to the McAleese inquiry: Report of the Interdepartmental Committee to establish the state's involvement with the Magdalene Laundries (2013), Chapter 19, columns 77; 91-99.

976 Interview with Priest 1, conducted by Sean O'Connell, 15 December 2018.

> *all these young women busy working away, and of course once we came to the place – the hatch – where there was a - we got the delivery or whatever we were doing - there was great excitement. Everybody saying hello and all that. And I think it was because there was so little doing by way of visitors and all that.*

He especially remembered a separate group within the convent 'called the Magdalenes' or 'the penitents' who were a separate religious community. For a period in the 1960s, after he became a priest, P1 was their chaplain. He explained that he always assumed that these women had originally been sent by the courts and that 'then some of them had become attracted to the religious life, and this title of the Magdalen was sort of transferred on to this religious community within the Good Shepherd'. He explained that 'you never made any enquiries as to what … again, the presumption was that they were in good hands'.

The Magdalenes were 'the kind of people that you meet in a religious community which is somewhat different, in a sense, because there was a kind of closed community'. In P1's view they had come to terms with whatever their life meant. They seemed to be remarkably happy people'. In his insights on this particular laundry, as well as on Catholic attitudes towards unmarried mothers, P1 offered a striking metaphor that could be used to describe a good deal of what is being investigated within this current report. He described 'a cloud of unknowing among people' that was facilitated by people not asking questions and which descended around issues such as the Magdalene laundries or the mother and baby homes. This served the purposes of young women who wanted secrecy about their personal 'indiscretions', but it also made them vulnerable because those institutions were hidden from effective and full public scrutiny. As was the case with P2 and with S1 and S2, P1 described a similar process whereby a mixture of not knowing, not asking and not telling created an air of secrecy and silence around these institutions that was justified in the belief that that it benefitted the women who found themselves within their walls.

ALTERNATIVE PERSPECTIVES: THE VIEW FROM THE ST MARY'S WOMEN, THEIR RELATIVES AND OTHERS

During the research process a total of eight interviews were recorded with individuals who had either experienced life in a laundry, had a relative that did so or who encountered the St Mary's women in the years after the closure of these Good Shepherd institutions. A former St Mary's resident also sent a written statement about her time in one of the laundries. Their valuable testimony offers important insights into many of the issues that have been discussed already in this chapter and the previous ones.

ID

The case of ID is interesting because her testimony indicated a number of significant issues.[977] She was sent to one of the Good Shepherd's laundries, apparently at the direction of her mother who appears to have reached agreement with the nuns that this should happen following the birth of, the unmarried,

977 Interview with ID, conducted by Ida Milne, 30 May 2018.

ID's second child. ID remained in the laundry for around twelve months before she was transferred to another Good Shepherd laundry in the Republic of Ireland for a few weeks before being discharged. Her testimony raises questions about under what legal authority (if any) she remained in the Good Shepherd convent, after her baby's birth, where she worked unpaid in the laundry. She maintains that the Sisters offered little information about why this occurred or when she would be able to leave the laundry. ID also has unanswered questions about some medical treatment that she underwent during her period under the Good Shepherd's care.

ID, who is from the Republic of Ireland, was twice sent north by her mother to Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland. The two pregnancies were both in the early 1960s. The first occurred when she was still at school and the second when she was in her early twenties. She was from an affluent family and ID reflected that because her family were paying for her stay at the two mother and baby homes, she received preferential treatment. This included having a single room in the first of the two mother and baby homes. Her observations on the mother and baby homes were not particularly critical.

ID explained the process by which both her children were adopted. It was on her return from the second adoption that she discovered that her bags had been packed, in her absence by the nuns in the mother and baby home, and she was directed to enter the St Mary's home/laundry. She explained that 'there was no discussion with me about it, it was all arranged with my mother'. ID did not feel able to question this. As a former convent schoolgirl, she described herself as a passive recipient of the directions given to her by the Good Shepherd Sisters. ID was also 'very, very scared of my mother' and this was exacerbated by the fact that her father had died, meaning she was 'more dependent on her goodwill'.

ID recalled that the other women in the laundry appeared to range in age from twenty to ninety. She explained that 'Oh gosh, the women there, they worked, they worked. Some of them worked out in the farm, because it was self-sufficient. Some of them worked in the kitchens, and some of them worked in the laundries, but boy, they worked … I can't tell you'. Discussing how authority was maintained in the laundry, ID explained that 'the rule of fear that we now read about was in the atmosphere but it was no longer necessary to be physically cruel because everybody knew their place and they got on with it'. She remembered that during her time in the laundry, one woman did run away but she was not pursued. ID speculated that the nuns reasoned 'what can we do if we chase her? We could not bring her back at her age [she was in her thirties]. So, they didn't'. This observation implied that adult women could and did leave the St Mary's homes if there was no court order preventing them from doing so.

However, in her own case, ID found it particularly unsettling that she did not know when she could leave: 'I was twenty-two by then. Ah, and there was no end date, no release date, I was just told I was going to be kept there until my mother decided otherwise, and I had no say in the matter'. Perhaps reflecting, once again, on her mother's financial payments to the Good Shepherd Sisters, ID explained that she 'got a reasonable job in the laundry'. She was directed to sort out 'the clean laundry, and what hotel or restaurant it was going to go to, or whatever. As opposed to the harder job of actually washing the darned stuff'.

ID became even more unsettled when she was 'called to go to a local hospital' and was brought there by another woman from the laundry, 'because you were never let out on your own'. She described her travelling companion as 'a trustee' who 'came everywhere with us, whether you were going

to the dentist or the doctor'. At the hospital ID recalls that she was 'brought in and put on a bed and given an injection. And sometime later I woke up, very groggy, took me a while before I could sit up, another few minutes before I could actually put my feet on the floor. And then I gradually came to, and I sat there until somebody came in and said "OK, you can go back now"'. ID is certain this happened between six to eight times but does not know who authorised this treatment. She reflected: 'Did I consent to it? If I signed a form, then I did, but I would not have had a clue what form I was signing. Nor why I was signing it, because at that time when you were told to sign a form, you signed the form, because it was only either my mother or the nuns to tell me this and both of them were, were my, my controllers'. She never received any medical feedback on this and speculates about whether there are any surviving hospital records about her treatment. ID also wonders if this 'was something that the nuns did to young women who had had two children or more'. If so, she 'would like to know, on what grounds they felt they had the right to do this. Was this supposed to put us off sex?' This is an aspect of her treatment during her stay in the Good Shepherd convent that ID hopes can be investigated further, an exercise that would involve a search for any surviving medical files. ID was aware that as the mother of two babies outside marriage she was viewed as particularly transgressive, not least because she recalls a nun in the second mother and baby home telling the other expectant mothers that this was the case. An act that ID described as 'petty nastiness'.

During her testimony, ID offered reflections on the 'trustee' that took her on the hospital visits that were related above. ID described 'the layers' of women within the Good Shepherd convent:

> *There were the unmarried mothers, then there was the women who worked in the laundries, and then there was a group called Magdalenes, who weren't nuns but wore habits like the nuns. She was not one of those, she was simply a trusted ordinary worker, who if she had no jobs to do would work in the laundry, with everybody else. But if something had to be done outside, she was the one who did it.*

ID deduced that this woman had come through the laundry system herself 'but possibly had no place to go to and had decided she would stay there because at least it was a guaranteed roof over her head. And goodness knows what options she too had had in her time, because, to me she was an old woman; she was probably forty'. ID's observations can be juxtaposed with S1's comments about the role of trustees, or auxiliaries, within the St Mary's home as well as P1's insights on the Magdalenes.

ID returned to the world outside the Good Shepherd convent one Christmas when she was removed to a laundry closer to her hometown, in the Republic of Ireland, and spent 'five or six weeks' there … and 'then I was allowed home and life went on'.

SC

SC also came forward to offer testimony to the researchers.[978] She has been scarred deeply by her experiences, both in a Good Shepherd laundry and the children's home in which she was raised by a separate order of nuns. SC's account further illuminates the issue of the suitability of sending anyone, particularly a traumatised teenage girl, to work unpaid in a laundry, particularly given the institutionalised nature of the much older women in the existing laundry workforce. Her testimony

978 Interview with SC, conducted by Olivia Dee, 17 November 2018.

also addressed the issue of the state's role in placing girls and women in the laundries and in tracking them down when they ran away. It also provides further insight into the unpaid labour carried out in the laundries. SC raises issues relating to her missing tax and national insurance contributions and worries about the impact of this on her future state pension. She also provides testimony that, by the 1970s, 'pocket money' was paid to the girls and women labouring in the Good Shepherd laundries.

SC was sent to a Good Shepherd laundry after she ran away from the children's home in which she had spent her childhood. She was sixteen and believes that she was the 'third youngest or second youngest' in the laundry at that point. She described the laundry as 'just a sweatshop' and recalled working 'from about eight o'clock in the morning [until]. I am sure it was until about four or half-four in the afternoon' and that 'they didn't give us any pay or nothing. I think they were actually getting paid for us to be there, but they weren't giving us like a wage as such. It would probably be about £2 a week if that'. This was to be spent on toiletries, bought during the weekly trip out of the laundry on Saturday afternoon: 'We'd be out once a week and … we would have to pay for our own toiletries out of that'.

Like ID, SC discussed the unease she felt on her arrival when seeing the advanced age of some of the other laundry workers and her concern that, like them, she would be kept in the St Mary's home for the rest of her life:

> *I went there and I just, I sort of panicked a bit because when they brought me down to the, where everybody was, there was a lot of old women there … so I just, it was hard to explain, sort of, I went within myself because I didn't like this place and I thought 'I'm not going to stay here for life'. And I was panicking in case … I would be there all the time. Do you know what I mean? It's like wanting your freedom and you can't have it. You had no choice. So I didn't speak to a lot of people at all. I went very, very withdrawn.*

SC's sense of confusion was heightened by the fact that when she was taken to work in the laundry she 'hadn't a clue where I was going'. She recalled the home as being 'in the middle of nowhere. They picked a good place to hide it, put it that way, you know what I mean'.

Later in her testimony, SC explained that as her stay in the St Mary's home continued, she learned more about some of the older women working in the laundry and felt that 'probably what had happened, a lot of these women who had parents shunned them out: "you don't come back home". They had their babies and they were just put down there and that was it. So then it was a way of life for them. They just got institutionalised, used to it'. SC could empathise with this because her own move from a children's home, also operated by nuns, to the Good Shepherd laundry left her feeling that 'I was already institutionalised with my upbringing and then for it to happen again, you know'.

SC remembers that the experience in the St Mary's home was 'horrible' and that 'you couldn't be yourself, you couldn't speak your mind, you couldn't speak your voice, if that makes any sense'. She felt that all that the Sisters wanted from her time in the St Mary's home 'was to work in the laundry'. Her first role in the laundry was in the packing room, which SC described as 'quite cold and dark and it was horrible, and you know like concrete floors'. She thinks she must have done well at that because 'then they put me in a dry cleaner's part. And then they moved me from there into the laundry … on a Hoffman Presser, like what you'd see in a dry cleaners, you know. And you'd be doing clothes and you'd be pressing it down, the steam would be coming up, you know. And that's

what I stayed doing then, just doing that all day. So everybody had their individual jobs as such'. As well as this, the girls and women 'had to do all the cleaning, besides that in the home, we done all the cleaning. The dishes, whatever needed doing, we had to do it, besides working in the laundry'.

SC did recall that there was a 'smoke room' and that she 'would go in there and have a smoke and that. And I'd come in with a guitar and just play the guitar and pass the time away when I had the time, if you know what I mean'. She also remembered the segregation between the St Mary's women and the residents of the neighbouring mother and baby home: 'when we used to go to mass, they'd sit us in first and the mothers, the mothers that were expecting babies, they would come behind so we couldn't see them. It was like we were separated, weren't allowed any communication. I don't know if they were trying to put across 'don't speak to them'. You know, like making the mothers feel ashamed. Do you know what I mean?'

SC describes running away from the laundry with two other teenage girls. She thinks that this was after she had been there for about six months. The trio 'ended up going to Belfast and then we got the boat from the docks to Liverpool'. On arrival there, they were detained by police officers. SC was unclear what powers were used to hold her on this occasion, but it is possible it was due to her being under eighteen and under the supervision of a care order that had led to her incarceration in the St Mary's home. It is not known if this was also true of SC's two fellow runaways. Such a care order, made the authorities responsible for her care, which involved tracing her if she disappeared from any home in which she was placed. Like a number of the cases discussed earlier, SC's experience raises fundamental questions about whether or not the laundry regime and environment was a fit and proper location to send a traumatised teenage girl. The HIAI was critical of this policy.

One further area of SC's testimony addresses broader concerns about the nature of the Good Shepherd laundries. She explained that she is concerned about the financial implications of the unusual status she was placed in while working in the laundry because she was neither paid nor recognised by the state as an employee:

> *we didn't receive money. So what happens when I'm pension age? Have I got enough stamps to cover me? I don't know. We didn't have a wage slip saying right there's … we didn't have a wage slip saying, right, your tax and insurance is paid. So there's nothing … So I'm panicking when I hit sixty-five, or is it sixty-seven, I don't know, am I going to have enough stamps to cover my pension? They're liable for that, I'm not.*

VV

VV offered testimony from the perspective of someone who had lived in one of the Sacred Heart homes for school-age girls, which operated within the St Mary's homes during the late 1950s and early 1960s.[979] As such, she did not work in the laundry. However, she observed and met with those that did and also offered some information based on her sister's experience as one of those who did work in the laundry. VV's testimony includes discussion of matters relating to: the segregation and hierarchies that existed within the closed world of the Good Shepherd convent; the secrecy that was encouraged amongst the residents of the various homes within the convent; the sense of shame

979 Interview with VV, conducted by Ida Milne, 5 June 2018.

that VV felt was attached to sexuality within the convent; and the extent to which the convent could be a refuge for a young girl seeking to escape domestic violence. VV's testimony also indicates that in the late 1950s and early 1960s, at least some school-age girls in the St Mary's Home had separate quarters from the older women. Moreover, they went out each day to school and, based on VV's time in the institution, did not carry out work in the laundry. However, laundry work and all it symbolised still looms large in her testimony.

VV approached the researchers to offer testimony on her experience of living in a Good Shepherd convent during her childhood. She was resident there, in the years that coincided with her secondary school education, because of domestic violence in her home and the breakdown of her parents' marriage. After her mother left home VV's sister was taken into care via a court order, VV entered a home for girls within the local Good Shepherd convent. She made this choice herself, contacting Social Services to request it because she was experiencing domestic violence. VV is not sure whether or not the state paid for her place in the home.

VV's testimony reflected on the range of distinct institutions that functioned on the Good Shepherd site. She lived in a children's home, during the late 1950 and early 1960s, with a small number of other girls. She recalled the congregation called the Magdalenes (who were discussed above by P1). They 'wore a brown uniform, they lived separately'. VV explained that they 'made altar breads and did embroidery for priests, cardinals and bishops'. The only time she encountered them was at Mass. There was also the laundry and its workers and a mother and baby home, from which VV and her group were separated entirely. This was reflected in the seating arrangements at Mass, which mirrored those described for each of the Good Shepherd convents: 'we would go in our section, the girls in the Class [the laundry women] would go in another section, and nuns and other people in another section. We could all see the mass, but there was something in between that we couldn't see each other. You know we weren't all together'. Another group with whom VV had no interaction were the women in the mother and baby home, also located on the convent site. She reflected that 'there was a sense of shame around us all, I should say that … but with the mother and baby home there was more of a sense of shame'. This sense of shame was amplified by the insistence that secrets must remain hidden and this was enforced by strict rules on communication. VV explained that the young school girls 'were not allowed to talk to anybody in the laundry … in fact, you were not allowed to talk to each other. Secrecy. And prohibition about talking about yourself even, was the order of the day, which, we just accepted'.

VV explained that she experienced security when entering the convent because she was escaping 'a chaotic home life'. This meant she accepted the alienating elements of convent rules and rituals: 'I probably took to this life, and I had no complaints about it at the time … it's a measure of how horrible my own family life was'. Her own experience in the convent led her to describe the regime as a largely benign one: 'you might be told off about this and that, but there was nothing, no cruelty or anything like that'.

Speaking about the St Mary's home women, VV speculated that 'there might have been sixty of them. There were quite a lot of women, young girls, women, elderly women who were in what we called the class, the class was the laundry … a lot of them were teenagers, a lot of them were other ages in between'. She remembered that the nuns closely monitored the girls and women at certain points: 'When the bread man was delivering, the nuns watched you like a hawk. I think they thought

you were going to run off with a bread man'. She explained that a lot of her terminology was picked up from the nuns. She referred to 'the big recreation room' and 'the big silence, which was at night': a reference to the prohibition placed on talking to each other placed on the girls and women at night time.

VV explained the level and type of interaction the girls in the children's home had with the various other residents of the Good Shepherd convent. This took place via snatched conversations on the walk to Mass or when the laundry women came through to measure VV and the other schoolgirls for dresses made for special occasions. The schoolgirls also joined the laundry girls and women for films: 'when there was a picture showing, we would meet … in the laundry's big hall, because, well they showed the picture and they showed to all of us, and of course, most of the times it was *How Green is My Valley* or *Boystown* or something the nuns thought was brilliant'.

During one of the encounters with the 'girls from the class', VV heard 'a brilliant, brilliant story', which she narrated:

> *[The women took their bras] which they'd washed, and put them on these two spheres which were meant for bishop, for priests' birettas, or other head gear of maybe … of maybe cardinals or something … So these women would put their bras, for a laugh, it was done consciously for a laugh, but it was obviously subversion, on top of these to get their bras done. I just think that's a brilliant story, but it is a second-hand story, but I like to think it happened. So it shows you, you know, well, it shows you a bit of the humour, you know, I think, but it's very sad too.*

VV recalled what she called 'trustees', by which she meant the auxiliaries that S1 described in her interview. It appears that in VV's convent, their role extended to escorting other girls and women to dental or hospital appointments. VV located them as part of a culture where some had 'more status' in the laundry and that some 'had more freedom to go out and in than others'. She recalls that they 'wore a kind of a uniform. Now they weren't nuns and I think that was connected to the Children of Mary'. The uniform was 'like of blue, of course it was blue'.

Discussing the new names that those in 'the class' received, VV's understanding was that this 'was connected with … something awful had happened in your life. Like you were raped, you know or even just you were regarded as a teenager, a wayward teenager. Which … was their thinking at the time'. She also felt that some of the laundry women were ill-equipped for life and were people 'who found the world difficult, or who were in difficult circumstances'. VV felt that the laundry meant that their world was 'structured' for them. As she was doing well at school and was determined to 'be good', VV explained 'that there was never a suggestion that I should go into the laundry … there was never, ever the slightest talk of me going into the laundry'. However, her younger sister did move from a children's home into the laundry at the age of fifteen. VV felt unable to speak on behalf of her sister but she maintained that her sister told her that 'she wasn't badly treated but how she arrived in the laundry is another matter. And, it's really all I can say'. She did add that 'I can't really say the circumstances you know … but she was only there a year or two, she wasn't there long term. But I think it was that they were kindly, they were kindly to her. She was one of the younger ones'.

When reaching adulthood, VV had to consider her options and the prospect of the St Mary's home must have loomed among them 'because I was just staying on, and on' in the convent. This was due to strong reservations about leaving and going back to the family home and her father's violent outbursts. When VV did eventually return home she recalled thinking 'this is brilliant. Thinking the

food was brilliant, thinking it was great to make yourself a cup of tea. Thinking ... and going to dances were an absolute joy, an absolute joy,' She also recalled the strict barriers she imposed on her teenage leisure, especially around sex and linked this to her time with the Good Shepherd Sisters:

> *Now I was obsessed, again ... had to be like Mary. I must be a virgin when I get married, so instead of looking for somebody to marry, that, you know, would I get on with them, I was, I was ... I did marry for love as it happened, but our whole courtship was conducted with me absolutely being directed by: I must not get ... I was absolutely clear I must not get pregnant, I must not have sex, I must be a virgin getting married, and I think that was all connected with the cult of the Virgin Mary, being with the nuns ... I mean I can remember, reading pamphlets and really trying to, you know, internalise them. You Too Can Be a Saint. A CTS pamphlet, a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet ... and I now, with hindsight from other things I have read, I now think those particular nuns, that particular Order of nuns were associated with what they call penitents, and in fact some of the, the girls in 'the class' are sometimes referred to as penitents, I didn't know what it meant then. But I think there always was that whiff of, and especially with teenage girls, you could get into trouble, they are saving you from yourself. There was something in that about it, even though I was totally innocent and had done nothing.*

Reflecting on her time in the convent, VV acknowledges that the term penitents – used to indicate the laundry women – was 'used unthinkingly'. She elaborated: '... now that I'm reading books about this, I know the significance of penitents'. They were called 'the girls' and VV thought this term was 'to do with, again like a, autonomy, infantilisation, you know, the girls. No, you see some of them would have been old. They would have looked after them 'til they died. They could have spent practically all their lives there'.

In her concluding comments VV repeated her view that the nuns had looked after her well in the children's home attached to the St Mary's Home. However, she did speculate that there had been 'probably a lack of regulation around how you came to be in the laundry'; a perspective that may draw upon the experiences of her sister which she did not feel comfortable sharing.

DL

DL's testimony can be very clearly juxtaposed with that of VV. It offers a different perspective on the themes that VV discussed.[980] Her father's employment brought him into regular contact with one of the Good Shepherd convents during the 1950s and 1960s. The family also lived close to the convent and DL recalls her father telling his children 'not to speak to "the wee girls", as we called them'. These were 'the girls who were put into the convent'. Her father explained 'that the nuns had said that we weren't to talk to the girls because they were "bad girls", as he put it'. It is likely that the 'wee girls' that DL encountered were the younger girls, such as VV, who were housed in the part of the St Mary's home that housed schoolgirls.

However DL's family also believed that 'a lot of young girls were, were put in the convent to work in the Magdalene laundries because the local priest in their parish had told their mother, or their parents, that the girls were too pretty and they would end up getting pregnant, so it was best to put

980 Interview with DL, conducted by Olivia Dee, 23 November 2018.

them into the convent to work in the laundries'. DL explained that, years later, she discussed this with a priest and that 'he concurred with that … it wasn't a surprise to him when I told him, when I, when we discussed this'. Whether or not there was any truth in this belief, the fact that this sort of perspective circulated in the wider community reflects the powerful and influential role of the Catholic priest in these matters.

From DL's family home it was possible to observe who entered and left the Good Shepherd convent. She recalls that the gates were locked at 10pm. She witnessed police officers 'bring girls in who were found on the streets or wherever, I don't really know'. The police would shine their torchlight at the gatekeeper's bedroom window and he had to get up to let them in.

DL still lives in the area and occasionally encounters women who formerly worked in the laundry and lived in the St Mary's home. They are now in their seventies or older. One woman is sometimes to be found in a local laundromat helping to fold the dry clothing and DL feels that 'these people were just put out to society and they didn't know anything different, and I don't know the ins and outs of how that all happened. But I certainly know that people who were living in the convent suddenly found themselves out living in society'.

JP

JP offered a rare perspective, in that she actually spent time as a paid employee in a Good Shepherd laundry when she was a teenager in the 1970s.[981] Her testimony can be juxtaposed with that of S1 who explained that greater state funding of the St Mary's homes in the 1970s funded the employment of staff who came into the laundry each day from outside the three Good Shepherd convents. JP described the range of women she encountered in the laundry. It also describes the payment of pocket money to the St Mary's women rather than wages. While this represented an improvement on matters prior to that, it raises a significant question about how employees from outside the convent were paid for their work whilst the St Mary's girls and women remained uncompensated. As was seen in SC's testimony (above) this also has implications around national insurance contributions and pensions as well as the continuing social justice issues surrounding the use of an unpaid labour force, many of whom did not enter the laundry of their own free will.

JP travelled to the convent each day from her family home. Initially, she was put to work in the washroom. Later on, she was moved to the presser and also worked on priest's vestments. JP also recalled the washing from local hotels that was laundered by the Good Shepherd Sisters' workforce. JP explained that there was a 'head lady' in charge of the laundry work. She was also a paid employee who came into to work in the convent each day. However, the majority of the workforce were 'girls there who were in it, who were not married and having children [it is assumed she meant they had already had their children] and little girls that were kind of, what you say, slow with learning disabilities and older, older people'.

JP recalled one woman who 'was a bit slow' who was delegated to 'to teach me how to use the machine, you know the hand-held machine?' JP was then moved to the calendar machine, which involved working in a pair, with another woman, to 'feed the sheets into the big machine'. At one

981 Interview with JP, conducted by Olivia Dee, 18 September 2018.

point, she worked alongside a young woman from the Republic of Ireland who had recently had a baby ‘a week or two before’. JP reported that this woman’s stay was a short one. JP also recalled working with another young woman who had been moved to this laundry from a children’s home in a different part of Northern Ireland. She also remembered one of the older women who was given the nickname Annie Oakley because she ‘was a wee bit disabled, she used to run round with a gun [an imaginary one] shooting you’. Another woman JP recalled was ‘a bit disabled, you know, she’s out in the community now, not far from where I live’.

JP described the separate entrances into the laundry for the workers who came from outside and the women who were resident within the convent complex. The latter were ‘like a herd of cows and when they were coming in, they were coming in like that herded together, and you could see their face you know’. She explained that ‘when you worked in it you only knew their first name’. The nuns ‘did not want you to interact with or to bother with the girls … you weren’t really allowed to talk’. However, this instruction could be circumvented and JP described how she engaged in conversation with the woman who was designated to train her on the use of the laundry machinery. From these interactions, JP learned that the nuns ‘gave them wages, something very little. It wasn’t very much, £2’. This was a reference to the ‘pocket money’ that was discussed by SC and S1, as well as in the HIAI Report.

The woman who taught JP how to use the machinery told her that the nuns ‘weren’t bad to her’. However, JP felt that this viewpoint should be tempered by the fact that the woman concerned had a learning disability. She described other St Mary’s home women as appearing more nervous and fearful. Overall JP’s experience of the laundry was that it was ‘very cold, very, you know what I mean, it, they didn’t, there was no, just do the work and out, they were very cold, it was a very cold environment you know … I was not used to treating people with coldness and it was like a, an army, you know, military’. This negative verdict is shared by one of the former laundry residents who JP encounters occasionally. This woman, who now lives independently was brought to the laundry at a very young age. JP explained that ‘she meets me in *location redacted* and she’d say to me “that was a bad place”’.

JP revisited the site of the convent in recent years and described the ‘eeriness’ she felt and the prayer that she offered up in the chapel. She believes that the state should have taken a greater interest in how these laundries operated: ‘maybe, you know, they were providing a service because we were pregnant, or any victim, or older people, but the end of the day they should have looked up into what was going on in them places’. This was a reference to the fact that JP does not recall seeing inspectors visit the laundry during the time in which she was a paid employee.

OC

A number of testimonies were also offered by family members of women who had spent a considerable amount of time in one of the Good Shepherd laundries.[982] OC spoke about her deceased mother’s experience of life in a Good Shepherd laundry and her subsequent attitudes towards the institution and the nuns who operated it. It is a complex testimony that throws light on a number of issues. This includes: the use of a St Mary’s home to hold a teenage victim of rape; the

982 Interview with OC, conducted by Olivia Dee, 10 May 2019.

role of families and parish priests in the confinement of young girls and women in Good Shepherd convents; the strong relationships that were established between some laundry workers and the Sisters; issues around departure from the laundry and how it was made possible; the role of trusted St Mary's residents (or auxiliaries); the cross border movement of women by the Good Shepherd Sisters; and the fate of women who spent a lifetime in the laundry system because they had no family to 'claim them'.

OC's mother was repeatedly raped until, at the age of fourteen in 195*, she became pregnant. The culprit was a labourer who worked on her father's farm. Her father, a widower, was a heavy drinker who was often in the local pub rather than at home. OC explained that her mother 'didn't know anything about the birds and bees' and only became aware that she was pregnant when her parish priest appeared at her school gates and drove her, without explanation, to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. After the birth of her baby son, who was adopted, OC's mother was placed in one of the St Mary's homes and began work in its laundry. She remained there for seven years (from the age of 14 to 21) even though she wrote repeatedly to her father asking to be taken home. He only agreed to this when he 'was on his death bed'. OC was not entirely certain about what happened to the man who raped her mother. She thinks he was sacked, but not prosecuted. A second daughter who also lived on the farm was taken into residential care, but a son was left in the family home with his father.

OC explained that her mother remembered her time in the St Mary's home with some positivity and that as far as she was concerned 'it offered her stability and security. She had three lovely meals a day, clean bed to sleep in. Her life, as she put it, was far better in the home, than it would ever have been at home'. In this respect, the convent offered an escape from an inattentive father and the rapist farmhand and, as such, was the better of the grim options. This positive view, held by OC's mother, was despite the alienating aspects of life in the St Mary's home that she described. She explained that 'the nuns had an order of silence' and that 'they couldn't talk'. So they 'worked alongside one another but there was no conversation during the day'. She also told OC that 'yes, you did work hard, but it wasn't really that hard work'. In this respect, she compared her work in the laundry with what she had been expected to carry out at home following her own mother's death.

Her mother also told OC that 'never ever, ever, did she hear anybody complain about abuse or say they were abused, or did she witness anything'. Her conviction on this point was illustrated in an anecdote that OC related: 'I can remember watching The Magdalene Sisters on the television when it came out, and she went ballistic and wanted me to turn it off, and said "none of that happened, that's a disgrace". And she was very adamant about it … to the day she died, she still wouldn't watch any of those kind of programmes, because she said that wasn't her experience'.

After her father gave his permission for OC's mother to leave the laundry, she worked for a professional couple as their childminder and housekeeper. This was arranged by the Good Shepherd Sisters and she worked for this family in the years before her marriage. After marriage she moved to the Republic of Ireland where her family was raised. Many years later she asked OC to drive her to a meeting with two elderly nuns who she knew from the St Mary's home. OC recalls that personally she was sceptical: 'I would have watched The Magdalene Sisters, I would have read a lot about people's testimonies and stuff. And I was actually reading a book, as it happens, about a person's story who had been in a Magdalene laundry at the time my mother broke the news to me'. OC was surprised by what she witnessed during the encounter with the nuns:

> *I would have been sceptical that the nuns would have been treating mum the way she said, you know? That it couldn't have been that good, you know, all these people can't be wrong and you're right? But when I went down and witnessed first-hand the welcome that they gave her, and said: "Where have you been all these years? We lost contact". And they were so genuinely delighted. They both cried. And we stayed overnight and we had a lovely chat.*

The two elderly nuns explained the nature of their relationship with the women placed in the convent: one said "Look, you know, that was just the way it was. We weren't allowed to have relationships with the girls. We weren't allowed to talk to them". OC believes that a lot of the nuns 'didn't even know the background as to why the women were in, so they wouldn't have known that Mum was one that was raped – unless Mum told her that, which Mum wouldn't have been able to tell her, and wouldn't have known the words to tell her'. This is an observation which raises questions about the placement of traumatised girls and women in the isolated and regimented laundry where the Sisters were not directed to cope with their difficult personal histories.

During one of their visits to the nuns, in 2007, OC's mother encountered a woman who had been in the mother and baby home with her fifty year earlier. She had also been placed in a Good Shepherd laundry after the birth of her child and had somehow been relocated to a residential home linked to the Good Shepherd Sisters in the Republic: 'she never got out. She stayed with the nuns. I suppose she became institutionalised. Nobody wanted her back – nobody would pay for her to come back and, sure, she couldn't survive on her own, so the nuns are still caring for her. And I'm sure there are others'. Despite the warmth she felt towards the two Good Shepherd Sisters, OC's mother acknowledged that 'she was lucky to get out'. The convent was a place of safety for her, in the context of the rapes she had suffered in her family home, rather than somewhere she would have chosen to live if circumstances were different. It seems that OC's mother was fortunate that her father relented and was willing to see her leave the laundry, albeit after seven years. By comparison, the woman she met all those years later in the care home had, in the words of the Good Shepherd Sisters, 'no one to claim her'. OC explained that after hearing this 'I just couldn't stop thinking afterwards: that could have been Mum. It really, it really affected me in the sense, like, that none of us could have been here? That Mum could have been left to, sort of, you know, wither away really and have no quality of life, you know?'

In conversations with her mother, OC amassed quite a detailed understanding of her life in the Good Shepherd laundry. OC described how fascinated she was by how 'ingratiated she became with the nuns'. She was given a new name, which involved a very slight alteration to her Christian name. It is clear the OC's mother became a trusted resident within the St Mary's home – an auxiliary (as explained above in the testimony of S1). Not only was she engaged in the laundry, where 'she did the ironing mostly', but she also was given responsibilities in relation to the mother and baby home that was part of the convent. Before Vatican II, the Good Shepherd Sisters was a closed Order. OC's mother found herself, as 'a good girl who always did what she was told', under instruction to 'bring the babies – on a bicycle – to the train station and bring them to … a children's home'. On her return to the convent she might find that she 'had to share the dormitory with the mother who you've just given their baby away – and you know you're told you can't say anything. And she didn't say anything. And so she did that on a regular occurrence'.

In terms of the other routines in the convent, OC's mother's day began at 6 am with Mass. After breakfast, work began. This left its mark on her, as OC recalled her mother constantly telling her "You're not ironing that sheet correctly". This had to be done right 'and they had to be starched and

she was very proud of it. Proud of her work, I suppose'. OC also felt that the silence imposed on her in the laundry had a long term impact as she was 'silent for so long that when she got out she'd never stop talking. So, like, we'd go as kids to the local town to go shopping ... And Mum would speak to everybody she met. A twenty minute or half an hour trip to the shops turned into, like, about three, four hours ... The silence probably drove her into the opposite'.

HT (and DT)

HT is another individual whose mother spent a long period in a Good Shepherd laundry.[983] In her case, she did not leave and tragically died in the early 1980s after twenty-five years in a St Mary's home. Moreover, this meant that HT never had the opportunity to meet with her. HT was the youngest of her children and she became resident within the walls of the St Mary's home, following his birth. Along with his siblings, HT was raised in a children's home and feels that his status as the child of a Good Shepherd laundry woman led to his poor treatment in the home, where he encountered vicious comments such as 'your mother was a mortal sinner'. This attitude was reflected in the nature of the duties the young HT was assigned in the home: his task was to clean the toilets used by 'maybe fifty or sixty boys'. Furthermore, during his childhood he was not informed that he had brothers and a sister. HT's testimony also raised a number of other concerns. These included: the nature of the work that the St Mary's women carried out and the extent to which they were prepared (or not) for independent living outside the convent; the impact of the Good Shepherd's policy of discretion and secrecy on the families of the women who worked in the laundries; and the inaccurate naming of his mother on her tombstone.

HT explained that as a young adult, when he was arranging his marriage, he applied for his birth certificate and began to ask questions about his mother. He approached one of the nuns in his former children's home, who told him "Oh you don't need to know anything". In retrospect, he feels insulted by what he deemed to be a dismissive response to his quest to find out more about her background. HT did eventually learn more about his mother, following her death. He received a phone call to inform him of her passing and to provide details of the requiem mass that was to be held at the Good Shepherd convent where his mother spent the last twenty-five years of her life. Sometime later, her decided to visit his mother's grave and managed to identify 'the communal grave for the Good Shepherds' but could not find his mother's resting place. Eventually, he found a headstone with the name of a woman who died on the same date and realised that the memorial had an incorrect surname for his mother. After making a complaint, the Catholic diocese subsequently informed him that the mistake was 'too expensive to change'. HT eventually ensured an alteration was made to the headstone by involving a solicitor. Reflecting on his exchange of letters with the Good Shepherd Sisters, HT said 'the letters you see here. I find them very defensive, they didn't want to know really'.

As the Good Shepherd Sisters explained in their responses to this research project and in their evidence to the HIAI, they closely guard the secrets and privacy of the women who passed through their mother and baby homes and laundries. In some respects this is commendable and it is clear that this is the wish of most women involved, but it is also the cause of distress to their family

983 Interview with HT (who was accompanied by his wife, DT), conducted by Ida Milne, 8 June 2018.

members. In this case, as a result of the inadequate levels of communication about his mother, HT has been left to speculate about her life and how she came to enter the laundry: 'the nuns did not want us to get in contact with our mother. I am just assuming now that … we were not allowed to be adopted, because she would not sign, and that is why she was kept in there, you know – I am not saying that is a fact – and that is why she was kept in there'. HT's view is certain that his mother did not want to be resident in the laundry and suspects that 'with the passage of time, she had no confidence to go out anywhere. That is why I wrote the letter asking what did they do to help her, establish her, and help her family?' This is a reference to a letter that HT wrote to the Good Shepherd Sisters asking them what they had done to prepare her to 'stand-alone' outside the convent. In reply he was informed that his mother 'chose to go in, there was not any order, you know there was no court order, no social services order, she chose to be there and had a happy life'. HT found that difficult to grasp as it 'made me feel she didn't want me, and she was happy to be in there'. However, he is distrustful of this information and unwilling to accept it at face value. Moreover, HT was told by a barrister that his mother might have thought it was necessary to work in the laundry to pay for the upkeep of her children in their Catholic residential homes.

HT reflected on the impact his mother's disappearance on his life and how the lack of communication from the Good Shepherd Sisters compounded his trauma. His wife (KT) suggested that he 'is very quiet you know, and I think it is just his nature. He doesn't want to remember, you know. And I sometimes think he has got a bad memory. You develop a bad memory just so you don't have to remember horrible things'. At the conclusion of his testimony HT noted, sadly, that 'I can't really give you anything about my mother, other than these certificates here [a reference to death certificates etc.]'. For him there are many unanswered questions:

> *why she was in there so long … what did they do to help her? Was it for the benefit of the nuns to get free work? Because their working in the laundry obviously was a business … I think there's a money-making exercise, it was a business they were running, really, I don't think it was a charity … the only people who seem to be benefitting is the nuns through the labour of the women, rather than helping them to get on their feet, and I don't know how you explain it whether its Social Services could establish them in the community and get them more confidence and run their own lives.*

His mother worked in the laundry from 'the day I was born to the day she died … that's what annoys me … she could have been helped, she needed help and they didn't help did they?'

PT

PT is another who offered testimony that featured frustration around the secrecy and inadequate communication about the life of a relative who spent several decades in one of the Good Shepherd Sisters' laundries.[984] In this case, PT is the niece of a woman who spent up to forty years with the Good Shepherd Sisters. Issues addressed by this interviewee include: the role of families in the placement of women in a laundry; the role of auxiliaries within the laundries; the institutionalisation of women in the St Mary's homes; the control that, PT believes, the nuns exerted over the laundry

984 Interview with PT, conducted by Olivia Dee, 2018

women, extending even into their lives in retirement homes; the arrangement of their possessions after death; and the fact that the wider community (business and schools) used the Good Shepherd laundries and had knowledge of how the system operated.

PT became aware of her aunt's existence a few years before the latter's death. Her aunt was born in the years just before the partition of Ireland, in a location close to the border. When she became pregnant outside marriage, she was, in PT's words, 'kind of thrown to the wolves because she got pregnant … family members … obviously have rejected her. I mean she … she was out of my life'. She discovered her aunt when going through her deceased mother's papers and made contact with her when she 'found the address … among my mother's things'.

Her aunt, who was unmarried, had a baby in a home in the Republic of Ireland before being sent to one of the Good Shepherd laundries north of the border and was there for 'probably forty years … It might not have been that long but it was a long time, because when I met her she was completely and absolutely institutionalised'. PT came to this view during the visits she made to her aunt during the final fifteen years of her life: 'she talked to me about working in the laundry, you know, she regarded it as a legitimate employment in spite of the fact that she didn't get any wages, as far as I know … I don't think any of them were paid'. During their meetings she recalls her aunt being on edge: 'If I asked her a question, she would look around like every corner of the room and listen, like … who's listening? Who's watching? And she never gave me any, like, straightforward [answers]'. In PT's view, her aunt's institutionalisation was evidenced by 'lots of tiny little things like, we used to take her out for lunch and so on, and she would be scared to … to order. She just went "That'll do me, that'll do me". You know? Like, I'm not entitled to a choice, just give me anything … she's developed over the years, believing that she's not deserving of making a choice'. PT gathered snippets of information in their conversations. It appears that her aunt was an auxiliary in the convent (see testimony of S1 for detail on this). Her aunt described how she 'she used to like run messages, going to collect prescriptions and things like that, for other members … she must have been trusted to not run away'. PT gained further insight into her aunt's life when she attended her funeral. It was a 'Catholic Mass and … there was a good few people there who would remember her. Now a few people said to me "we remember her delivering the laundry". PT recalled that those making these comments had links to 'hotels and schools probably, there would have been boarding schools'.

Visits to her aunt took place in a residential home in the grounds of the convent where her aunt formerly worked in the laundry. This continued her aunt's connection with the Good Shepherd Sisters as an institution. Moreover, PT felt that one of the Sisters was 'keeping an eye on her because when I visited her, you know, she was hanging around and even when my aunt was dying, I was in the room with her while she was dying and she was there as well. She never left'. In PT's view this was because 'she was afraid of what she would say, maybe even in her last dying moments'. This nun lived in the convent, not the residential home and PT said 'I've two conclusions: either she hung around there all the time or [only] … when I'm visiting'.

PT's aunt was 'absolutely delighted that she'd found family again' and she made PT her next of kin, meaning that for 'decisions about like any medical … they phoned me and, like get flu injections and all of that, I would give permission'. However, PT was concerned that 'when she died I wasn't allowed to see her will'. PT explained that this is when she came to see 'how much under their control she had been. She was controlled in life and they tried to control her in her death again'. PT believes that her aunt had named the Good Shepherd Sisters as beneficiaries in the will, but has still not seen it.

Following her aunt's death, the Good Shepherd Sisters gave PT the name of their regular undertaker and she organised the funeral. This company was surprised to be dealing with her, explaining that 'the nuns usually do this for the women, organise the burials'. PT concluded that 'most of them died without having family contact'. In discussing the burial location, PT explained that her aunt had expressed the desire 'to be buried with her mother'. However, she recalls that the Sister she dealt with replied "No. She's being buried with the rest of the women". PT explained that this involved her interment in a section of a local cemetery involving 'a graveyard with little crosses but no names'.

There are number of other issues that leave PT upset. She 'was annoyed' that her aunt was given a different name by the Good Shepherd Sisters. PT suggested that 'they may as well have given her a number'. She is frustrated that she cannot find out more information about her aunt's baby. The organisation holding the records of the mother and baby home in the Republic where her aunt gave birth, have not provided her with the information she desires and the Good Shepherd Sisters have told her 'that's confidential information'. On this matter she feels 'I can respect that in a way but, I mean, she's dead now'. Her unease about this was exacerbated by another issue: 'in her room, she had lots of photos, some of which I didn't recognise' and after her death they 'all disappeared'. When PT asked where they were, she was told 'they were probably just thrown out'.

In concluding her testimony, PT suggested that she was ambivalent about coming forward to offer an oral history interview to the researchers. She would like to see the Good Shepherd Sisters 'confronted', but, she continued, 'on the other hand, I remind myself where would those women have gone? You know, if they didn't have there to go? But once they were in there, you know they were … within their [the Sisters] power and they obviously made them feel like that … Even in their death'.

In considering how to apportion any blame to the fate of her aunt, PT again wrestled with the issues:

> *[families] did disown these women, there's no doubt about it … That's why it's so hard to … to analyse because I have to remind myself, where would she have gone if she didn't have the nuns? And then I say to myself, well because she'd nowhere to go is no excuse for them to treat her like a slave … And then again I blame my mother's family, but I can't blame them in isolation from the society in which they lived at that time.*

WB

WB came forward to offer testimony about her past contacts with a number of women who formerly worked in one of the Good Shepherd laundries.[985] She provided interesting commentary on issues such as: how the women came to be in the laundry; why they remained for decades and how they became institutionalised; the failures of the Good Shepherd Sister's system; the long term impact of being labelled as 'sinful' by becoming pregnant; and the efforts of social workers to help the women adjust to their new lives outside the care of the Good Shepherd Sisters.

WB encountered them in the residential home in which they lived after the closure of the St Mary's home. These women had 'been sent to the nuns when they were pregnant back in the fifties, sixties, seventies' and had then 'gone to work in the laundry' and also in 'the gardens' of the convent. She

985 Interview with WB, conducted by Olivia Dee, 27 March 2019.

argued that they were 'institutionalised' during their very lengthy period in the St Mary's home and WB felt this was continued after they left the laundry via daily contact with the nuns who lived close to the residential home.

Spending time with the women, WB found that 'they would come forward with their own stories. You didn't ask them, it's not your place'. One or two of the women 'had come from outside of the jurisdiction, they'd come from across the border. They still had, actually, quite strong southern accents as well' despite spending decades in Northern Ireland.

WB outlined how the organisation responsible for the residential home had 'tried to reclaim some aspects of these women's dignity and rights'. The women had their original names 'taken off them' when they entered the laundry … So, their identities were stripped'. However, social workers did research 'to try and recover their original names'. For the women this created 'absolute mayhem; all of a sudden you're allowed to be called by your original first name, which nobody's called you for forty years. So you've got used to the new one. So, there's a sort of pandemonium'. Another intervention by the social workers was in arranging for one woman to attend classes to learn 'how to read and write. She couldn't read and write. She couldn't count. Not because she, didn't have the ability, she'd never been taught. She was still illiterate in her seventies'. Once she had learned how to read and write, she 'was very proud of herself'. This is an example that chimes with the earlier testimony from P1, in which he suggested that the Good Shepherd Sisters did not do enough to prepare women for independent living. The example provided by WB suggests that this individual woman was not intellectually challenged adequately by the mundane tasks that she carried out for decades in the St Mary's home.

In WB's view the women were 'all regarded as vulnerable because they have been institutionalised all their lives. Some of them would've had mild learning disabilities', although one had 'pretty severe learning disabilities'. Some were much more capable than others of living with a degree of independence. There were around fifteen women in total during the time WB met with them, which was several years ago. At that point, their ages ranged from their late sixties to their early nineties.

WB was raised as a Catholic and understood some of the cultural contexts of the women's lives, observing that 'a lot of them would still be very religious, they'd still see themselves as children of God and, you know, the rules of the Church were right and you have to abide by the rules'. She observed that 'there would have been very little rebellion in them, you know?' Despite this, WB understood that 'they had all tried to escape at one point or other in their early days there, and they'd been either dragged back or come back voluntarily because they'd no money, or their families didn't want them, and they'd nowhere to go, nothing. Nowhere to eat, nowhere to sleep'. WB believed that most of these escapes occurred 'shortly after they'd had their children'. One woman told WB that she had run off and 'sat in the telephone box', but 'they sent the priest out, and a couple of nuns, and got her, found her and brought her back'. WB pointed out that it was hard for them because they had 'no money and [did not] know what legal situation they're in'. Moreover, none of them were from the local area and this created further difficulties for them if they did decide to abscond from the convent.

As well as discussing attempts to leave the laundry, the women spoke proudly about their work within it 'especially if they were doing any needlework or anything fancy … they'd be very proud'. They went into 'detail to describe to you what they did. If they were on ironing and folding, or if

they were on stitching, or if they were on boiling, possibly, whatever, and the machinery coming in, the different roles that they had. Or if they were on embroidery or something fancy, or collar work, you know'.

WB discussed what she understood was the high degree of control that the Good Shepherd Sisters had over the women during their time in the laundry and the afterlife of that paternalistic relationship, as both sets of women continued to live in close proximity and attend the same daily mass. WB even recalled that 'their whole dress code and all would've been very similar to the nuns'. For these reasons, the relationship between these women and the surviving nuns was 'very close'. In WB's opinion, 'the nuns were obviously in charge. Even later in life … when the nuns came [through the] French doors in the main day room, living room, in the residential unit,' the former laundry women 'would all sit up and tighten their legs, they would all sit up really straight … almost like you would do when you're a child and a strict teacher walks into the class'. Asked if there was any affection in the relationship, WB replied; 'In a kind of weird way, like that, what do you call that syndrome people have?' WB confirmed that she meant Stockholm syndrome.

In some cases, these former laundry women were traced by the children they gave birth to decades earlier and received visits by them in the residential home. WB recalled one woman saying of her son: "he's the reason why I'm here, that's my sin". WB understand that these views 'didn't start when they went to the nuns. That was already ingrained very deeply … they already would have been very faithful members of the Catholic Church'. WB noted 'the circumstances under which they would have got pregnant, quite often they would have had absolutely no control over', a reference to cases of rape and incest that made rhetoric about sinfulness even more unfair and unwarranted. Deeply ingrained perspectives, such as this, ensured that 'a lot of them actually dreaded their children coming to see them'.

WB also recalled a conversation with one of the women who kept herself informed by reading the *Irish News* every day. This elderly lady wondered aloud about how welfare state money had been spent in her case, observing that her daily newspaper was 'the only thing' purchased especially on her behalf. WB followed up this point and speculated about how welfare payments were spent. WB was aware that the Good Shepherd Sisters has purchased cemetery plots for the women but has concerns that the women may not have received all they were entitled to from the state. WB's suspicions are fed by her knowledge that the women were unpaid for their work in the laundry.

The women's lack of finances was a factor that tied them further to the Good Shepherd Sisters when the St Mary's home closed. In this regard, WB echoed the critique of the Good Shepherd laundries that has been articulated from the 1890s (see **Chapter 1** and **Chapter 12**). Both these sources had attacked the Good Shepherd laundries from a social justice perspective, pointing out that women left the laundry without any personal capital despite all their hard work. In addition, they had received limited practical training with which to compete in the labour market. The former St Mary's women that WB encountered had few options other than to move into the residential home on the convent site. WB explained the dynamics of this:

> *By that stage, when you think about it, say you're twenty years of age, you're pregnant, big shame on the family, massive. You're sent to the nuns, you're there, you're under their control. You're already a practising Catholic, you believe in the wrath of God and all the rules of the Church, and then you're sent to work in the laundry for your sins, and you're let know that, and*

then you do that all your life, and then the laundry is closed. The machines come in – they would talk about that, the change when the machines came in – and then they're old and they're more or less retired. And they're in this unit that they've lived in all their lives, what, where on earth, where do you go from there?

WB observed that 'if you live all your life in an institution, you've no access to a kettle, never made, cooking a meal or any of that, then you would not have those skills to cope with life on the outside'. There were 'no independent living skills under the nuns'. The extent of control over the women was such that WB was informed that when they lived in the laundry 'the women weren't allowed out. They weren't allowed to look at men. If a man came in to fix the machines they had to turn their, turn their backs and not look, to stare at the wall. They would have had an occasional day out in the summer, maybe'. WB's conversations with the women led to the conclusion that there was a lot of 'humiliation' within the laundry regime: 'it's just control isn't it? Control of people, it's just oppressiveness'. The women were 'robbed of their independence, they've been robbed of their identity, they've been robbed of their children, they've been robbed of their livelihood, their careers, their life choices, everything'.

WB also felt that it important to note that the women had been the victims of 'the financial abuse'. In WB's view the women suffered 'complete deprivation of freedom. Not only were they not paid for their work in the laundry, but they weren't paid their benefits due to them, anywhere near the amount'. She maintains that these women were 'were in slavery and imprisoned'.

XY

XY spoke to the researchers by telephone on a number of occasions.[986] She made it clear that she would be uncomfortable in taking part in a recorded interview but was willing to offer a written testimony of her account about her life in one of the Good Shepherd laundries. XY now lives independently in her own home.

Born in the late 1930s, XY explained that 'I never knew my parents or any of my relatives'. She believes that she was in a baby home for the first three years of her life before being placed in an orphanage. At the age of twelve, she was 'sent with another girl who was sixteen to a home for the elderly' in the Republic of Ireland. As XY describes it 'I got a job in the sewing room of the home but only stayed … for about six months before being sent back to *name of home redacted* following a difference of opinion with the elderly lady who was in charge of the sewing room.' Shortly after she 'was sent to work for a while on a family farm in *location redacted*, but this job did not last long as I couldn't milk the cows!' After these failed attempts to find work someone made a major decision on XY's behalf:

Then, when I was 16, I was told I was going across town to the Good Shepherd Convent … I remember very well the day I arrived at the Good Shepherd Convent. It was a lovely sunny spring day in March 195 and I walked carrying all my belongings in a little suitcase … with an older woman …. We weren't sure where we were going and had to keep asking directions.*

986 XY provided a short written statement to the researchers.

The older woman was obviously XY's escort for the journey as she left once a nun greeted them and offered them 'a lovely cup of tea and scones'. XY also recalls that the nun 'gave me a big hug and I immediately felt a warmth about her and the convent'. She explained that she was 'introduced to the girls in St Mary's who all seemed very happy'. Later on she met 'more of the girls including some I knew from *name of children's home redacted*, indicating that XY was following a well-trodden path between the children's home and the laundry. XY was told that she would be known by her middle name rather than her first name and her explanation for this was that it was 'because there was another girl there called *XY's first name redacted*'. This was not the conventional reason why names were changed: as all girls and women had their name altered on arrival. However, it is worth nothing that before her arrival at this particular St Mary's home, five girls or women were previously allocated XY's actual first name. The last of these arrived in 1944 and was still in the laundry when XY arrived in the 1950s.

XY wrote warmly about her time in the laundry, mentioning two nuns who were 'among my friends all the time I was there.' In the 1950s and 1960s she remembers it as 'a busy public laundry' with between '80-100 girls working in the laundry's different departments – the sorting room, the laundry room, the ironing room, the sewing room and the packing room.' XY explained that work was from '9am-5pm and it was hard work, but the atmosphere was great and we all enjoyed it.' She writes that there was radio playing during work but that sometimes 'we prayed and sang as we worked'.

In terms of recreation, XY remembers weekend trips to the seaside when the 'nuns brought big hampers with sandwiches, fruit, lemonade and tea and we all enjoyed a picnic.' In the autumn and winter there were 'evening classes for us – knitting and sewing, cooking, baking and typewriting.' She also recalled the musicals, such as HMS Pinafore and My Fair Lady that were 'performed for the local community'. This section of XY's testimony concluded with her view that the Sisters 'were all very good and kind to us. We were so well looked after, we were well fed and well dressed and we were happy.'

There was then a change of tone and it became clear that her time in the St Mary's home had included very unpleasant treatment by one of the Sisters who was put in charge of the St Mary's home and 'changed the whole atmosphere.' XY described what happened next:

> *Things changed however when a nun called Sister *name redacted* came to the Good Shepherd Convent .... Put in charge of St Mary's, she changed the whole atmosphere of the place. She was so strict and hard on us. She was narrow minded and had no heart. She took away all my confidence. She always told me I was a nobody. That I was stupid and would never be able to get a job. She treated the other girls in the same horrible way. She was the only Good Shepherd I encountered who demeaned me in this way.*

XY also related how many years later this Sister had apologised for her behaviour. However, given that so much of XY's testimony is so positive about the Good Shepherd Sisters, her revelation about this Sister is particularly notable. How did such an apparently inappropriate individual find herself placed in a key role in charge of the vulnerable girls and young women who worked in the Good Shepherd laundry?

Because she was 'keen to get away from the influence of Sister *name redacted*', XY explains that she found work outside the convent in the early 1970s in a variety of city centre shops. This lasted for three years before she returned to work in the laundry until its closure. She then worked in

a residential home looking after its elderly residents and then in the Good Shepherd Convent kitchen. Now retired, XY still does some voluntary work and calls into the Convent regularly, including each week for Sunday lunch. She lived in the Convent until the late 1980s when she moved to a flat. This was a disconcerting experience for her: 'I had been resident so long in the Convent, I felt completely alone. For the first time in nearly 40 years I was on my own. I was broken hearted and I had no confidence – Sister *name redacted* had taken it away.' However, later moves to other accommodation, most recently 'a beautiful two bedroom bungalow' have made XY 'very happy'.

XY also related how the Good Shepherd Sisters introduced her to a family 'who have become central to my life'. From the late 1960s, she was asked to babysit for a family who lived close to the Good Shepherd Convent and explains that they 'made me feel very welcome'. She is godmother to the child of one of the girls that she originally babysat and has been a guest at family weddings and celebrations.

Conclusions

This chapter and the three proceeding it have assembled material from a wide variety of sources and provide the first historical assessment of Magdalene laundries in the Northern Ireland context. It is clear that they operated in similar ways to laundries operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters and other religious orders in the Republic of Ireland. Their existence represented a catch-all solution to a wide range of issues identified by the state, members of the Catholic clergy and, in some cases, family members of the girls and women who spent time in the St Mary's homes in Belfast, Derry and Newry. They were home to women on probation, teenage victims of incest, alcoholic women without family support, women fleeing violent husbands, young women being punished, or 'morally reformed' following the birth of an illegitimate child, and teenage girls on the run from paramilitary rough justice. The wide spectrum of girls and women accepted into the St Mary's homes was in keeping with the Good Shepherd Sisters principle that no one deemed to be in need should be turned away by the Order.[987] However, any institution would struggle to deal adequately with such an array of complex human issues, let alone one where individual identity was removed and a regimented culture and monotonous work regime were the order of the day. This was particularly true for the period before the mid-1960s when few of the longer-standing Sisters had social work qualifications. In evidence to the HIAI the Good Shepherd Sisters explained how their policy was to offer mentorship and support for girls and women in the St Mary's homes. But this task must have been undermined somewhat by the policy of re-naming new arrivals, imposing silence at meal times and punishing infringements of their rules in a cruel and demeaning fashion as judged by the HIAI.[988]

However, the evidence indicates that the regime in the St Mary's homes and in their laundries became more benign from the late 1960s onwards as the result of factors that included the impact of more liberal Catholic ideology, following Vatican II, plus increasing financial support from the welfare state. It is clear, for example, that the Good Shepherd Sisters dropped the practice of giving 'class' names to new arrivals in 1970. The women who worked in the St Mary's home

987 HIAI, Chapter 21, Module 12. Col. 34

988 HIAI, Chapter 21, Module 12. Col. 155

laundries began to receive modest amounts of 'pocket money' during the 1970s, which they could spend on themselves. There were also increased educational opportunities, mainly in the form of evening classes, which enabled some of them to spend time away from the convent. These were improvements on the conditions experienced by the previous generations of St Mary's women. However, judging by the weekly timetable submitted by the Good Shepherd Sisters to the HIAI, their lives were still very regulated and restricted.

It is clear from the available oral testimony that, broadly speaking, two perspectives on life in the laundries emerge. The first, expressed by the majority, raise obvious concerns about unpaid labour and question why some women remained within the confines of the St Mary's homes for many decades. Women who experienced life in the laundries, such as ID and SC, described the fear they felt about their fate; they wondered if they were set to remain in the St Mary's home for decades like some of the elderly women they encountered around them. Others who gave testimony (HT and PT) and expressed their concerns about how their family members (a mother or an aunt) had, in their view, disappeared into the laundry several decades earlier. They also articulated frustrations about what they believe are limited explanations from the Good Shepherd Sisters about why this happened and about the personal histories of these relatives. All the oral testimonies, to varying degrees, offer regret that the laundry regimes existed in the form in which they did. This ranges from the Good Shepherd Sisters' remorse that, in their view, there was no economic alternative to girls and women working unpaid in the laundries, through to much more fundamental criticism of what others deem to have been a fundamentally exploitative practice. The evidence presented in the chapters on the St Mary's homes indicates that concerns about the financial and economic model (and its implication in terms of social justice) operated in the Good Shepherd laundries have been debated since at least the 1890s. However, there is no evidence that the state in Northern Ireland gave sustained consideration to these matters even though it benefitted from their existence; particularly during World War Two.

As this chapter indicates, the HIAI report also highlighted concerns, criticising several aspects of the regime that existed in the St Mary's homes and identifying cases that signify that they were an inappropriate destination point for young girls and for the victims of sexual abuse. The evidence collected for this report has highlighted how many of the concerns raised by the HIAI are equally relevant in terms of all categories of St Mary's home resident. There are also other issues. A priest (P2) who was familiar with one of the St Mary's homes, intimated that the women who worked in its laundry were not given enough preparation for independent living and remained within the home for too long. It is no surprise that this comment was offered because, as we saw in **Chapter 12**, similar points have been made by Catholic commentators since at least the 1890s.

However, taken overall, Priest 2's account is not critical of the Good Shepherds. The Sisters themselves expressed regret about the laundries but argue that their existence was the result of a lack of state funding for many of the girls and women who were placed in the St Mary's home. They also maintain that the women in these homes lived mainly happy lives. As we have seen, most testimonies discussed here differ from that perspective. However, a couple of testimonies share common perspectives with those of the Sisters. That from XY indicates that some former St Mary's home residents have some positive memories of their time in the laundry. Moreover, the testimony from OC, about her mother, indicates that she too appreciated the relationship with the nuns that she formed in a Good Shepherd laundry in the 1950s and early 1960s.

Surveying the discussion of the three St Mary's homes, in the previous three chapters and the oral testimony discussed within this chapter a number of conclusions are summarised here:

- Entrants to St Mary's Derry/Londonderry estimated at 1,000.
  - 55% remained for under 1 year.
  - 18% remained for between 1 and 3 years.
  - 12% remained for between 3 and 6 years.
  - 5% remained for between 6 and 10 years.
  - 16% remained for over 5 years – 108 women.
  - 2% remained between 10 and 25 years (this does not include a large number of women for whom no departure date is recorded).
  - 8% made multiple entries and exits.
  - 5% have no departure date against their name (many of these appear on the burial list supplied by the Good Shepherd Sisters).
  - 10% of Derry entrants aged 10-14.
  - 33% of Derry entrants were aged 15-17.
  - 28% of Derry entrants were aged 18-23
  - 9% of Derry entrants were aged 24-28
  - 5% of Derry entrants were aged 29-33
  - 7% of Derry entrants were aged 34-40
  - 4% of Derry entrants were aged 41-50
  - 4% of Derry entrants between 51 and 78.

- Entrants to St Mary's Belfast estimated at 1,358 (no figures for 1922-1931).
- Entrants to St Mary's Newry estimated at 458.
- Higher proportion of teenagers in the laundries than HIAI assumed.
- Women worked an extensive working week without pay.
- Limited available financial records suggest that laundries did not operate at substantial profits (although World War Two contracts boosted profits for those years). Although note observations in Chapter 12 on the significant cash reserves held, at least for 1973, by St Mary's Derry.
- State's use of the laundries during World War Two made it complicit with the system of unpaid labour in operation.
- Girls/women placed in laundries by welfare authorities, probation, police, parents, priests, other Catholic organisations
- Evidence of girls/young women being sent to a St Mary's home without their consent (seemingly at the direction of parents or a parish priest).
- Appropriateness of many placements questionable (as identified by HIAI – for example placement of victims of sexual abuse or and incest which effectively punished them).
- Humiliating punishments employed (particularly pre-1970 as identified by HIAI).
- Girls/women were moved between laundries/homes in Northern Ireland/Republic of Ireland.

- Girls/women were free to leave (subject to completion of any relevant probation/protection orders) usually after consultation with Sister in Charge.
- Significant number of women remained for very long periods suggesting the 'institutionalisation' of these individuals.
- Some St Mary's women buried in unmarked communal graves. Others buried in communal plots with names on headstones. Some St Mary's women's burial site not confirmed at this point.
- One death (in 1945) linked by Good Shepherd records to a laundry accident.

Chapter 16:

Thorndale Industrial Home

Like the Good Shepherd Convents in Belfast and Newry, Thorndale combined its roles as a Mother and Baby Home with one as an Industrial Home. It was a recipient of young females accused or convicted of offences, as well as those deemed in need of moral reform or protection. Girls and women entered the home from a variety of referral sources which included social workers, probation officers and charity workers. Parental and family referrals took place, as did those by members of the clergy and by Salvation Army officers. Individuals were also sent directly from police courts on probation, as an alternative to a prison sentence. In many cases the police – or social services – brought females under Care and Protection Orders to Thorndale House.

The Salvation Army's work with females in Belfast began in 1886 when it opened a Rescue Home at 63 Great George Street, in the city centre. This moved to Wellington Park on the Malone Road in 1905, where the facility was described as an Industrial Home, or a Shelter for young women. In 1922 the Industrial Home/Shelter moved to Thorndale House off the Antrim Road in the north of the city. In addition to the industrial home, the shelter provided short-term accommodation for women in need, often only one or two nights. The industrial home became was refocused as 'a girls' training home' in 1948 and continued in this role until its closure in 1965.

Records Relating to the Industrial Home

As with the records relating to Thorndale Mother and Baby Home, the archival material for the Industrial Home is rather complex. There are Girl's Statement books for New Assisted Cases, which cover the period between 1922 and 1964, and 1982 and 1984 (the entries decrease in the 1950s and there is a gap in these records for the period between 1964 and 1981). There are Day Books which include all residents in the Industrial Home between 1926-39, 1942-63 and 1974-79.[989] Not all the names in the New Assisted Cases Books appear in the Day Books. Moreover, as only new cases – not re-admissions – are contained in the New Assisted Case Books, sometimes girls and women appear for the first admission, which may have been several years earlier. There are also Country Statement Books, in which Thorndale administrators submitted monthly declarations of females leaving the home. However, these names do not appear in the New Assisted Cases Books. To try and determine accurate numbers for admissions, the Day Books have been used for the dates for which they are available and any gaps have been supplemented with data from a combination of New Assisted Cases and Country Statements.

The New Assisted Cases Books also included pregnant women who entered the Mother and Baby Home rather than the Industrial Home. By the 1960s it is clear from the records that the majority of

989 Salvation Army, series THO/1/1/1. There are some records which are identified as Industrial Home New Cases 1923-4 but these appear to be women staying overnight in the Salvation Army Shelter, so these have not been included.

women who appeared in the New Assisted Cases books were pregnant and thus maternity rather than Industrial Home cases. The analysis of the Industrial Home therefore only includes those who entered between 1922 and 1955.

Profile of Women Entering the home

Between 1922 and 1955, as far as can be determined, 707 women entered the Industrial Home. This is a larger number than the 389 which is recorded in the Salvation Army statistics for the period between 1922 and 1964. The larger number may include women in the Shelter who may have only stayed a night or two and may not have been submitted in official records from which the Salvation Army calculated the numbers. **Figure 1 - Appendix I** shows the pattern of admissions declining over the period. 43 women entered in 1939 which was the highest number over the period.

The age of women entering the Industrial Home ranged widely. The oldest was an 85 year-old woman who entered in 1922 and stayed only one day. She was described as 'restless' and went home.[990] At the other end of the spectrum was a 9-year-old in 1933 who was a preventative case, described as 'taken from bad surroundings, not fallen'. She stayed for a couple of weeks and went to school until she could be admitted to 'The Nest' in Clapton, London, which was a Salvation Army Children's Home.[991] Admissions included an increasing number of teenagers in the 1940s which may explain the refocusing of the work from 1948.

As was the case for Thorndale Mother and Baby Home, the majority of women in the Industrial Home came from Northern Ireland and Belfast in particular, with a couple of women each year arriving from the Republic of Ireland and Britain.[992] However, the last address rather than the nativity of individuals was recorded, so it is not possible to state conclusively where the women were born. Religion was not routinely recorded; rather a question was asked as to whether the entrant professed to be saved or not.

Referrals

Individuals were referred from a range of sources. The pattern shifts from one which featured a large number of women and girls being referred to Thorndale by named individuals, in the 1920s, to one that was more heavily dominated by welfare authorities, social workers, probation officers and the police by the 1950s; the last decade analysed here. These reveal the changes in social service provision over the period and in particular the evolution of the probation service, which drew heavily upon local voluntary societies in the early twentieth century, but then 'saw an infusion of new full-time probation officers into the service in Belfast' following World War Two.[993] The voluntary organisations involved in probation work included groups such as the Saint Vincent de Paul, the Legion of Mary and the Salvation Army. In Derry/Londonderry, for example, the three probation officers appointed in 1916 included a Salvation Army officer and a member of the Sisters of Mercy

990 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2, Salvation Army

991 Ibid.

992 Industrial Home Records, THO/1.

993 Fulton and Parkhill, Making the difference , p. 21.

in the city. In Belfast, the courts quickly established a working relationship with the Salvation Army's Wellington Park Rescue Home, 'resulting in the home giving places to women who had been through the court system'.[994] Like representatives of other institutions, members of the Salvation Army attended courts to offer their services for suitable women. A newspaper report in 1931 revealed that 'the Army officers visited the Police Court three times a week and received from the magistrates the care of first offenders. Thus, they were able to save many young persons from the stigma of prison life, and that of itself meant a sound lift towards respectability and virtuous living'.[995] Many women are recorded as coming directly from the police court to Thorndale. For example, M.W. entered, in January 1925, following a phone call from a police officer to the Salvation Army after she had appeared in the police court for concealment of birth. M.W. stayed for a year and then left for a job in County Tipperary.[996]

The prison registers for Armagh Prison also record girls and women who were sent to Thorndale rather than entering the prison. These included A.B., aged 16, an unmarried servant from Newtownards, who was convicted of the larceny of an attaché case, a woollen coat, a camera and other articles and money to value of £14 in July 1927. The court released her 'to the custody of … the Salvation Army on the accused recognisance of £10 to keep the peace and good behaviour for two years during that time to remain under the dominion of the officer of the Salvation Army'.[997] These referrals from the probation service continued into the 1950s and 1960s. In December 1956, M.S., a 22 year-old married woman from Belfast, was convicted of larceny. She was put 'on probation for 12 months under Miss Harvey on her own bail of £5 with a condition that she reside in Thorndale House Duncairn Ave Belfast'.[998] Miss Harvey was a full-time probation officer. In October 1962, M.L.P., a 21 year-old waitress from Londonderry was convicted for obtaining money by forging documents. Her twelve-month probation order included the condition that three months were spent at Thorndale House.[999]

If women did not comply with these probation conditions they could be sent back to court or prison, as was the case of M.M. who was brought by a probation officer to Thorndale in 1938 for concealment of birth. She refused to stay and was taken back to court where a judge sentenced her to six months in prison with hard labour.[1000] Salvation Army officers also took further decisions on behalf of some of the girls and women committed to their care under probation. A.C., an 18 year-old, who was 'given into the army's care on twelve months' probation' for larceny, in 1935, was taken by Major Gill to Liverpool as it was felt she 'should get away from bad companions'.[1001] The police also employed Thorndale as a remand home for women awaiting trial. Mrs H. was given board and lodgings for a week in, 1932, after four babies bodies were found in her suitcase in the home where she was a domestic servant. She was subsequently sent to Armagh Prison.[1002]

994 Ibid., p. 8; p. 15.
995 Northern Whig, 30 July 1931.
996 Country Girl's Statement Books, Jan. 1926.
997 Armagh Prison Register, PRONI, HMP/1/1/2/2.
998 Armagh Prison Register, PRONI, HMP/1/1/2/3.
999 Ibid.
1000 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/4.
1001 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.
1002 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

Whilst Thorndale was used in this way between the 1920s and 1960s, its role in this respect appears to have ceased by the 1970s. The three retired probation officers who provided testimony for this research recalled very few dealings with Thorndale. Their careers in the probation service began in the 1970s and 1980s and they explained that they had more familiarity with Armagh Prison, and the two training centres for female offenders: Middletown and Whiteabbey.[1003]Middletown was the St Joseph's Training School, converted from an industrial school on the invitation of the Ministry of Home Affairs following the introduction of the Children and Young Persons (Northern Ireland) Act 1950. It was operated by the Sisters of St Louis until 2000.[1004] Whiteabbey Reformatory school was certified for girls in 1945 and twelve months later it was listed as an industrial school before being designated as a training school under the 1950 legislation. It dealt with Protestant girls, with St. Joseph's in Middletown designated for Catholic females.[1005]

As was the case with the Good Shepherd Convents, Thorndale was also used by the police when they required emergency accommodation for girls and young women. E.K., brought to the Industrial Home by the police in 1931, was given board and lodging for a month and then went home. Her notes describe her as an 'inveterate smoker and lazy'.[1006] From the 1950s, there were an increasing number of women admitted who had been evicted from their houses who needed emergency accommodation for a few nights.

Families also placed women and girls in the Industrial Home when they had concerns about their behaviour. Speaking at the Thorndale Annual Garden Party in July 1931, Commissioner Booth-Tucker said 'young girls today got out of hand and their parents did not know what to do with them. They usually fell into the hands of the police who brought them to the Salvation Army, where they found a haven of rest and became leaders in good'.[1007]In the previous twelve months, Thorndale's Industrial Home had dealt with 37 women and 63 maternity cases.[1008]The following year's garden party also heard about these cases:

> [the] Industrial Department dealt with girls who had passed through the police courts as first offenders. Instead of their receiving imprisonment the home was willing to receive them and give them a fresh start. The Industrial Department also assist another type of girl, who was simply friendless, helping her to learn a craft and to find a position.[1009]

J.R., who was admitted in 1951 'at her parent's request', absconded from the Industrial Home but was tracked down by the RUC and returned to her parents' home.[1010] Maggie C. who was 15 years-old when her sister referred her to the industrial home in 1928, was recorded as a 'preventative case'.

1003 Interview with Probation Officer 1, Probation Officer 2 and Probation Officer 3 [Interviewed by Sean O'Connell, 13 May 2019.

1004 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. Module 11 – St Joseph's Training School, Middletown. https://www.hiainquiry.org/module-11-st-josephs-training-school-middletown

1005 Ibid. Chapter 13. Module 7 – Youth Justice Institutions: Introduction, para 18.

1006 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

1007 Belfast Telegraph, 30 July 1931.

1008 Belfast Telegraph, 30 July 1931.

1009 Belfast News-Letter, 16 June 1932.

1010 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

The Salvation Army records detail how they felt they had 'really helped her'. They were disappointed when her sister returned and took her away, 'much against the Captain's wishes as she gave the makings of a real good girl'.[1011]

As was the case with Good Shepherd St Mary's homes, various factors played a part in the admission of girls and women to Thorndale's Industrial Home. Alcohol was a feature in a number of cases, and the admission registers required new arrivals to answer whether or not they had 'ever been a drink case'. The number of women recorded as being a 'drink case' declined significantly from the 1920s, which may have reflected a change in policy for the Salvation Army. Those few women who were recorded as having issues with alcohol generally stayed for short periods. L.G., who entered in 1934, was recorded as being a 'drink case' and also as having been in prison. She remained for a month and her notes record that the Salvation Army 'kept L.G. in the hope of her turning from her wasted life but the old temptations proved too strong however, and she chose to return to her old haunts'.[1012]

Women with learning disabilities and mental health issues also entered Thorndale Industrial Home. Sometimes they were sent by their parents who were unsure how to care for them. E.H., a 16 year-old who only stayed a few days in Thorndale, during 1945, had been sent by her parents as she was 'very sour and sat in her bedroom all day at home'. Her parents thought that 'a few weeks with a crowd of people might help her'. However, the records went on to record that the Salvation Army thought she 'appears to be mentally unbalanced'.[1013] Two other teenagers, F.L. a 19 year-old, who arrived in 1940, and 15 year-old A.G., who entered in 1942, were both described as being 'out of control' in the notes explaining the reason for their admittance. F.L. was brought by a social worker, but sent home by the Salvation Army as she 'appeared mentally deficient'. The records for A.G. concluded that the Thorndale staff 'tried to help her in the home but mentally deficient'.[1014] 24 year-old M.M., who entered in 1935, 'proved to be far more mental than we were given to suppose and she would have needed more watching than it is possible to give here … she was not capable of being taught'.[1015]

Other more unusual explanations for the admission of females to the Industrial Home included the case of a 78 year-old woman, who arrived in 1954. It was noted that she lived alone and had been 'tormented by young boys'. She stayed for nine days until arrangements could be made for her to go to her daughter.[1016] M.D., an 81 year-old, was admitted in 1942 having been stranded at the railway station, was sent later to the Home of Rest.[1017] A 46 year-old married woman arrived in 1932 as her husband wanted her to stay for six months to 'come off her drug habit', but she was 'very restless and would not stay'.[1018] This range of admissions, in terms of their age and the personal and family crises that lay behind their arrival, suggest similarities with the role of the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes. It appears that Thorndale Industrial Home was also tasked with coping with the needs of a

1011 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

1012 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

1013 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/4.

1014 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/4.

1015 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

1016 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/5.

1017 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/4.

1018 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

variety of girls and women and managing personal issues that families could not, or would deal with for themselves. The courts, the police, the probation service and the wider community clearly placed extensive demands on what was a poorly funded voluntary body with staff who were not trained to cope adequately with women admitted with such complex needs.

Living Conditions

There is no information in the records about the living conditions in the Industrial Home. It is evident that while unlike the Good Shepherd institutions women did not work in a commercial laundry, labour of some kind was carried out. Attached to the front of one of the Industrial Home Day Books were Factory Act Returns for 1946 to 1948. There was also a note which explained that an official communication had been received in reply advising that the laundry at Thorndale was not subject to the Factory and Workshop Act, 1907; presumably as it was not a commercial laundry and served only the Thorndale residents. There was some uncertainty here, however, as the return for 1946 stated that 9 women were employed in work under the Factory Act. Another 33 women described as being otherwise engaged; this appears to have involved needlework as a 'one power-machine sewing machine' was also mentioned. In 1947, 7 women were employed in the laundry and 16 otherwise engaged in the workroom.[1019] Women were also expected to do cleaning and domestic chores, and there was a focus on training women and girls for domestic service situations with the Salvation Army identifying many such jobs for the women. This training was not always successful. L.W., a 13 year-old who was brought to Thorndale by her father in 1933, stayed for three months and was given 'board and lodging and some little training in housework'. However, she was described as a 'very lazy girl, untidy and sullen and should have stayed a long time to be really helped but her mother fetched her home'.[1020]

Exit Pathways

There were a wide range of exit pathways for women depending on their situations. Due to the different and complex methods used to record this information by the Thorndale staff, it is impossible to quantify these statistically. However, it can be stated that the majority of women either left 'to a situation' or were recorded as 'left to seek work'. The majority of women who stayed for longer than a few days spent several months in the industrial home, but usually not longer than 3 to 4 months. Their destination is not always recorded and the Day Books just note the number who were 'sent to friends' or went to 'situations' (in other words, some form of employment) each month. There are some references in the records indicating that members of staff would have liked women to have stayed longer, such as VC who stayed for 3.5 months in 1928. It was felt that she had a future as an associate in the Salvation Army but 'her father came suddenly and wanted her to go home and we were very disappointed.'[1021] The aim of Thorndale Industrial Home was to provide training in domestic service and to get suitable employment for the women. There was no expectation that women would stay for long periods of time, unlike the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes.

1019 Day Books Industrial Home, THO/1/2/4.

1020 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

1021 New Assisted Cases Books, THO/1/1/1/2.

Conclusions

- It is calculated that 707 girls and women entered the Thorndale Industrial Home between 1922 and 1955.
- This small number (when compared to the Good Shepherd numbers) suggests that Protestant communities found other ways of dealing with many of the young girls/women that ended up in Good Shepherd laundries if they were born into the Catholic community.
- This differential may have been the result of greater levels of poverty in the Catholic community and/or greater engagement with state welfare by Protestants, with Catholics making greater use of Catholic voluntary institutions.
- The state was connected with the home through the justice system (remand/probation) and social services (protection orders and other placements).
- Referrals follow many pathways that are similar to the Good Shepherd St Mary's homes/laundries, including some referrals by family, referrals of women/girls with learning disabilities and referrals of females in crisis circumstances.
- However, length of stay does not resemble the St Mary's homes, with no long/life time residents. Several months, rather than several years was a common length of stay at Thorndale Industrial Home.

Chapter 17:

Further research suggestions

Earlier sections of this Report have outlined the need for further research on adoption which would require access to adoption records. Given that we have been able to evidence that children born in Northern Ireland were moved to and subsequently adopted in the Republic of Ireland, it is considered that, for any further research on adoption to be sufficiently comprehensive and conclusive, it needs to be undertaken on a cross-border basis. This is necessary to clarify what processes were involved in cases where babies moved over the border from mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland to the Republic. Only individual adoption files (and related records) will satisfy public interest on the question of whether all cases complied with legal requirements. This would require co-operation and formal agreements between the authorities in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.

One final aspect of the researchers' remit, as outlined by the inter-departmental working group was to collect 'information in relation to other relevant matters identified during the course of the research which may warrant further investigation in the public interest.' This led the research team to the view that consideration was required of the role of those baby homes to which infants were transferred from the mother and baby homes which were under investigation. A major aspect of the work of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation, which is currently in its fifth year of research in the Republic of Ireland, is to examine infant and child mortality rates in institutions such as the St Mary's mother and baby home operated by the Bon Secours Sisters in Tuam, County Galway. The Commission's researchers are investigating issues including the very high death rates at this home and the discovery of the remains of several hundred babies and young children whose burials were unauthorised and unrecorded. This matter has, for obvious reasons, attracted public attention north of the border. One outcome of this was a geophysical and topographical search of grounds at the former Marianvale mother and baby home to seek evidence of any unregistered burials on that site. None was found.[1022]

In Northern Ireland, mothers and babies spent relatively short periods of time in mother and baby homes after births took place. This was unlike the mother and baby homes in the Republic of Ireland where mothers often spent at least two years and children longer. These extensive periods were a factor which increased the mortality rates associated with the homes. If any comparable issue arose in relation to infant mortality in Northern Ireland, it was most likely to centre on the baby homes to which children were sent once they left the mother and baby homes shortly after their birth. For this reason, as the research timetable drew to a close, the researchers sought permission to search for archival material related to these homes. These homes were:

1022 Belfast Telegraph, 16 March 2017.

Catholic Voluntary Homes
St. Joseph's Baby Home Belfast/Nazareth Homes, Belfast
Nazareth Homes, Derry/Londonderry
Nazareth House Baby Home, Portadown
Our Mother of Mercy Home, Newry

Protestant Voluntary Homes
Thorndale (with/without mothers), Belfast
Hopedene (with/without mothers), Belfast

Voluntary Homes
Dr Barnardo's, Manor House, Ballycastle
Glendhu, Belfast

State/Welfare Homes
Coleshill, Enniskillen
Coneywarren, Omagh
Clogrennon, Larne
DhuVarren, Portrush
Gleneyre, Portadown

Drawing on the evidence made public by the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI), it is unlikely that much documentation relating to Nazareth Homes in Belfast or Derry/Londonderry survives. However, further research would be required to clarify this and also to pursue records relating to Nazareth House, Portadown and Our Mother of Mercy Home, Newry. The PRONI catalogue was searched for records relating to the Welfare/State Homes and PRONI staff were consulted in this task. While there is considerable discussion of the homes at departmental level, no admission records or case notes for any of the homes could be located. This is concerning, but does reflect the conclusions reached by the HIAI about the disposal of historical records relating to children's homes in accordance with routine records policies.[1023] It is also clear that a large proportion of babies when leaving mother and baby homes were fostered/boarded out/nursed in return for modest financial payments. Local authority records do contain some surviving inspection records for some of the homes to which children were sent. Future research on these records would assist in providing a fuller analysis of the outcomes for babies leaving mother and baby homes.

With very limited remaining research time remaining, the records of the St Joseph's baby home in Belfast and the records of baby homes held by the Barnardo's organisation (for Manor House, Ballycastle) were identified as case studies. As custodian of records relating to St Joseph's baby Home, Family Care Adoption Services (FCAS) was approached with a request for information on the St Joseph's records and Barnardo's for the Manor House records. The researchers are grateful to Maggie McSorley of FCAS for providing an analysis of the St Joseph's records. However, the relevant Barnardo's files arrived in Northern Ireland (from England) only after the research was completed and they still require analysis. This means that only one case study is included here and it is clear that further research is required both in relation to the St Joseph's archive, Manor House and the other homes listed above.

1023 Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, Report, Volume 3, Chapter 8, paras 136 and 235.

The St Joseph's home was the one baby home that had been mentioned in the oral testimonies as being a cause of concern in terms of potential issues around health and hygiene. A number of birth mothers and one of the retired social workers made reference to unhygienic conditions in the baby home at St. Joseph's, operated by the Sisters of Nazareth in Belfast. These included first hand observations about poor conditions leading to infant illnesses and second hand testimony that one woman's baby had died in this baby home. The investigative website The Detail carried out some research on this issue in 2017, discovering that a significant number of deaths of children aged under two (63) occurred at Belfast's Nazareth House and Nazareth Lodge in 1942. The most prominent cause of death in these cases was Marasmus (severe malnutrition).[1024]

St Joseph's received very large number of babies from several mother and baby homes. Research in the Marianville mother and baby home records indicated that, between 1953 and 1982, 533 babies were sent to the St. Joseph's home. A further 97 babies were placed there from Marianvale. The Mater Dei archives indicate that at least 169 babies were moved from there to St. Joseph's and that a further 133 were sent to Nazareth House or Lodge. The first specialist Catholic mother and baby home in Northern Ireland, Mater Dei, opened in 1942. It is highly likely that, prior to that point, large numbers of unmarried Catholic mothers gave birth in Workhouse infirmaries and that their infants were then sent to St Joseph's/or the Bethlehem wing.

Case study of St Joseph's baby home/ Bethlehem Wing Nazareth Lodge, Belfast

The records of St. Joseph's baby home (and Bethlehem Wing at Nazareth Lodge Belfast) are held by Family Care Adoption Society (FCAS). They cover periods from the 1922 to the 1980s, even though the name of the home seems to have fallen in and out of use over those decades. The home was part of the complex operated by the Sisters of Nazareth in Belfast and was also the location of two children's homes, Nazareth House (for girls) and Nazareth Lodge (for boys). The first St. Joseph's home was located within the Nazareth Lodge building. The records of the Belfast Corporation Maternity and Child Welfare Committee record the decision to close St. Joseph's in November 1933 when it stopped receiving a grant from the Committee.[1025] The management committee, the Diocesan Orphan Society, instituted a boarding out scheme at this point as an alternative to housing babies on the Nazareth Lodge site. Boarding out was an early form of fostering children and was a policy that assisted homes such as St Joseph's in attempts to prevent the spread of infections by reducing infant numbers within the home. An official from the Maternity and Welfare Committee continued to sit on the management committee.[1026] Despite the new focus on boarding out, the records held at FCAS indicate that between 1934 and 1953, babies were admitted to a 'Bethlehem' wing in Nazareth Lodge, which was not in receipt of a Welfare Committee grant and was therefore reliant on voluntary financial contributions to cover operational costs. A new purpose built St. Joseph's Home was opened on the Sisters of Nazareth site in 1953. It was described by one newspaper as having cost £106,000 and having accommodation for 120 babies.[1027] In a meeting with officials from the Ministry of Home Affairs, which took place in January 1955, Fr. White of the St

1024 https://www.thedetail.tv/articles/lost-lives-the-43-babies-who-died-from-malnutrition

1025 Records of Maternity and Child Welfare Committee, Belfast Corporation, LA/7/9AD/2, PRONI.

1026 Communication from the Sisters of Nazareth to the IDWG.

1027 Irish News, 30 October 1953.

Patrick's Orphan Society explained that the 'babies' home was a separate entity and was in no sense part of Nazareth Lodge.' This produced questioning from officials who indicated 'that the Ministry had hitherto regarded the babies' home as an integral part of Nazareth Lodge and therefore did not require it to be registered separately as a voluntary home.' Fr White acknowledged that 'the Sisters of Nazareth and the lay staff engaged in the babies' home, were all under the supervision' of Nazareth Lodge. Following this discussion, St Joseph's was registered as a voluntary home for children.[1028] Also in 1955, the Diocesan Orphan Society met at St Malachy's College in Belfast. Appeals were made to priests to identify foster-mothers for the babies in St. Joseph's, as according to Bishop Mageean the 'correct place for a child to be reared is in the family'. The meeting learned that it cost £13,000 per annum to operate the home, with one of the largest costs being nursing staff salaries. It was hoped that the Welfare Committees or other public bodies would make a contribution.[1029]

The FCAS was contacted with a request for access to the relevant records. In response, research into the records of St. Joseph's was undertaken by staff at FCAS and the findings were forwarded to the researchers. This data did not identify by name any baby recorded in these records. It should be noted also that the records that have survived are incomplete in many respects. Working with the data available, the findings listed: the number of babies in St. Joseph's (the Bethlehem wing for 1933-1951) between 1922-1981; where they were born; whether their mothers had been in a mother and baby home; how many of the babies died; where they died; and if they were adopted or boarded out. The figures indicate high mortality rates during a number of periods. This was particularly the case during the 1920s. 50 baby deaths were recorded in 1926, 46 in 1927 and 50 in 1928. The number of admissions recorded to St. Joseph's for these years was 90 in 1926, 92 in 1927 and 116 in 1928. No figures were available for the number of babies in the home at this point, but these figures suggest one death for every two babies admitted to the home in these years. This death rate attracted the attention of the Belfast Workhouse Board of Guardians, as many of these children were admitted to the Union Infirmary for treatment in the latter stages of fatal illnesses. In 1927, it was suggested by one of the Board of Guardians that the Board's reputation was being damaged due to this high death rate of children, which was due to the circumstances at St. Joseph's, where, 'children were kept for some time and then sent to the Guardians' institution in a practically dying state, with the result that death after death took place'.[1030] Further allegations were made in the following year about babies being sent from St. Joseph's to unregistered nurse mothers, after which some of these infants fell ill and were admitted to the Union Hospital, where they died 'in a matter of hours'.[1031]

1028 Minute of Meeting between Rev. P. J. White and Civil Servants at the Ministry of Home Affairs. 28 January 1955. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A. PRONI.

1029 Irish News, 19 April 1955.

1030 Northern Whig, 17 Aug. 1927

1031 North Down Herald and County Down Independent, 8 Dec. 1928

Table 1: Admissions and deaths at St Joseph's baby home in the 1920s

Year	Admissions	Deaths
1922	50	25
1923	69	31
1924	67	25
1925	69	39
1926	90	50
1927	92	46
1928	116	50
1929	74	35

The recorded number of deaths associated with St. Joseph's declined in the 1930s. Although in 1930, the infant mortality rate was close to one in two of all babies admitted, it appears to have fallen between 1931 and 1934 (although the statistics are incomplete because of missing entries in the records that were kept during this period). With entry records complete again, in 1935 and 1936, there was one recorded death for every seven recorded admissions. In 1937, the death rate recorded in the data analysed by the FCAS suggested that for every four recorded baby admissions there was one recorded death. In 1938, for every nine admissions recorded one death was noted.

Table 2: Admissions and deaths at St Joseph's baby home in the 1930s

Year	Admissions	Deaths
1930	63	29
1931 (pages missing)	25	7
1932 (pages missing)	21	4
1933 (pages missing)	15	1
1934 (entries missing)	34	1
1935	78	11
1936	78	11
1937	81	20
1938	95	10
1939	79	13

These statistics require much further analysis before firm conclusions can be reached about how the death rates should be compared with the broader population and with other baby homes, but a reference point is provided by the Northern Ireland illegitimate infant mortality rate for 1940, which was 167 per 1,000 births.[1032]

1032 Annual Report of the Registrar General, 1941, p. xxxiii

It was mortality figures for the 1940s that attracted the attention of *The Detail*, as discussed above. Death rates for babies at St. Joseph's remained extremely high in these years, even though they did not reach the peaks experienced in earlier years. It might be anticipated that the war years, with greatest pressure on resources and higher rates of illegitimate births, would produce the highest death figures. However, the figures analysed by the FCAS appear to suggest that 1948 and 1949 had the highest recorded infant mortality rates in this decade in St. Joseph's.

Table 3: Admissions and deaths in St Josephs' baby home in the 1940s

Year	Babies admitted	Deaths
1940	66	12
1941	106	21
1942	108	8
1943	69	10
1944	84	6
1945	68	7
1946	46	6
1947	76	18
1948	66	22
1949	60	15

The available figures suggest that this decade began with a death rate of approximately one baby for every five who entered St. Joseph's. It then fell to one in every 13 babies recorded as entering the home in 1942. In other words, the deaths of 8 babies are recorded for St. Joseph's in 1942. This raises an important concern about the effectiveness of records kept in this historical period because separate research by *The Detail* on death certificates located at GRONI suggests that 63 children under two years of age and resident in either Nazareth Lodge or House died in 1942.[1033] This apparent significant anomaly can only be rectified via comparison of the relevant death certificates with the original St. Joseph's records held at the FCAS. Moreover, this task would enable identification of babies' entry pathways to St Joseph's/the Bethlehem wing, Nazareth Lodge.

The records suggest that there was a decline in recorded deaths in the early 1950s, with 3 deaths in 1950 before a spike to 18 in 1952 (out of 69 babies admitted). This fell to a recorded number of 6 deaths in 1953, with 67 babies admitted. Thereafter, recorded deaths were much lower and, in 1961, the Bishop of Down and Connor hailed the St Joseph's baby home as 'one of the finest institutions in the Province'.[1034] According to the records analysed by the FCAS, no St. Joseph's babies died between 1953 and 1968, when one infant passed away. Further deaths are recorded for 1972 (1), 1973 (2), 1977 (1) and 1980 (1). The data ends in 1981.

1033 At this time, St Joseph's did not exist as such and all babies under 2 would have been in the 'Bethlehem wing' this appears to have been recorded variously as Nazareth Lodge or House in the records.

1034 Belfast Telegraph, 11 April 1961

There are, however, further questions about the comprehensiveness of the statistics. While no babies are recorded as dying in 1955-56, there is a letter from the Sister in charge of St. Joseph's to the Ministry of Home Affairs, written in September 1955, informing them of the death of a six-month old child due to pneumonia.[1035] Similarly, the information from the St. Joseph's register records no deaths in 1959, but inspection reports (discussed below) from September and December 1959 indicate that four babies died following an outbreak of gastro-enteritis in the home. A further 16 children were hospitalised during this outbreak.[1036] Finally, a newspaper report from 1970 noted that an open verdict was returned at the inquest of a baby who was found dead in his cot at the St. Joseph's baby home. This is another case which does not appear to be included in the St. Joseph files held by the FCAS.[1037] It is clear that much is still to be discovered about the history of St. Joseph's and the very high mortality rates which were recorded in this home. Moreover, similar scrutiny of the other baby homes operating during this historical period is required.

Information from Inspection Reports

The reports written by officials who inspected St Joseph's baby home under the terms of the Children and Young Persons Acts provide further insights although they are only relevant for the years after 1955. They also furnish further information on the relationship between voluntary homes, such as St Joseph's, the welfare authorities and the state. Finally, they also give a measure of the numbers of babies in the home, staffing levels and the general conditions that exited at St Joseph's between the mid-1950s and 1970s.

In 1955, following her inspection of St Joseph's, Ministry of Home Affairs inspector, Kathleen Forrest, declared that 'I am not happy about the proportion of staff to children in his home.' The home was almost at its full complement of 120 babies under two years old. The home was staffed by:

4 Nuns (trained nursery nurses)

5 SRNs (state registered nurses)

5 staff said to have 'good hospital experience but not qualified'

1 nursery nurse (NNEB)

2 NI Res. Ch.Care Course

14 Nursery assistants

This was a total of 31 staff and, in addition there were also '5 lay-students' and '2 nun students'. Forrest concluded that although the 'students may be some help it cannot be a great deal. I do think that in this home there should be 40 staff to the 120 babies.' She concluded that 'the babies are well-cared for and affectionately handled and have progressed well' but that 'it is difficult for the staff

1035 Sister Aloysius Patrick to Secretary Ministry of Home Affairs, 9 Sept. 1955, St Joseph's Baby Home,. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road, HA/13/272A, PRONI

1036 St Joseph's Inspection Reports, Sept., Dec. 1959, K.B. Forrest, St Joseph's Baby Home, HA/13, PRONI

1037 Belfast Telegraph, 10 September 1970.

to attend to all the physical details of their care quite as one would like.' Despite this concern, her conclusion was upbeat: 'In general, however, the lively and responsive attitude of the children is a great credit to the existing staff.[1038]

As noted above, in September 1955 a St Joseph's home baby died from pneumonia. A report by a doctor who had attended the child stated:

- 8 September 1955 – She was seen by the night nurse at 1am when she appeared quite comfortable. When visited again at 4 am she was dead.
- This does not appear too satisfactory but there is little one can do. It seems to indicate as much as anything the necessity for routine examinations by a doctor interested in preventative medicine, particularly one interested in the progress of infants.[1039]

The same medic, Dr Patricia Mulligan undertook an inspection of St Joseph's in April 1956. This recommended that the maximum number of places be reduced from 98 to 80 because '18 staff for 98 infants seems most inadequate' and 'compares most unfavourably with that reported by Miss Forrest [on 27.7.55].' This report concluded that the 'health of the children has been very good and there appears to have been no GI [gastro-intestinal] infection since August last,' but it also discussed an 'infant who died in the home aged 4 months [who] had been in the home only 1 month.' This baby 'had a cough on admission. This cleared up and he started coughing again. He was seen by the MO [Medical Officer] who thought he was progressing satisfactorily but just as MO was departing the baby died.'[1040] A memorandum composed following the death of this child recorded 'a proposal to set up child welfare clinic sessions' in St. Joseph's.[1041]

In late August and September 1956, Ministry of Home Affairs inspector, Kathleen Forrest, made a number of visits to St Joseph's. She concluded that there had been 'several desirable changes.' This included the arrival of 'an additional nun … who has taken over responsibility for the general administration of the home.' The Sister who was in charge previously 'continues to be responsible for the care of the babies.' In addition, a doctor was 'devoting one afternoon per week to a session of routine medical examination.' At that point, Forrest recorded 95 babies and 28 staff in total.[1042] The following year, in 1957, there was an influenza epidemic and this impacted the St Joseph's babies. Four were admitted to hospital and a few others 'had deteriorated considerably during the influenza epidemic'.[1043]

1038 Inspection Report by K. B. Forrest, 21 July 1955. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A PRONI

1039 Memorandum by Dr Patricia Mulligan, 26 September 1955. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI

1040 Inspection Report by Dr Patricia Mulligan. 10 April 1956. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI

1041 Memorandum E. Jackson. 3 May 1956. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1042 St Joseph's Inspection Report by K.B. Forrest, 21 September 1956. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1043 Inspection Report by Dr Patricia Mulligan, 14 February 1957. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

Despite her approving comments on improvements she observed in 1956, Forrest was again expressing concerns about St Joseph's in 1959 following an outbreak of gastro-enteritis. There were six cases, two babies were admitted to hospital where one of them (an eight week old) died. At this point, however, Forrest added that apart 'from this outbreak the health of the children in the home has been excellent throughout the year.[1044] Forrest's tone was more critical in December when during an inspection visit:

> Matron immediately informed us that there had been further cases of GE [gastro-enteritis] since our last visit. We were surprised as we had not seen any notifications of hospital admissions and discharges which Matron assured us had been sent to the ministry in all cases. On enquiring subsequently...we found that the forms had been held in CW [Child Welfare] branch. We have now received in two batches a total of 11 forms including notifications of 3 deaths. But at least as many are still missing including the notification of 1 death. We should like to have these as soon as possible. As study of hospital admission records reveals that there have been at least 3 other cases this year. These occurred in June.[1045]

It appears that record keeping was inadequate, in these cases, either at St Joseph's or at the Ministry of Home Affairs, or possibly at both institutions. A report on this outbreak revealed that there had been thirteen cases in total, eight were treated in hospital and four babies died.[1046] Later in that December 1959, Forrest wrote again about St Joseph's. This time, she recorded thst herself and Dr Norman Simpson had concluded that 'the children in this home are being well-cared for by the staff who are obviously devoted to them.'[1047]

A report in October 1960 reported that 110 children had been in residence at St Joseph's that year, 58 under one year of age. Six children were the financial responsibility of their mothers' local welfare authorities. The report noted one death: a baby 'who died in the Fever Hospital with pneumonia'. It concluded that the other babies 'looked healthy, well-nourished and were responsive to a degree seldom seen in institutions of this size. We are satisfied that this home is being administered on suitable lines.'[1048]

During the early 1960s, the reports contained a number of positive comments on St Joseph's staff. In November 1960, in responding to an allegation (details were not recorded) about the health of St Joseph's babies, a report noted that there had been no major illness over the previous year and judged this 'truly remarkable for a home with so many babies'.[1049] In 1962 the nun in charge of St Joseph's was complimented on her 'real vocation for work with children – her approach is

1044 Inspection Report by K. B. Forrest, 29 September 1959. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1045 Inspection Report by K. B. Forrest, 3 December 1959. HA/13/27AA, PRONI.

1046 Inspection Report by K. B. Forrest, 3 December 1959. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1047 Inspection Report by K. B. Forrest and Dr Norman Simpson, 11 Dec. 1959. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1048 Inspection Report by A. E. Wright and Norman Simpson, 7 October 1960. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1049 Norman Simpson to K. B. Forrest, 4 November 1960. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

understanding and affectionate and I think she is well-supported by staff.'[1050] Three years later positive comment was made that 'the nursery nurses and assistants had a pleasant way with the children and it was not unusual to find that members of staff took individual children to their own homes during their leave and off-duty periods.' [1051]

In 1968, however, the tone was less affirmative. It noted that, as the result of 'quite a bit of illness in this home during the past year', the Sister in charge and her staff had been under 'considerable strain'. Between December 1967 and March 1968, 'several babies were affected with a severe respiratory infection, as a result of which two babies died in spite of prompt and efficient treatment.' The disease was 'thought to have been caused by a virus.' The inspectors were 'surprised to find that medical records are no longer being kept in this home…as they felt that such records performed no useful purpose.' The inspectors informed the Sister in charge that 'under the CYPA [Children and Young Persons Act] she was responsible for the custody of medical records for each child under her charge.' [1052]

The demands on the Sister in charge appear to have been reduced, in at least one respect, shortly after this point. The report for 1971 recorded that St Joseph's 'had ceased to be responsible for adoption placements'. The inspectors viewed this as a 'welcome development as there seems to me no doubt that the staff are fully occupied in caring for the children. The investigation of prospective adopters and the placement of infants are now carried out by Down & Connor Child Welfare Society'.[1053]

The issue of funding from Welfare Committees (or the lack of it) continued to be a topic for debate. A meeting of the Child Welfare Council, in February 1959, heard that the St Patrick's Orphan Society had approached the Ministry of Home Affairs to provide a field worker 'in the matter of illegitimacy' for voluntary homes like St Joseph's. The request was rejected as being 'neither necessary or desirable'. This decision appears to have been based on the belief that if the Welfare Authorities were brought 'into this problem of illegitimacy [it] would tend to lessen the secrecy aspect. When a girl from a good family in a country district gets into trouble of this kind there is a conspiracy to hush it up, but if the WO [Welfare Officer] goes in the whole thing becomes general knowledge.' The Committee concluded that the voluntary homes 'might make better arrangements for adoption or boarding-out if they could employ good qualified staff but they have not the resources and apparently it is not the policy of the Ministry to give any assistance.'[1054]

1050 Inspection Report by J. Hill, 7 November 1962. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1051 Inspection Report by J. Hill, 13 April 1965. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1052 Inspection Report by J. Hill, August 1968. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1053 Inspection Report by J. Hill, 7 April 1971. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

1054 Child Welfare Council Minutes, 27 February 1959. Children and Young Persons Act (N.I.), 1950. Voluntary Homes: St Joseph's Baby Home, Ravenhill Road. HA/13/272A, PRONI.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a very limited amount of information on the subject of the baby homes to which many of the children of unmarried mothers were sent after their birth. To satisfy continued public interest in the historical treatment and well-being of these children, it will be necessary to carry out further research on a number of homes. The case study presented here on the St Joseph's baby home in Belfast does raise important questions about the infant mortality rates in that home. Only subsequent research on that institution will enrich our understanding of the home and enable a full assessment of deaths that have been identified. It will be important to compare and contrast mortality rates with statistics that can be gleaned from other baby homes. It is known that large proportions of deaths of illegitimate infants took place in 'institutions of all kinds'. In 1938, 102 of 167 deaths of illegitimate children under one-year old occurred in institutions.[1055] In addition, a full assessment of the role of these homes will only be possible following an analysis of any surviving evidence on the admissions of babies to these homes. This will facilitate an understanding of babies' entry routes into homes, such as St Joseph's or Manor House, and to answer questions about where they were sent from and about their health when they arrived.

1055 Government of Northern Ireland, The Registrar-General's annual report for 1938 (1939)

Appendix 1:

Adoption legislation and practice 1922 to 1987

The legislative framework

1. The authors were asked to examine the operation of relevant homes across Northern Ireland from 1922 to 1999. The legislative framework varies significantly across that period and it is therefore necessary to consider different statutory schemes applicable to those time periods.

1922 – 1930: No legislative provision for adoption

2. Prior to the introduction of the Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1929, there was no formal legal basis for the adoption of a child by an individual or couple who were not the child's birthparents. A non-judicial form of adoption existed, whereby Poor Law Guardians could take over parental rights for children who were 'deserted', orphans, or children whose parents were disabled or judged impaired or unfit to have control of them. These children were largely fostered out but technically remained under the care of the Guardians. This form of adoption does not appear to bear any relevance to the Report.

3. Otherwise, children could be raised by an individual or family other than their birth family through informal, privately arranged and entirely unregulated means. Those 'adoptive' parents had no legal rights in respect of the child, and no legal responsibility for him or her. Such arrangements were not prohibited by law, but lacked any legislative basis governing the relationship.

1930 - 1950: The Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1929

4. This legislation mirrored the Adoption Act 1926 in Britain and came into operation on 1st July 1930. Section 1 granted courts the power to make 'adoption orders', which, by section 5, had the effect of transferring all rights, duties, obligations and liabilities from the parent or guardian of the child to the adopter(s) as if they had been born in wedlock to them. The one exception related to inheritance.

5. In respect of children already 'de facto' adopted, the Court had the power to make an order without requiring the consent of parent or guardian if 'satisfied that in all the circumstances of the case it is just and equitable and for the welfare of the infant that no such consent should be required and that an adoption order should be made': section 10.

Consent

6. The Act imposed certain conditions on the circumstances in which adoption orders could be made which are of relevance to the Report. By section 2, it required 'the consent of every person or body who is a parent or guardian of the infant... or who has the actual custody of the infant or who is liable to contribute to the support of the infant.'

7. Given that the Act refers to 'the infant', it might be assumed that consent could only be given by any party, including the mother, after the birth. The wording related to the specific adoption order, rather than consent to the infant's adoption generally, and had been interpreted by the English Court of Appeal as meaning consent at the time of the order (Hansard, Adoption of Children Bill, HC Deb 5 December 1949 vol 470, 1596.) However, debates at the reading of the subsequent 1950 Act suggest that in practice, such consent was at times given in advance of the birth in cases under the equivalent English legislation (and presumably the evidence of that consent was used to demonstrate continuing consent at the time of the adoption order) (Hansard, Adoption of Children Bill, HL Deb 11 July 1949 vol 163 cc 1061 – 1062, 1082).

8. It was possible for the court to dispense with consent if satisfied that the person had abandoned or deserted the infant, could not be found, or was incapable of giving consent. Where the person was liable to contribute to the infant's support, consent could be dispensed with if they had persistently neglected or refused to contribute. The court had a catch-all discretion to dispense with consent where 'in the opinion of the Court and in all the circumstances of the case' it ought to be.

9. Under section 3(a) the court had to be satisfied that every person whose consent was necessary and not dispensed with had in fact consented to and understood the nature and effect of the order. In particular the legislation drew attention to the need for the court to be satisfied that any parent understood the effect of the order would be to permanently deprive him or her of their parental rights. The consent form in the Adoption of Children County Court Rules 1930 was sparse and contained the following declaration:

   I [undersigned] [relationship to infant/petitioner] hereby state that I understand the nature and effect of the adoption order for which application is made (and that in particular I understand that the effect of the order will be permanently to deprive me of my parental rights.) And I hereby consent to the making of an adoption order in favour of the Petitioner.

10. This form required the signature of one witness: Rule 5. It was open to the Judge to refuse to make an order unless all parties attended before him, but he had discretion to dispense with the attendance of any party, including the mother: Rule 12.

11. Of perhaps less relevance to the Report is section 3(b) of the Act which required due consideration to be given to the infant's wishes, in light of their age and understanding, when assessing whether an order would be in their best interests.

Who could adopt?

12. By section 2(5), only those resident and domiciled in Northern Ireland could adopt.

Who could be adopted?

13. The Court did not have the power to make an adoption order in respect of any infant who was not 'a British subject and so resident'.

14. At this time British nationality was determined by the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act 1914, as amended by the 1918 and 1922 Acts of the same name. It provided that 'any person born within His Majesty's dominions and allegiance' was 'deemed a natural-born British subject.' By the time of the 1929 Act, transmission of British nationality by descent was indefinite provided that the child's birth was registered at a British Consulate within a year of birth, and upon reaching the age of 21, the child expressed the desire to remain British.

15. From a British perspective, the Irish Free State remained a dominion within the British Commonwealth and therefore those born there from 1922 onwards remained British subjects. Under Article 3 of the 1922 Constitution of the Irish Free State, those born in the Irish Free State or ordinarily resident there for at least seven years held citizenship of the Irish Free State. It further provided that the conditions governing the future acquisition and termination of citizenship were to be 'determined by law'. No such law was passed until 1935.

16. By 1931 the Statute of Westminster had made the Irish Free State a dominion, with the powers to repeal or amend laws made by the UK Parliament in so far as it constituted law of the dominion and to make its own laws, including laws having extra-territorial operation. The Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act 1935 provided for citizenship on the basis of birth and descent. Section 33 explicitly repealed the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Acts 1914 and 1918 in so far as they were ever in force in the Irish Free State.

17. However, British law did not change on this point until 1948. Despite the recognition of the power of the Parliament of the Irish Free State to repeal the 1914 and 1918 Acts within Eire, the position appears to have been that under those Acts as they applied in the United Kingdom those born in Eire remained British subjects, being persons born within His Majesty's dominions. The case of Murray v Parkes (1942) (Irish Times, 1st April 1942) demonstrates British judicial attitudes to the citizenship of those born in what was then Eire. Michael Murray was a 33 year old man, born in Roscommon but living in Leicester, who contested his conscription to the British army. The Court found that he was a British subject and nothing had deprived him of that status. The legislation that made him a citizen of the Irish Free State did no more than confer on him a national character as an Irish citizen within the wider British nationality. His status was that of a British subject.

18. On 1st January 1949, the British Nationality Act 1948 came into force. It created the status of citizen of the UK and Colonies (CUKC), and the separate status of citizen of a Commonwealth country. These constituted all existing British subjects. Given that Eire was due to leave the Commonwealth on 18th April 1949, citizens of Eire lost British subject status automatically on 1st January 1949 if they did not acquire CUKC status through the special provisions in the 1949 Act or become citizens of another Commonwealth country. Those special provisions enabled certain Irish citizens who were British subjects before 1949 to apply to remain British subjects, but no provision was made for the retention of British nationality by Irish citizens born in the Republic of Ireland after 1949: British subject status, unlike CUKC status, was not transmissible by descent. Birth in the Republic of Ireland before 1922 did not confer CUKC status on 1st January 1949 because the UK was defined as Great Britain and Northern Ireland. To have CUKC status an individual born before 1949 in the Irish Free State/Eire became CUKC by descent if born in wedlock to a father born in the UK, or a colony, at the date of their birth.

19. The Ireland Act 1949 came into force on 18th April 1949, recognising the end of Eire's status as a British dominion and the declaration of the Republic of Ireland. It amended the 1948 Act to ensure that certain persons domiciled in Northern Ireland were not inadvertently deprived of British citizenship status. Section 5 of the Act conferred CUKC status on any Irish-born person who: was born before 6th December in the 26 counties which became the Republic of Ireland; was domiciled outside that area on 6th December 1922; was ordinarily resident outside that area from 1935 to 1948; and was not registered as an Irish citizen under Irish legislation. This essentially ensured that those born in the 26 counties to a father from the 26 counties, but domiciled in Northern Ireland, could retain British subject status.

20. It is therefore very difficult to generalise about who may or may not have been British subjects. It is however a fair assumption that infants born in Northern Ireland were, under UK nationality law, British subjects for the purposes of the 1929, 1950 and 1967 Acts. Whether potential adopters in other countries were British subjects is a much more complicated and fact dependent question.

Payment of money

21. Under section 3(c) the court had to be satisfied that the applicant for the adoption order had not received or agreed to receive, and that no person had given or agreed to make or give any payment or reward to the applicant in consideration of the adoption unless court sanctioned. Section 9 imposed a broad restriction on any payments not sanctioned by the Court either to the adopter, or parent or guardian, in consideration of the adoption. It is noteworthy that it was not incumbent upon the Court under section 3 to be as equally satisfied that no parent or guardian was receiving payment in respect of the adoption as it was that the adoptive parent was not receiving payment.

Maintenance of records

22. Under section 11 the adopted children register was to be established, which would record every adoption ordered under the Act.

The role of third parties

23. Section 8(4) required the court to appoint a person or body to act as guardian ad litem in the hearing to safeguard the interests of the infant before the court. Under Rule 7 they were appointed by the Judge 'as soon as practicable after the filing of the petition.' It was their duty to investigate as fully as possible all the circumstances of the infant and petitioner with a view to safeguarding the interests of the infant. The investigation included answering questions as to whether: the petition was true; payment had been received; the means and status of the petitioner enabled him to maintain and raise the infant suitably; insurance was effected on the infant's life; whether an interim order should be made or any particular terms imposed on an adoption order.

1950 - 1969: Adoption of Children Act (Northern Ireland) 1950

24. Like its predecessor, the 1950 Act followed shortly after similar English legislation. It repealed the 1929 Act, introducing a new two-part process whereby an 'interim order' was required prior to a final order. The power to make an interim order had been contained in the 1929 Act but it had been at the judge's discretion. The obligatory interim order in the 1950 Act gave custody to the applicant for a probationary period of 3 months to 2 years before the adoption was finalised.

Consent

25. Consent to an interim order was required of 'every person or body who is a parent or guardian of the infant, or who is liable to contribute to the maintenance of the infant'. There were similar provisions to the 1929 Act enabling the Court to dispense with consent, including in circumstances where it was 'unreasonably withheld' or the person was one 'whose consent ought in the opinion of the court to be dispensed with': section 2(4).

26. In contrast to the 1929 Act, in which consent was required to be to the specific adoption order (implying that the mother should know who the adoptive parents were), section 2(4) allowed for either a general consent that the infant be adopted, or a specific consent in respect of the particular proposed adopter(s). It went so far as to prevent a mother who had given general consent to adoption withdrawing that consent on the sole basis that she did not know the identity of the proposed adopter(s).

27. In an attempt to enable mothers to give time and consideration to their decision, and prevent consent being given before birth, section 2(5) ensured that consent could not be provided less than 6 weeks after the birth of the infant.

28. Section 3(a), like its predecessor, required the court to be satisfied as to the necessary consents. Under the new two-part order scheme the consent was required to be to the interim order, but this required consent to and understanding of the nature and effective of the adoption order (the final permanent order).

29. The practical mechanisms for ensuring compliance with section 2(3)(a) were set out in the Adoption of Children (Northern Ireland) County Court Rules 1950, which took effect from 19th June 1950. Rule 6 required every consent required under section 3(a) to be in writing, in a prescribed Form 2, and attested by one witness. The wording of the form highlights a difficulty in adopting part but not all of the English legislation. Under the 1949 Act, Parliament had attempted to promote the secrecy that had pertained culturally if not legally under the 1926 Act procedure, by allowing the mother to consent generally to a child being adopted. There was no interim order in the 1949 Act, and therefore it made sense for consent to relate either to the specific adoption order or adoption generally. However, the 1950 Act in Northern Ireland adopted a two-stage procedure, whereby an interim order was granted by the court before a final adoption order. Whilst a party could technically still consent generally under the Northern Ireland legislation, the fact that consent was required for the purposes of the interim order meant that the person giving consent was always aware that there was a specific order envisaged for which their consent was sought. Whilst the Petitioner was not named, the Petition was required to be served on everyone whose consent was sought, unless service was dispensed with by the judge. In reality therefore, it is difficult to envisage in what circumstances a mother might provide valid consent to adoption without reference to the specific adoption order intended, as envisaged by section 2(4) of the Act. By 1954 the Court rules allowed a petitioner to serve a copy of a notice of the petition, rather than the petition itself, to keep his or her identity secret: Rule 4(2). The consent form enabled the signatory to consent to the making of an order in favour of the named petitioner(s), or simply to the making of an adoption order in respect of the infant. The Form was identical in so far as it confirmed the nature of consent.

30. It is noted by the Adoption of Children Report 1963 ('the 1963 Report') and at varies points in the Report that the signature of the mother was required to be witnessed by a Justice of the Peace. When the 1950 Act came into force this does not in fact appear to have been the case. Under the 1950 Rules, the signature simply had to be witnessed by one person, who signed to state that the signatory 'satisfied me that s(he) fully understood the nature of the foregoing statements'. It was only when the 1954 Rules came into force on 1st May 1954 that the signature of the mother to the consent form had to be attested by a justice of the peace to be admissible as evidence: Rule 6. The signature of any consenting party executed outside Northern Ireland also required to be attested by a justice of the peace or their equivalent in the jurisdiction.

Who can adopt?

31. The 1950 Act, unlike its English counterpart, maintained the requirement that adopters be resident and domiciled in Northern Ireland: section 2(7).

Who can be adopted?

32. In a change of definition and a relaxation of the requirements under the 1929 Act, adoption orders were prevented only in respect of any infant who was not resident in Northern Ireland under section 2(7).

Payment of money

33. Like its predecessor, section 3(c) required the Court to be satisfied that the applicant for the adoption order had not received or agreed to receive, and that no person had given or agreed to make or give any payment or reward to the applicant in consideration of the adoption unless court-sanctioned, or as provided for in the legislation. Again, this was narrower than what was prohibited under section 21, which was worded in broader terms than section 9 of the 1929 Act. It provided that:

    Except as otherwise provided in the succeeding sub-section, it shall not be lawful for any person whatsoever to give or agree to give or whether directly or indirectly to receive or agree to receive any payment or reward whatsoever in consideration of or in connection with the adoption of any infant.

34. Excepted payments included those: made or received by welfare authorities in connection with adoption; court-sanctioned; made on or behalf of a registered adoption society in respect of the maintenance of an infant placed at its disposition; and weekly payments below a prescribed rate, made to a registered adoption society in respect of the infant's maintenance where not in the care and possession of an adopter.

35. Alongside the provisions on payments, restrictions on advertisements were imposed by the 1950 Act for the first time. Section 22 prohibited any person from advertising that any parent or guardian wanted their infant adopted, that anyone was looking for a child to adopt, or that anyone was willing to arrange adoptions (unless a registered adoption society or welfare authority).

The role of third parties

36. By section 4(3), every interim order had to appoint the welfare authority (or an officer thereof) for the area where the applicant resided as guardian ad litem of the infant. Section 4(2) generally imposed a duty on the welfare authority to supervise the welfare and safeguard the interests of the infant.

37. Under Rule 4(d) the welfare authority was a notice party to every petition, and the Judge had no power to dispense with service upon it. Rule 8 effectively imposed upon the welfare authority the role of investigator on behalf of the Court, following which investigation a report was provided to the Court. This was required to address as fully as possible all of the circumstances of the infant and petitioner, and in particular the following questions (which were taken from the 1929 Rules):

    a) *whether the statements in the petition are true;*
    b) *whether any person or body whatsoever has given or agreed to give or, whether directly or indirectly, has received or agreed to receive any payment or reward whatsoever in consideration of or in connection with the adoption of the infant;*
    c) *whether the means and status of the petitioner are such as to enable him to maintain and bring up the infant suitably, and what right to or interest in property the infant has;*
    d) *what insurance, if any, has been effected on the life of the infant;*
    e) *whether it is desirable for the welfare of the infant that the Court, in making the interim order, should impose any terms or conditions in the interests of the infant.*

38. It can be assumed that, in the absence of any evidence other than that of the parties before the Court as to the issues outlined, it was upon the basis of this report that the Court satisfied itself as to the facts as required under section 3(c) (above) and that the order was in the interests of the welfare of the child. The 1963 Report explained that, on the evidence it had reviewed, 'that report is broadly the basis on which the court comes to a decision to grant, reject, or postpone the application and determine the duration of the interim order.'

39. Where an interim order was in force, section 4(5) gave the guardian ad litem the right to apply for removal of the child in certain circumstances. Section 5 imposed upon the welfare authority the duty to take into its care where necessary infants in respect of whom applications for interim or adoption orders were refused, or interim orders were discharged.

40. The welfare authority therefore had a dual role of investigator into the circumstances and merits of the proposed adoption, and guardian ad litem to protect the child's best interests. Where adoptions were arranged by welfare authorities, rather than individuals or societies, the welfare authority which was arranging the adoption would often be the same authority investigating it.

41. The new powers and responsibilities reflected the establishment of eight new welfare authorities which had taken over the functions of the Board of Guardians. Each authority's powers were exercised by a statutory welfare committee, which appointed Children's Inspectors and Welfare visitors.

42. The 1950 Act set out rules applicable to adoption societies, which had not been present in the 1929 Act. These were largely borrowed from English legislation which had responded to concerns raised in the Horsburgh Report (1937) that some agencies were advertising with financial inducements and profit motives, and children were being moved between adults with no safeguards to protect their welfare. The recommendations of that Report led to the Adoption of Children (Regulation) Act 1939. Whilst implementation was delayed by war, an exception was

made in light of the gravity of ongoing allegations and the Act came into force in June 1943. Following the conclusion of war, the Curtis Committee reported leading to the overhaul and reorganisation of children's services in the Children Act 1948.

43. Section 15 prohibited unregistered organisations from arranging adoptions:

> *It shall not be lawful after the commencement of this Act for any body of persons to make arrangements for the adoption of an infant unless that body is a registered adoption society or a welfare authority.*

44. A 'body of persons' is defined in section 32(2) as 'any body of persons, corporate or unincorporate'. This meant that there was no prohibition on individuals arranging adoptions, whether related or in some way connected to the child or not. The 1963 Report stated:

> *We have received no evidence of any person or persons in Northern Ireland making a practice of placing children, though we have been concerned to receive information about one such person who, in a period of five years, placed 13 children in Northern Ireland from an address in London.*

45. The definition of 'making arrangements for the adoption of an infant' is found in section 32(1) and relates only to those not the parent or guardian of the infant. A person makes such arrangements if he:

> *enters into or makes any agreement or arrangement for, or facilitating, the adoption of the infant by any other person, whether the adoption is effected, or intended to be effected, in pursuance of an adoption order or otherwise, or if he initiates or takes part in any negotiations of which the purpose or effect is the conclusion of or any agreement or the making of any arrangement therefor, or if he causes another to do so.*

46. By section 16, all such societies were required to be charitable associations and registered with the Ministry of Home Affairs. A charitable association was defined by section 32(2) rather than by reference to charity law, as 'any body of persons not operating for gain, which exists for the purpose of promoting a charitable, benevolent or philanthropic object, whether or not the object is charitable within the meaning of any rule of law'.

47. Under section 20, adoption societies were prohibited from placing any infant in the care and possession of a person in whose favour an adoption order could not lawfully be made, or any person resident abroad unless a licence was granted under section 23.

Restrictions on sending children for adoption abroad

48. Section 23 prohibited the transfer of British subjects abroad for adoption by non-British subjects:

> *It shall not be lawful for any person, in connection with any arrangements made for the adoption of an infant who is a British subject, to permit, or to cause or procure, the care and possession of the infant to be transferred to a person who is not a British subject or the guardian or a relative of the infant and who is resident abroad.*

49. The definition of making arrangements for an adoption set out in section 32(1) (paragraph 51 above) is broad enough to encompass adoptions under the laws of other countries or de facto, or extrajudicial, adoptions.

50. It was possible to obtain a licence, subject to any conditions imposed by the Court, to authorise the transfer of the infant to a British subject resident abroad for the purposes of adoption under section 23(2):

> *It shall not be lawful for any person, in connection with any such arrangements as aforesaid, to permit or to cause or procure the care and possession of such an infant as aforesaid to be transferred to a person who is a British subject resident abroad, and who is not the guardian or a relative of the infant, unless a licence has been granted in respect of the infant under this section.*

51. The British subject adopter was not required by law to have any connection to Northern Ireland. The same consents were required as for an interim order, and the same court form was used for this purpose. The effect of a licence was simply to enable the care and possession of the child to be transferred; it created no rights associated with adoption.

52. It is not immediately clear from the wording of section 23(2) whether the reference to 'who is not the guardian or a relative of the infant' refers to the transferor of the child, or the potential adopter. On one reading, any person, related to the child or not, could transfer a child to someone abroad for adoption so long as the adopter was a relative. On another reading, a relative of the child fell outside the requirement to obtain a licence and could transfer the child abroad to be adopted by a British subject.

53. Data obtained by the NI Child Welfare Council for its 1963 Report shows that between 1955 and 1959, two of the 25 applications for licenses were withdrawn because it was found that as the female petitioner was related to the child, the licence was not required. In practice therefore, it seems, relatives of infants were not required to obtain a licence to bring the infant abroad for the purposes of being adopted by British subjects. This suggests it is likely that the latter option above was the interpretation of section 23(2): a relative could transfer the child abroad to be adopted by a British subject without a licence. However, it is possible that relatives were considered to fall outwith the scope of these provisions entirely, and that was the reason there was no need for a licence. If that were correct, a consistent interpretation of section 23(1) would mean that it was not unlawful for any relative to bring an infant abroad for the purposes of being adopted by a non-British subject. However, that is not the natural reading of

the legislation, and on balance it is my view that it was unlawful even for relatives to transfer children abroad for the purposes of adoption by a non-British subject who was not a guardian or relative of the child.

54. Section 32(2) clarified that 'abroad' meant outside Northern Ireland.

55. The court had to be satisfied by a report of a British consular officer or other trustworthy person that the proposed adopters were suitable, and that the transfer was likely to be for the welfare of the child. However, the outworkings of the licence provisions meant that it was possible for a child to be removed from Northern Ireland for adoption by someone who had never met him or her, who had never been in Northern Ireland and who had never appeared before the Court which agreed to the transfer.

56. It should be noted that while section 23(1) restriction on transfer abroad applied to children who were British subjects, adoption orders could be made in Northern Ireland in respect of children who were not British subjects, so long as they were resident in Northern Ireland: section 2(7) above. The Act did not prohibit children who were not British subjects from being taken abroad from Northern Ireland for adoption, although this would probably only apply to children born in the Republic of Ireland, moved to a home in Northern Ireland, and then moved outside Northern Ireland in connection with an adoption.

1969 – 1987: The Adoption Act (Northern Ireland) 1967

57. The 1967 Act came into force on 1st December 1969. It repealed the 1950 Act, dispensing with the need for an interim hearing but retaining the court's discretion to make an interim order.

Consent

58. The 1967 Act eliminated the need for consent of anyone other than the parent or guardian of the infant (or the spouse of an applicant), in line with the recommendations of the 1963 Report.

59. Like the 1950 Act, consent could be given specifically or generally. Section 4(2) was explicit that consent could be given before any application for an adoption order. Consent could also be given unconditionally or subject to religious upbringing conditions. The requirement for consent to be given 6 weeks after birth was retained.

60. Consent could be dispensed with on similar grounds as before, and in making that decision the welfare of the infant was the Court's paramount consideration.

61. A parent or guardian was not required to attend to give consent, and where consent was witnessed by a justice of the peace, or relevant officer of the County Court or Supreme Court, no further evidence was required to prove consent. The consent form was more detailed than under the 1954 Rules, including a section confirming the signatory's understanding that the

court could not make an order without the consent of each parent or guardian unless dispensed with under the statutory grounds for doing so. It also provided that the signatory understood that the document could be used as evidence of consent.

62. A significant change in the 1969 Adoption County Court Rules related to the role of the guardian. The report it was required to provide to the Court under Rule 13 had to include:

    whether every consent to the making of an adoption order was freely given and with full understanding of the nature and effect of such order...

63. From debates in Parliament prior to the introduction of the 1987 Order, it seems the practice had arisen of the guardian ad litem being present for the signature of consent by the birth parents, with a view to ensuring this consent was given as described in Rule 13 (HL Deb 7 December 1987 vol 491 cc32.) At that time there was 'overwhelming support' for retaining this procedure. It was not until the 1987 Order however that the guardian was required to be independent of arrangements for adoption.

Who could adopt?

64. Section 1 of the Act extended the right to adopt to those domiciled anywhere in the UK, Isle of Man or Channel Islands, so long as they were resident in Northern Ireland; and those who were domiciled but not ordinarily resident in Northern Ireland. This tackled the problem of those UK nationals who were obligated to work away from home within the UK, such as members of the armed forces stationed in Northern Ireland, or those from Northern Ireland working in the rest of the UK.

Who could be adopted?

65. The 1967 Act retained the requirement that infants proposed for adoption be resident in Northern Ireland.

The role of third parties

66. Again, bodies of persons other than welfare authorities and registered adoption societies were prohibited from making arrangements for adoption: section 29(1). Adoptions arranged by private individuals continued to be lawful.

67. The extent of the report of the guardian ad litem was significantly increased by the 1969 Rules. It covered information such as the particulars of the accommodation in the home and other members of the household, the medical history of the petitioner, their status or occupation, whether the petitioner understood the nature of the order, whether the infant understood the nature of the order and wished to be adopted by the petitioner, the views of other relatives if either parent was dead and a range of other details.

Restrictions on sending children for adoption abroad

68. In line with its approach to domicile and residence for adopters, section 37 widened the geographical scope for adoption by narrowing the prohibition to outside of the British Islands:

> *Except under the authority of an order under section 38, no person shall take or send an infant who is a British subject out of Northern Ireland to any place outside the British Islands with a view to the adoption of the infant (whether in law or in fact) by any person not being a parent or guardian or a relative of the infant.*

69. The British Islands did not include the Republic of Ireland: section 37(4).

70. The role for licences was replaced by 'provisional adoption orders', which aimed to increase safeguards for children being transferred abroad in response to the concerns of the 1963 Report. Where an adopter was domiciled in a country other than Northern Ireland, and intended to adopt an infant from Northern Ireland in his or her own country, the Court could make a provisional adoption order under section 38, giving the applicant custody of the infant. Unlike the licence system, the order was granted in favour of the actual adopter, and required the place of adoption to be the domicile of the adopter.

1987 – 1999: The Adoption (Northern Ireland) Order 1987

71. The 1987 Order came into force on 1st October 1989 and remains the current legal framework for adoption in Northern Ireland. It followed both significant reform in England and Wales in the Adoption Act 1976, and the Report of the Children and Young Persons Review Group on the Adoption of Children in Northern Ireland (1982).

72. Notable reforms included:

    a. The introduction of a statutory duty on Health and Social Services Boards to provide an adoption service;
    b. The introduction of 'freeing orders' which enabled parental rights to be transferred from parents to an adoption agency;
    c. Requirement for adoption societies to renew registration every three years;
    d. Access to his or her birth records for an adopted person on reaching the age of majority.

Consent

73. Consent is required by the 1987 Order if the child is not freed for adoption. In that case each parent or guardian must agree 'freely, and with full understanding of what is involved' either generally or specifically to an adoption, and either conditionally or subject to religious upbringing. Consent can be dispensed with on a specified ground, but the catch all discretion of earlier legislation – that it was a person whose consent ought in the opinion of the court to be dispensed with – is removed.

74. A child can be freed for adoption with or without parental agreement. By section 17, a joint application can be made by parents and adoption agency to free where the court is 'satisfied in the case of each parent or guardian that he freely, and with full understanding of what is involved, agrees generally and unconditionally to the making of an adoption order'. The same grounds for dispensing with consent to an adoption apply to a freeing application.

75. As under the 1969 Rules, it was for the guardian to 'ensure so far as is reasonably practicable that any agreement to the making of an adoption order is given freely and unconditionally and with full understanding of what is involved': Rule 5(a). Consent for freeing or to an adoption order was required to be witnessed by a Justice of the Peace for all relevant parties, not just the mother: Rules 6, 18.

The role of third parties

76. For the first time, the 1987 Order prohibited individuals from making arrangements for adoption or placing a child for adoption, unless they were the parent placing the child with a relative, or the individual is acting under a court order: Article 11. Adoption societies registered in Britain could act only insofar as necessary to do so in the interests of one of those parties whose needs they were established to meet.

77. Rule 4 of the County Courts (Amendment No. 3) Rules (Northern Ireland) 1989 required the guardian ad litem to be an officer of a Board or employee of an approved organisation who was not personally involved in the making of arrangements for adoption. If employed by any organisation other than a Board, an employee could not act as guardian ad litem at all where that organisation was involved in the arrangements.

Restrictions on sending children for adoption abroad

78. The essence of the provisional adoption order was retained in the 1987 Order. By Article 57 the court could make an order vesting in the applicant the parent rights and duties relating to the child (later 'parental responsibility') where they were not domiciled in Northern Ireland but intended to adopt the child in their country of domicile. The applicant had to provide an affidavit from a suitably qualified expert on the law of adoption in their country of domicile: Rule 27(3), 1989 Rules.

79. Section 58 otherwise restricted removal of children for adoptions abroad. For the first time Northern Ireland law prohibited both British subjects and citizens of the Republic of Ireland being taken outside the British Isles with a view to adoption by anyone not the parent, guardian or relative of the child.

Appendix 2:

Extracts and discussion on all the oral testimonies

Dealing with trauma

Birth mothers and their children were being asked to physically reveal themselves to the researchers on this project, to trust the promise of anonymity and, in many cases, to discuss in detail events in their lives they may never have disclosed to anyone. In this section of the report, it is necessary to recognise the presence of trauma in the oral histories of the birth mothers and their children, and to further explore how this impacted the research. From reports in the Republic of Ireland, and popular media discussions of these institutions, it was clear that memories of trauma related to time spent in mother and baby homes and laundries would surface in the interviews. It was important that the researchers did not project their own expectations on to these interviews and equally crucial to allow expressions of trauma, expected or unexpected, to come forward. A number of examples are included in this short discussion.

Missing memories

Birth mothers often reached a point in the interview where they could not remember an event that would appear to an outsider to be memorable. In each of these cases there was a specific missing memory of a highly traumatic incident. This was different to simply 'not remembering', but was more of a protective, subconscious decision to avoid a specific memory. One of the interviewees (TS) explained that a friend warned her before she was interviewed that she would be expected to talk about the actual process of leaving her baby son in a children's home. At this point, it suddenly became apparent to TS that she had no memory of the moment. It is highly likely that this 'forgetfulness' was a psychological, potentially unconscious choice. TS explained that she did not want to push herself to remember it and was certain that, even if she 'did sit and think about' it, this memory would still not resurface. TS felt that this warranted further explanation. She also narrated that during counselling for unrelated workplace bullying, her counsellor had asked if she had ever been previously made to feel 'humiliated'. Her immediate response in that situation had been 'no' but that was not accurate:

> *And I didn't, I couldn't, and then this hit me, you know, Sister *name redacted* and I started to cry. And I cried for that whole hour and I couldn't tell that girl that I couldn't stop crying. And then I kind of said to her before I left, so we carried it on the next time. But, so that came out of me from nowhere on that day. So I don't want or wouldn't want anything to bring that, leaving *name of son redacted* there, because I have no recollection of it.*

In therapy for an unrelated incident TS was forced, unexpectedly, to confront her feelings about one of the nuns she had encountered in a mother and baby home and her own experience of 'a shouting session' she had been subjected to over a trivial incident about clean napkins. Despite its triviality, it still evoked an emotional reaction in relation to the trauma TS had experienced. She claimed these missing memories were something she did not want to explore.

BC has a similar experience when faced with the adoption of her child. She remembers her sister suggesting she keep the baby, but recognising that this was impossible. She described vividly a mounting anxiety, an overwhelming mix of emotions and then a shut down, and it is here that her memories disappeared:

> *But I remember very clearly, I was, I was absolutely hysterical, and nurses, probably because I was so young, would spend a lot of time with me, and there was one particular red-headed nurse, came down and she sat with me and she held my hand, and then I remember just thinking just like I've done there, I remember swallowing and thinking 'this is too painful' ... And I literally, I went to the other side of the bed, and I was gone. Every ... I just literally put a shutter on it ... Now that's not to say that I haven't cried about it since, but I literally, psychologically put a shutter down it was the only way to function ... It was the only way I was going to survive. And it was just ... bring that shutter down. I don't know how I did it, I mean I must have had some resources as a fifteen-year-old, to be able to do that, and actually to be able to shut off all that.*

HS has the same mental block about travelling home, to her parent's house, after her baby was given up for adoption. In what an outsider would assume to be a memorable part of her experience, she stated that all she could remember was that the grass near the local church needed cutting, and that was it. Another interviewee, IH, described the facts around her daughter's birth as 'wiped.' In an emotional interview she outlined the 'horrendous' birth experience and the fact that she could not remember her child's date of birth. She knew it had been March, but nothing further and was strongly of the view that this was the result of her memory 'saving' her. YN described putting her thoughts into a 'zip folder.' After attending a dance class she felt uncomfortable at being touched by her dance partner and decided not to go back. She claimed that her experiences were placed in the 'folder' so that they existed, but weren't 'bursting to come out all the time.' It was easier to compartmentalise the memories than feel them constantly, but they could still come out in seemingly neutral situations.

It is crucial to recognise that these gaps in memory reveal significant details about the most difficult parts of these testimonies, rather than suggesting that the testimonies are flawed as a result of these omissions. These young women were under pressure to make life-altering decisions, with little or no support, in the aftermath of an isolated and traumatic birth. It is clear from their own explanations that they feel they have isolated these memories and buried them as a coping mechanism. A number of women described blank space in their memories, 'pulling down blinds' or simply acknowledged that they refused to push further to try to remember to protect themselves from the most traumatic parts of their experience. Instead of mourning the loss of these memories, we need to recognise how much they reveal about the enduring trauma of so many of these experiences.

Sexual Abuse

The interviewers recognised that sexual abuse was likely to be a part of the testimonies, but abuse was present in so many stories and in so many unexpected incarnations. In many cases it was unclear whether interviewees wanted to discuss this further, or had even spoken to anyone about it before. In some cases, interviewees dismissed these revelations as irrelevant, but it was clear that this was for the benefit of the research project and they felt that they needed to 'stay on topic'. However, it was important to allow space to discuss these memories. It was integral to the story in many cases, and, moreover, the interviewees needed to be allowed the space in which to explore the possible connections between these events, their own experience in the institutions and their lived trauma. On a basic human level, it was vitally important to allow respondents the opportunity to talk about any aspect of their story and to respect their bravery in coming forward. The researchers did not want their position as researchers on a specific subject to dictate the boundaries or length of the interview. As oral historians it is always imperative to allow the respondents to indicate their own limitations and to speak on subjects that many had been forced to hide for so long. Because of this, interviews varied in length and often much longer periods of time were spent building the relationship through conversation before the tape was switched on and after it was switched off.

Traumatic discussions of sexual abuse were not unanticipated by the researchers but it was surprising that abuse of this nature featured so prolifically on the periphery of their stories. Many interviewees discussed their lives before they entered the institutions being researched with some reservations, referring to sexual abuse as children or teenagers. When they expanded upon this it was often clear that the sexual abuse they had endured was integral to the story and that any discussion of it would help our understanding of their experience as a whole. Accusations of abuse were levied at members of the clergy, strangers, family friends, family members and, in some cases, 'boyfriends' who had groomed and taken advantage of them at a young age.

Abuse allegations often disrupted the chronology of the interviews, either because some interviewees seemed unsure if they were going to discuss it, or because of the complex nature of what they were trying to explain and whether it was 'relevant.' BC halted her interview during a discussion of the medical procedures in the mother and baby home. She had been asked what the researcher considered to be a very off-hand question about nursing, and BC stopped the interview and struggled to articulate exactly what it was she wanted to say:

> *That's another issue which is going to be very difficult for me … there is another issue … but anyway you wouldn't have asked, you wouldn't have asked her. You would have asked other people because they almost fostered a lack of support in one another. I don't know how they did that, looking back I don't know how they did that.*

What BC was trying to convey was that over the course of many years she had come to the conclusion that she was sexually abused by a member of staff in one of the institutions. She talked through the birth of her subsequent children, and how she began to recognise that she had been given unnecessary, invasive internal examinations during her first pregnancy in the mother and baby home, once or twice a week:

> *It depended on what mood … and it wouldn't always be everyone … and she would call you to a particular room and people would come down and say "Sister Z needs to see you." And it was always in the evenings. And you would go up and she would say "I need to do an internal*

examination to see how much you're dilated and whether everything's healthy up there." And she did that on the regular would-be basis, to not all of us, most of us. And ... I blanked ... I've blanked out ... I remember the examinations and I remember feeling really uncomfortable during them and they seemed to go on a long time. But anyway I didn't realise at the time what it was because I had no notion of sex abuse or anything like that.

Unexpected revelations like these forced a change of direction and usually extended the interview to allow for discussion and exploration of the thoughts and feelings of the interviewee. In these situations it was important to move past a simple interviewee/interviewer dynamic for the comfort and support of the narrator. This is why, after revelations like this, the interviews could become more conversational, as the interviewer attempted to provide support and the narrator was given space to make sense of their experience. In addition, by discussing an element of their testimony that they perceive to be the most shocking, the narrator has demonstrated an increased level of trust. It would break that trust to fail to explore this crucial part of the testimony adequately.

Other examples of this element of testimony were frequent, and equally unexpected. MN revealed partway through the interview that she and other girls had been abused by the father of the man who got her pregnant. This changed the dynamic of the interview. The man who had first tried to arrange an illegal abortion, then was instrumental in MN's placement in a mother and baby home, had been taking advantage of the young women he was claiming to support. This made MN's references to her shame and guilt around her pregnancy even more significant. The man's position as a member of a religious community emphasised that she had been let down repeatedly.

AB's story of abuse framed her whole testimony and was instrumental in understanding her experiences of mother and baby homes. As a child, she was frequently assaulted sexually by her stepfather. By her early teens, AB had made the decision that getting pregnant was the only way to avoid this abuse. Later when she became pregnant for a second time and gave birth to a girl, she made the decision to have the child adopted lest the baby ever experience similar abuse from a stepfather. The earlier abuse directly impacted her entire life story, providing a clear explanation for the decision to keep her son but place her daughter for adoption. It also emphasised why she was able to articulate this decision logically in the interview.

Another interviewee, NO, explained how trauma related to her experience as an unmarried mother had resurfaced frequently over the years. It was clear that her interview was two stories; one of her experience in a mother and baby home, and the other was the battle with the aftermath. This was a testament to the emotional complexity of adoption and its ongoing repercussions. After her pregnancy, NO married an abusive man but refused to sleep with him for fear of becoming pregnant again. She drank to excess, cut herself, attempted suicide and spent time in a psychiatric unit. She labelled her behaviour 'destructive' and explained how the abuse had rekindled her feelings from the adoption:

So many times in my life I've just felt like this lost child. So many times. And I know I'm not that lost child anymore, but I still drift back to how I felt then.

In cases like these it was hard to know whether to continue the interview, as the emotions of the past and the present threatened to overwhelm the narrator. What became increasingly clear was that without taking adequate time to understand and empathise with the trauma, the interviews would not have explored, in enough detail, the ramifications of adoption and the shame that had been imposed on these women.

Physical manifestations of trauma

As well as the content of the interviews, there were physical representations of anxiety during the interviews. Respondents asked rhetorical questions about their own achievements, seeking assurance that they 'hadn't done too badly', that they had succeeded in their careers and their families. Some kept their mobile phones nearby and checked them, or answered calls mid-interview. Some stopped the tape when the interview questions drifted beyond their personal boundaries. When interviews took place at the house of the narrator, several left the room with little warning or played with pets as a means of distraction. When we returned to the interview the chronology had broken and it was perhaps easier for the interviewee to change the direction of the interview or take some time to think without extended silence.

In addition, many of the interviewees discussed the ways in which trauma has stayed with them or could be triggered. Several discussed being unable to watch genealogy or ancestry programmes on television. NO revealed that she kept a photograph of her adopted child with her at all times, slept with it and had even found it untarnished after a house fire. Yet one of the photographs featured one of the nuns from the mother and baby home, who NO remembered as an unpleasant individual, holding the child. NO discussed seeing the face of the nun every night before she went to bed. But the picture is her child.

HS discussed the lingering shame she feels from her experience and how it can surface in ordinary situations:

> *It's a thing that's happened. It's a time of my life that I'll never get back and it still haunts me. It always will. You'll always feel that you're a lesser person than other people. That wee ghost back here, someone will always say… you think you're doing so well and then all of a sudden this wee ghost raised its head and it pulls you back from maybe doing something then you're able to do. And it's just a confidence thing, it pulls you back to say 'I'm not good enough to do it. I'm not good enough to be in their company'. You know, it's always there in your subconscious.*

A significant number of the interviews were emotional, either throughout or at specific moments, and the most common moment for this was the discussion of adoption. It was at these moments that the raw emotion attached to the memories became most obvious, and that pain of the adoption process had not disappeared. MN's memories were quick and narrated through tears:

> *And then after six weeks my baby was up for adoption. So when my six weeks were up, she, I had to take her, I had to dress her the day that she was going, this was the same day as I was going home then. I had to feed her that morning. I had to dress her. I had to wrap her. We were instructed what clothes to bring for them. I had to wrap her in a shawl. I had to carry her down the front stairs, which we weren't normally allowed to use, into the Colonel's office [a Salvation Army Colonel] and I wasn't allowed to see the prospective parents. I had to then hand her over to the Colonel and then I had to leave the room. And then she took her and give her to her new family. That was the last I saw her (became tearful here). It was extremely difficult to do that. If, if at least they'd had the humility to dress the baby that morning and take her from the nursery it would have been a little bit easier. And this wasn't just me, this was every girl. It was the same, it was the same for everybody. That's what it was.*

MN ended with an emotional final memory of her experience, and it was here we decided to end the interview, as it became clear that she had become overwhelmed with both the past and present:

> *And then being told to then try and live a normal life and pretend that none of this had ever happened. And, as I say, it's only...that was fifty years ago and I would say it's only about two years ago from I was able to tell anyone other than my husband and my parents who are now dead. I had a younger brother and I don't think he knew. And I hope he didn't; I hope he doesn't know what happened or anything about it. I would be devastated if I thought he knew. And that was kind of my experience with Thorndale House and their treatment of us. As I say, it's a long, long, long time ago and for all these years I've put it out of my head and tried not to remember. So there's probably lots of other wee details that I haven't remembered … And to be forced to carry your baby and just hand her over and just walk away was a terribly, terribly hard thing. And I tried to, I made her wee clothes and I had embroidered her initials inside her clothes in the hopes that, if her name was changed she might at least have her initials. And I still have her other clothes today (became more tearful here). That's fifty years ago and I kept them.*

IH spoke in the same way about her birth daughter's experiences of adoption, and through that, her own regret and sadness. Like MN, the recollection was quick and addressed the past and the present:

> *… But she just … her sister was treated exactly the same, but her adoptive parents made her go to boarding school when she was sixteen, because they didn't, I don't know what they didn't like about her … and then they stopped paying it half way through the year. So she had to leave school, and go to work. But she went back to live with them again. And her adoptive father died about six months ago, and she did … her mother hasn't spoken to her for years. And her mother found, well found out some stage, that she had found me somewhere, and she says, "just go to your other mother", or something. But when she went down to help her adoptive mother through the, the burial and things, she was friendly with her for about two or three weeks, and then her adopted mother said, "you didn't buy your father any flowers for his funeral … I don't want to see you again." So she has cut all ties with her again. So she has no … Even all the aunts and uncles she would've had as a child growing up in this adoptive family, she doesn't have contact with any of them, because her mother has banned them from seeing her. So adoptions don't always work out, you know … If I had known all that, I would have fought harder. I would have fought harder, at the time …*

IH's frustrations were emphasised by the repetition of that phrase. 'I would have fought harder.' The trauma of the adoption and her decision were intertwined with her regrets that her daughter was not given a good home, that she could have provided that and that she had been misled:

> *And she was adopted by a man who was high up in the hospital, and a music teacher, who you would have thought would have been ideal parents. Didn't work out. And her younger sister's the same, but her younger sister has not found, has not looked for her birth mother. She has decided not to look. But she doesn't speak to the mother either, so it's sad for both of them, you know. If I had known how awful it was going to be, and how you could have got help, I would have fought harder. But then I wouldn't have been the person I am, either, probably … like just … I don't know, if I would have got into the training I did, if they'd known my history.*

Her reiteration that she would have ‘fought harder’ demonstrates emotional content that does not emerge from archival history alone and was an indicator of the enduring nature of the emotional toll of these decisions, even decades later.

Some contemporary views on adoption from women who ran mother and baby homes and laundries emphasised that it was a solution to the problems of illegitimacy, and that there were few alternatives for so many of the women who came to these institutions. Yet it was clear immediately that for the women who faced the ‘choice’ between total isolation and adoption, there was little comfort in these options. The adoption decision was not only traumatic for themselves as teenagers or young women. The trauma has followed them throughout their lives, being rekindled when they eventually attempted to reunite with their children. The evidence of this trauma was in the physicality of the interviews, in the emotional distress and anxiety associated with giving testimony.

These interviews differed from other types of interview because of the constant awareness of the serious and private nature of the conversation and the position of the interviewer as not only a stranger, but also an outsider, with no experiences of the institutions themselves. This served to inhibit the interview in the initial stages, until we could build the trust and the empathy that you would require from a less formal situation. Being an outsider and a stranger worked in our favour once we had addressed these barriers. Many of the interviewees had chosen not to tell their families about this most private element of their life history, but talking to a stranger was less risky. They felt less open to judgement and that the encounter carried with it fewer consequences in the long term. Because the interviewers had not experienced the homes themselves, there was a desire to impress upon them all relevant information and to ensure that they understood the context and circumstances of their experience. Both of these aspects helped mitigate the traumatic aspects of the interviews and led to a more detailed and reflective oral history collection.

Reuniting

The testimonies of birth mothers and their families rarely ended with the adoption of their baby followed by a swift and straightforward process of reintegration into their former lives. Where mothers had given their babies up for adoption, the interview invariably included discussions of reunification, whether ongoing, positive or unsuccessful. By recording this element of the story it was possible to understand the difficulties of this process and to better understand how trauma could span the decades and come from the reunification as well.

It was rare that birth mothers had not made some attempt to locate their children, usually as soon as it was possible for them to do so. However, some had chosen not to. Others had tried and failed. Along with the adoption process, this was one of the most difficult parts of the interview, with interviewees succumbing to tears and revealing their frustration with the process or the disappointment with the outcome. During her interview, GN produced two rings that she had bought herself as a reminder of her two children and as a way to do something nice for herself. She broke down in tears when explaining that she could not wait to show them to her birth daughter. CD described the difficulties of navigating a new relationship when the ‘mother’ and ‘daughter’ were in their fifties and seventies respectively. LC produced photo after photo of her son, who she had finally met, and talked with the interviewer about the facial similarities the pair shared. CS explained her anger and frustration when her birth mother denied their biological connection for years and the damage it had caused to their relationship. KF was born in one of the Good Shepherd mother and

baby homes and had spent decades searching for her birth mother. She described feeling let down by social services, who in her view delayed her attempts to find her mother, and then, to her further annoyance acted as chaperones at her first meeting with her birth mother. This imposition made the long-awaited meeting awkward and disappointing and did little to address the questions and the fear KF had felt before. It was not until the second meeting, away from the social workers, that mother and daughter were able to adequately address their relationship.

The reuniting stories are so important. They stretch beyond simply asking about experiences of mother and baby homes, and instead reveal the complex and enduring nature of trauma over the decades. They reveal the impact of the adoption decision on two lives. Including these stories also provides a perspective that is not to be found in the archives, by demonstrating how the trauma of their first pregnancy has, in many cases, not dissipated and needs to be addressed.

Interviewees who were not birth mothers (or their children)

It is important to acknowledge also those who came forward to offer testimony from their perspective as retired professionals or observers of either mother and baby homes or Magdalene laundries. Many of these individuals have also been courageous for different reasons, offering their actions or those of their professional group up for scrutiny. In particular, the Good Shepherd Sisters who volunteered interviews faced the unenviable task of defending two types of institution that have become the subject of intense public scrutiny and critique. They have, no doubt, faced their own form of trauma in seeing their Order become the subject of severe criticism. As interviewees, they were offered the same respect and rights that were due to all the other research participants. Part of the ethical code of the oral historian is to 'do no harm' to those who place their personal histories on the record. The two Sisters who were interviewed both indicated areas that they did not wish to speak about, but these related to their family and personal background rather than the mother and baby homes or the laundries. Like all other interviewees, attention was paid to their well-being during the interviews and they have been sent transcripts for post-interview review. Neither has asked for any deletions from their transcripts, which both ranged over a good deal of important and helpful material as readers of the report will appreciate. The contribution of the Good Shepherd Sisters to this element of the research was appreciated.

MEMBERS OF THE CLERGY OR RELIGIOUS ORDERS

Sister 1 (S1)

S1 is a Good Shepherd Sister with extensive experience of working in the order's convents in Northern Ireland. She arrived in Northern Ireland in the 1960s and her first task was to work in one of the laundries, or the St Mary's class as it was known to the Sisters. She recalls that 'I was introduced to the St Mary's ladies and I got a great welcome from them, they were really very loving really to me … they were so delighted to see a young nun.' The laundry had just been 'renovated and restructured' and S1 recalled that it was very bright' with an 'open plan' layout. She explained her role in the laundry, which was 'to check clothes to make sure that all the white marks were there [on the laundry] and put them back into the laundry bags' for the return journey home.' The women working

in the laundry demonstrated the procedures for her as S1 learned on the job. Shortly afterwards, she was 'allocated … to look after some of the hotels.' Hotels and private homes were the mainstay of the convent's laundry business, with the summer months the busiest because the hotels had their peak occupancy levels. The work involved dealing with 'a big number of sheets and a big number of, what'll I say, table linen, serviettes and towels. There were a few private washes too.'

One of S1's most vivid memories of working in the convent was of a young girl 'she's still in my mind' who was 'special needs.' S1 remembers 'praising her for being able to fold a little serviette'. Overall, she 'I thought it was just lovely being with them really. I liked it really, in that sense.'

On arrival at the laundry, women 'were given new names' and S1 believed that 'they seemed to take up their names fine.' S1 explained the context of this requirement: 'well you know the way they were encouraged not … some of them would say today they weren't allowed to share their story, but that was up to them but they were encouraged not to give too much information about themselves and that when they left nobody would know anything about them.'

S1 recalled that work in the laundry 'wasn't so difficult but I suppose the pressers could be hard at times because they were hot and you had to work it with your leg as well and it was 'hard on your hand … and you'd find it hot alright'. The women were trained on how to use the machines and for this reason she did not 'remember any accidents in the laundry'. Women arriving in the laundry were assessed by the 'Sister in charge in the laundry who allocated them to different tasks, and see how they got on.' They might begin by 'just folding clothes'. Recalling her time working in the laundry S1 said 'when I was there it was great craic … I certainly remember them … having good chats themselves.' There 'wasn't silence, but she agreed that there was 'a level of quiet, yes. But you see, the girls had to be taught, in a sense I felt, a lot of skills in the laundry because they were able to hold on a job and to stay certain, you know, with jobs afterwards.' She provided an example of work in the laundry provided a skill for use in the outside world of paid labour: 'the dry-cleaning place … it was quite a good. Girls got good jobs after learning to dry clean, oh yes.' S1 maintained that: 'a lot of girls … seemed to think that their time with us was worthwhile and they valued and they had good relationships with us, and they always kept in touch.'

Asked about whether or not the laundry women had holidays, S1 explained that they were taken away for one week each year to various seaside villages. She remembered them 'telling me about it and they were all just excited going. And they loved it and a whole … a full week away at sea.' In addition to this 'there were lots of Saturdays. The minibus was there every Saturday to bring them a number, of girls, every Saturday to different places.' In addition, she recalled that some of the 'girls were going out in the evening to classes in the minibus … the Sisters were taking them out to English, I think, and Cookery.' This took place after laundry work 'finished around half-five and they had supper at six' and they headed off for classes at seven o'clock at the local technical college.' S1 recalled other trips out for the laundry women in the convent's minibus. Day trips were undertaken to a number of seaside towns and villages. On these occasions, S1 recalled 'they'd usually have a meal out in a hotel, or a restaurant … The sisters looked after them that day, they paid for everything.' The trip might also include a visit to 'a shopping centre somewhere' and the laundry women would 'do their own shopping there'. They had some cash for this shopping as 'they got some money every week anyway. Not a whole a lot I think.' Asked to clarify whether or not the women were paid a wage for their work in the laundry, S1 replied that 'it was more pocket money I would say'. This is what they spent on these Saturday trips out.

S1 was not herself with the St Mary's women in the evenings, but believes that other activities included 'playing games like Scrabble and Ludo and Snakes and Ladders, and there was kind of money games, and there was table tennis there as well for the girls in the big room.' There was a television and S1 explained that 'they always watched television, they loved Ironside that was on that time … and Top of the Pops! They had a record player as well.' S1 also revealed that 'a lot of entertainment came in for the girls. I know, I still hear them talking, well, years ago about [when] *name of well-known singer redacted*came in with his music and other entertainers used to come in as well.' There was access to books: 'novels and things … some of them religious some were not' but S1 does not think newspapers were made available. Nor does she recall there being a telephone that the women could use in the St Mary's home. She did remember one in the Good Shepherd mother and baby home that she moved on to in later years. In terms of the laundry women S1 speculated: 'I'd say they could use the convent phone if they had to request a call or, you know? I'd say there was … but I didn't think they had a phone.'

The women were expected to attend Mass in the convent at least two or three times a week: 'half-seven mass… they were expected to go'. However, S1 said she did not know anything about potential penalties for those who refused to attend mass. S1 valued the spiritual element of life in the convent for these women:

> *they were in a time of crisis when they'd come in and they valued prayer really because I'd say to them, or somebody'd say "we'll pray about that … God's always with you, God loves you, you see. Nobody loves you." We'd tell them that … and they felt like they got a lot of support through prayer, through kind of, all … problems they had.*

Asked if the laundry women received visitors, S1 thought this varied from individual to individual:

> *But there was a number of people who kind of befriended them and would come in to see them. Maybe the former workplace where they worked formerly or something. I'm not sure … there was a lady up in *town redacted* … she'd come with a few of the ladies for a weekend and just keep in touch … they went out to her for a weekend or … and she'd come in to see them. Some … some befrienders like that you know? They were all over eighteen those girls that went out. They were older.*

S1 discussed the education opportunities that she understood were available to the laundry workers. One Sister was tasked, at eleven o'clock each day, with taking those who desired it to an education room upstairs in the building. This Sister offered instruction in typing, English and Arithmetic and there 'was an understanding with the Sister in charge of the laundry that they could leave.' These classes continued until lunch, at twelve-thirty. S1 recalled that this educational provision was separate from that offered to a younger group of girls who 'had lessons the whole day really.' She thinks 'they were never in the laundry, no girl could work in the laundry unless she was over fifteen.' It is not clear if the twelve year old mentioned above was working on serviettes in some other capacity or if this was an occasions in which a young girl did work in the laundry. The Institutional Historical Abuse Inquiry speculated that some girls of school age might have worked in the laundry during the summer holidays.

There was also a 'great emphasis on music, and a great emphasis on plays and play clothes and doing little sketches. And it was a means as well of teaching them elocution and good English and … maturing them really and giving them a sense of confidence.' S1 reasoned that these activities

helped ready the laundry women to return to the community outside the convent. Other activities she remembered included walking in the grounds and tennis. On Sundays, the same Sister who led educational classes would take the women 'for poetry and a bit of drama.' This was in the afternoons and 'then some other sister took them for religion classes'.

The women slept in 'a big dormitory' with dividers between each bed to provide 'a bit of privacy.' A Sister slept close by each night. If one of them decided that they wanted to leave the convent, S1 explained that:

> *we'd send her to the Mistress. She'd have to talk … not to me, you know. She'd have to discuss that with the Sister in charge … she'd have to go up to her office and talk to her about that. And the Sister in charge would have a chat with her and would decide whether she could go straight away or, you know, that she'd have to find employment or what she wanted.*

If this was a woman who had been referred by a social worker the Sister would 'have to talk first then to a social worker and discuss it, oh certainly yes.' If the woman had family, 'you'd have to talk to family about it. But very often they were kind of independent and … had no family support.'

Asked for a profile of the women she encountered, S1 thought the age of those in the laundry was from sixteen upwards. Some came from a particular hospital: 'they were registered 'special care', and some were put in by their parents, and some were under court order. So there was a whole mixture of them really.' In cases where someone was placed in the laundry by their parents, S1 reflected that 'they were put in by their parents because the parents really didn't want to … there was a stigma attached to a child with disabilities and they didn't want to care for them.' She remembered that another cohort of laundry women were 'former children's home girls who hadn't made it … made it to independent living in the community, and they were returned back to Good Shepherd, to keep them. And then they went out again and maybe came back again.' S1 believed that in some of these cases the women had referred themselves, having struggled to cope on leaving the convent environment. She offered an example of someone in this category:

> *I know one girl, she … she was sixteen. Is it sixteen? No she was eighteen. She was eighteen when she left *name of children's home redacted* and they got her a job [and soon after] … a Sister was sent for because things weren't working out with the manager and [the Sister] brought her to us and I know she was unhappy to be with us but … the *employers redacted* weren't happy with her employment.*

In this case, S1 recalled that the individual concerned eventually trained in another occupation. She was in the laundry from 'sort of November until August, and … I don't think she was that happy staying on, but what could you do?' Because there was no … she had no employment.'

Asked to expand on cases of women who arrived at the laundry via the courts, S1 felt it was usually due to 'some tiffs' although she could not be sure because 'we weren't told. Sister in charge didn't tell us, other than due to court orders, what they were in for, you know? I think for stealing in shops and things like that, shoplifting.' However, S1 does not recall encountering a probation officer visiting a client in the laundry and this tallies with the testimony offered by the three retired probation officers that, certainly by the 1970s, there was relatively limited interaction between the Probation Service and the Good Shepherd Sisters.

S1 maintained that anyone who did serve a period of court-imposed detention in the laundry would leave at the end of the designated period. She also thought that they would have been allowed, like the other women, to 'go out on a Saturday, with a senior girl, you know? When they were accompanied … no girl went out really without there being somebody else with her'. A senior girl was someone who 'was there for a long time. She would also be known as 'an Auxiliary' or a 'Child of Mary'. This was an individual who 'had made a commitment to help the girls and to support the Sisters in their work.' An Auxiliary committed to spending the rest of their life in the convent. They 'guided the girls. They were there to guide them really and to … not to … not to challenge them or anything but to guide them really.'

Asked to explain the category of 'moral danger' and what it meant in the context of women placed in the laundry because they were characterised as at risk in this fashion, S1 was unsure about how to best define it: 'Well I would say that they had a baby or two babies … actually special care came under, on the scene then and they registered some of those girls [as special care]. So I just don't know how … how that criteria worked.'

Discussing women in the laundry who originated from the Republic of Ireland and how they came to be referred to the Good Shepherd convent, S1 revealed that they were:

> *referred by the Legion [Legion of Mary], referred by a doctor or referred by domestic violence at home, or you know … I don't think there were court referrals … I think … Legion of Mary [would] see them homeless and see them unsupported and refer them up. And a lot … were working in [Northern Ireland] and things didn't work out for them so they were referred … to us, if you know what I mean?*

S1 was unclear about the details of money received by the Good Shepherds from the State for the support of the women in the laundry: 'I wouldn't be sure of that really. But I would imagine the younger girls would have to be … some maintenance … but not for the elder girls, and not for the ones who came in without social services' support'. She recalled that, in the wake of the Seebohm Report of 1968, the Sisters received more grants. S1 remembered that in the laundry at her convent in the 1970s 'a manager came in and that there was employees that came in as well.' The Sisters were then 'able to do more for the girls, so they say. They ran more classes and they were able to go out and get employment then. They had money to pay for the employees that came in.'

On the subject of deaths and burials of the laundry women, S1 recalled that the:

> *girls very often died in the hospital … Well a few would have died in the convent, yes. But they would be like any other burial … they … they were laid out and … say a wee prayer for them and there … I can remember doing that … they'd bring down the coffin then and they were going to the convent church.*

There was then 'full funeral rites and the burial.' S1 maintained those buried in this way have their graves marked 'and all the names are up in black marble.' If the deceased had any family, they would be traced. Often the Sister in charge 'had some … some record … some information I think.' S1 also told us 'I certainly remember death notices [in local newspapers] but I'm not sure when it started … But certainly in the seventies there were death notices in the paper.' She discussed the case of one woman who died in 1980 after several decades in one of the St Mary's homes. She had arrived in the 1940s, already in middle-age, from a residential home. S1 had researched her and it appeared that

'she had nobody.' A local priest had also enquired about her background 'but he didn't know … who … what category of girl or why she had come to us'.

Her concluding thought on the Good Shepherd laundry was that 'I suppose it was difficult, it was a hard situation but what else was available? There was nothing else. Well, Social Services, social services hadn't developed enough to do more things in the community. The community services came on board later you know, when girls could stay out and society changed too. But at that time what was there? I don't know'. S1 returned to this theme at the end of her testimony, to add 'I'm sorry about the laundries alright but what could we do? It was only when Social Services came on with grant aid … we didn't need the money as much. And they came forward to help and there was more collaboration.'

The discussion with S1 also covered her time working in mother and baby homes operated by the Good Shepherds in Northern Ireland. Amongst the matters that emerged in this segment of her testimony was the burial of stillborn babies. Expectant mothers in these homes usually gave birth in one of the local NHS hospitals and, in some cases, S1 believes that stillborn babies were dealt with by the hospital authorities. In a small number of cases these babies were laid to rest in a Good Shepherd plot at a local cemetery. In one of these plots two babies are named on the large grave but S1 explained that 'there was about six or seven babies there I think'. She maintained that the names of the other babies in this particular grave are not on a headstone there because this was the wish of the birth mother: the stigma and secrecy attached to unmarried pregnancy being maintained in the anonymity of their baby's resting place.

S1 also related details of the higher education training that prepared her for aspects of the work in mother and baby homes. Many of the Good Shepherd Sisters took social work and related qualifications during the 1960s and 1970s. S1 had also previously spent a number of months in one of the Order's mother and baby homes in the Republic before her career took her north of the border. She described the emotional dynamics that led to a young women being placed in one of the homes:

> *parents wouldn't have them when they were pregnant and I remember going to the parlour one day and this mother came up to see her daughter and she said to me straight away "Sister what do you think of the terrible girl I have, terrible girl … look at her! What has she done?"*

In S1's opinion, the fact that parents had washed their hands of young women like this meant that 'they were thrilled to come into us. It's the truth, because when they came in you could see the change so quickly afterwards when they got over the first few days. And they could go through the pregnancy in a relaxed atmosphere. It was very therapeutic for them really'.

The process of referral to the home began with a formal welcome. Then 'every girl got a booklet' and was shown to 'her little cubicle in the room and it was tidied up and she was delighted, it was kind of a student's room, some of them said to me.' They each had 'a washing basin and a bed and a chair and they were comfortable'. S1 revealed the trauma the young women went through, remarking that 'they could hear each other crying alright … which some of them didn't like.'

S1 described the structured daily routine, which she felt was good for the residents. This included 'a bit of knitting and I used to … well the Sister in charge used to encourage them to knit something for the baby, teach them how to crochet.' The home had a 'beautiful … music box' and there was TV with

Top of the Pops again popular. Some of the residents received parental visitors, but by no means all of them. A significant number, S1 remembered, were referred by agencies like the NSPCC or Social Services and did not have functioning family networks. In the early 1970s, 'Social Services got their act in order and they … they supported the girls really and they came to visit them every month … it was a stipulation. And … they looked after the adoption then as well, which was great.' Social workers were more frequent visitors to the home by this point. The local GP and Health Visitor also called regularly. Social Services also arranged for some antenatal classes as well as sending in 'somebody, like with arts and crafts specialism, and they used to take the girls to classes in relation to sewing and doing more fancy things.'

S1 remembered that a significant minority of residents were from the Republic:

> *If the girl wanted to get away from her home area … St Patrick's Adoption Society … they … they had contact with the girl initially when she was pregnant, they would send her North to us because she wouldn't know anybody in the North and she'd be more … she'd be more at ease. But they'd take their baby back South, as well, they'd take the mother and baby back.*

On the topic of adoption, S1 insisted that the Sisters 'let the social worker do all that once the social worker came on board. We referred them always back to our social worker really, and the social worker made the decision with them.' She outlined the legal requirements for adoption, the involvement of a Justice of the Peace and the principle of consent that it was the JP's responsibility to uphold. S1 recalled that mothers considering giving up their child for adoption 'got an explanatory memorandum explaining what adoption meant, and she was taken over it, and I might take them over it if they wanted me, but like the social worker took them over it and they signed … at the bottom of that that form, they have read it and they understand it.' Thereafter it could take a year before an adoption order was finalised and there were opportunities in that time for the birth mother to reconsider 'if she wished to lodge an objection'.

In discussing options with the home's residents, S1 explained that 'I used to have two bits of paper and I can say all the advantages of keeping a baby, all the disadvantages'. She would then ask the young woman "and what do you want, you know, yourself?" The birth mother would often be talking to her mother about this also. S1 reflected on accommodation options available via the Housing Executive and Ulidia Housing Association, but felt that the prospect of independent living 'was too lonely for them really, and they were scared going alone.'

The Good Shepherd mother and baby homes 'couldn't keep babies'. They had no accommodation for taking care of babies whilst adoptions were being arranged. Instead, babies born to women in the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes went to children's homes in Northern Ireland. However, in some cases, 'some of the girls chose to go on to Stamullen with their babies because that was a registered adoption society … And they knew their babies were going for adoption and they could get away more quickly.'

Asked about the legal issues around crossing the border with a baby in these circumstances, S1 replied that 'if the mother took the baby herself, it was her own business.' She was not certain if that was generally how this occurred because 'it was before my time. See. But I certainly think somebody arranged, somebody went with the baby on their behalf. But it wasn't the Sisters. They were family I think.' In the case of those babies that crossed the border to Fahan, S1 felt that 'Social Services social workers brought them up. I'm not quite sure … That's only hazarding a guess too.'

S1 was asked about the formalities involved in the process of handing over a baby, whether it be to a social worker or perhaps a family member: 'I think it was quite flexible in those days if the parents took the child. Oh no, I don't think we had any paperwork about that. Oh no. Social work … you see if the baby was born in the hospital, sometimes the babies didn't come back to us at all, they went straight to a children's home or a foster home or wherever.' S1 noted that some birth mothers employed false names during their stay but that she 'always gave the right name, gave the right name to the ambulance men as well', when they came to take a young woman to the maternity ward.

Discussing a Radio Four documentary about the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland, S1 concluded that 'there's nothing to it', in respect of the allegations the programme contained about forced and illegal adoptions. However, she did reflect on things that could have been handled better in the past:

> *certainly there could be more care for the pregnant girls and more … society could be more caring and supportive rather than getting her off side and her family feeling shame and guilt and all that. And help the mother to make a … a decision that would be right for her rather than be influenced by society and all that baggage, you know?'*

Asked if she thought the mother and baby home staff could have done anything differently, S1 suggested that it would have been difficult to go against a family's wishes:

> *families would go daft if you rang Social Services without them, without their permission, and they wouldn't give permission. So our hands were tied to. So … what else could you do? So if the girls came in and they were referred by a doctor or a priest, oh no way Social Services were to be involved. So what to do?'*

S1 felt that the women 'were all helped at their time of need', but if there had been 'more support and more openness about adoption and about pregnancy there would be half the stress. We were only … we were only kind of responding to what was happening. It was sent in to us and we had to … to comfort and support them. Care for them, love them really too.'

Sister 2 (S2)

Like S1, S2 moved from the Republic to work in Good Shepherd convents in Northern Ireland, where she worked on and off between the 1960s and 1990s. S2 began by discussing her experience of one of the mother and baby homes, during a period she spent there in the 1970s. Earlier in her life, S2 had gained professional qualifications that were useful to her in this role and had worked previously in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the Republic. She compared the two homes:

> *it was much the same except you're dealing with Northern people and I had to get used to their accent and all that kind of thing. But as regards the working environment or how we were with the women, that was our charism. That's how we were. So it was much the same.*

One big difference she noted in the northern mother and baby home was that 'all you had to do was ring *name of hospital redacted* and say "there's a girl in labour" and the ambulance would be out. Now that was one big difference, you know? You didn't have to have the … I suppose, the stress or anxiety of … of having to bring the girl in if she didn't tell you at the early stage if she was in labour.'

Another difference she recalled, later in her testimony, was in the process of handing over a baby for adoption. In the Northern Ireland mother and baby home 'the social worker would have taken, very often, would have taken the baby when it was going to be adopted or whatever situation it was, and then the parents or family or friend or boyfriend or somebody would come and take the girl, or the woman, you know?' In her experience of the home in the Republic, S2 remembers having often to escort 'the girl in to the Catholic Protection Rescue Society who were the adoption agency that we worked a lot with, and others as well, and bringing the mother and the baby in, and she handing over the baby. That was very sad you know. Very difficult.'

S2 described the traumatic first encounters with young mothers-to-be in a similar fashion to S1:

> *Regarding the mother and the single girl and her understanding of her pregnancy and meeting her family, it was the very same as the South, that part of it. Mother distressed, and never knew about this and "Oh where did I go wrong?" And all these kind of ... you know, that the parents would say or whether it was the social worker that sent them or their parish priest brought them - whatever. It was much the same as regards the situation regarding the mother you know?*

Asked if the Sisters received training to help them when encountering people in this form of distress, S2 reflected that 'well, you see, our very charism is compassion and I suppose from ... we entered religious life, part of our training was that you are interacting with people who have had a very difficult background.' She also explained that the Good Shepherd community in the convent 'would come up and support, you know, "Are you alright? You look a bit anxious today."... So that kind of support was there, you know?' S1 narrated an emotional conversation from her time in the mother and baby she worked at in the Republic. A professional woman in her thirties arrived at the home and revealed that she had considered suicide when she discovered her pregnancy; 'I'll never forget that, no. She was going to throw herself into the river. And I just said "My God that could have been me as well", you know?' So it gave you an insight into the terrible trauma that these girls went through.' That anecdote, involving the Republic in the 1960s can be usefully juxtaposed with one from the 1970s in Northern Ireland. At this point, S2 had been sent to live in a working-class community and was running a youth club:

> *And one of the teenagers became pregnant. She was still going to school and I went up to her mother and just kind of to say "How are you coping?" and all the rest of it. Of course the mother was crying and all the rest of it and in my simplicity, or naivety or whatever you want to call it, I said to the mother and, you know she was the eldest of about six children and I said "How will you cope? Will it be alright? Will you be able to look after her? Do you want help?'*

The woman's reply was not one S2 necessarily expected. It was "And what else would I - Sister – do, only look after her". This led S2 to reflect:

> *I never forgot it. Like my experience was the girls coming into the mother and baby homes but here was a total different experience now of someone saying of course, she's my daughter, I'll look after her. So I never forgot it so it left a huge impression on me of the change I think ... it was the beginning of the change of culture of parents being more acceptable.*

S2 argued that in reviewing the mother and baby homes contemporary society has:

> *to look at what was the culture, what was the thinking. You know, why did parents send their daughter away, why were they so ashamed, I mean there's a whole load of reasons for it, you know? And … so I think that influenced … it influenced us all. We were, we were being as compassionate and as caring as we possibly could, because sometimes they never told their family. I mean I myself had an uncle in England, and I asked him could his address be used for post for people to send their letters.*

In cases where parents were aware of their daughter's pregnancy and visited the home, S2 recalled the dilemmas with which they wrestled:

> *I remember one lady telling me "I would love to keep her at home, I hate that she has to come away, but … I couldn't have her around with the rest of the children … How would I explain it to them?"*

S2 reflected that the training that many Sisters undertook in the 1950s and 1960s was part of a broader strategy mapped out by 'the leadership of the Province [of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Ireland]. S2 explained that there were trained social workers and midwives in the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. This medical support meant that 'thanks be to God we never had any, what would I say? Mishaps' She considered herself to be engaged in 'a very special ministry, at the time, very special because everybody that came in was in distress.' The most difficult examples of this included a couple of cases where incest was involved. One of which involved a young girl who was brought from the Republic to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the North.

With examples such as this, discretion was very much at the heart of the mother and baby homes. S2 was first based in a Good Shepherd convent in Northern Ireland during the early 1960s and at this time she was not involved in that area of the work. The mother and baby home on the site was very separate. There were 'just the two sisters that were there and the local superior at the time would have met the girl coming there, or the woman. But the rest of us in the community would have had nothing at all to do with them. That was how it was and it was very much respected.'

In discussing this issue of discretion and privacy, both S1 and S2 were keen to indicate that the Good Shepherd Sisters felt honour bound to maintain promises they made to earlier generations of birth mothers. In this respect, S2 discussed her concerns about those birth mothers who gave up their child for adoption and who wanted no possibility of future contact.

Some years after her first placement in Northern Ireland S2 was moved to take up a position within another of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland. S2 described its lay out, explaining that 'the first lovely room was the dining room then you walked on was the sitting room, and then there was a small nursery … it wasn't very big. You see there was kind of a quick turn-over as … some only stayed a month or six weeks.' In terms of sleeping arrangements 'there were six bedroomed rooms, I think it was six that were there. This was all down the way so that was all … that was the whole corridor then. I think we could only accommodate about eighteen as far as I remember.' She recalls 'two or three single rooms and then there was the sister who ran the whole … looked after the nursery … her bedroom was there, and mine was next to it. And that was it. It was a very simple building.'

S2 explained the process involved in welcoming a young woman to the home. Often she would get a phone call from the convent's main reception to inform her "there's a family here". She would 'go up and I'd meet them and you know, mother and father would be in tears. So we'd bring them down then and show them, you know, look this is where your daughter will be living now, show them the whole place and … and there was a certain kind of, I suppose maybe, a certain kind of relief on the behalf of the parents, you know?' This process wasn't necessary if the young woman arrived with a social worker as they 'would know the set-up'. On other occasions 'the priest might bring them; their mother had gone to their local parish priest and he would bring the girl along' or 'a boyfriend occasionally, not very often, but occasionally.' In terms of the young mother-to-be, S2 felt it was 'it was very important … to try and welcome her and tell her she would be alright. Everything would be done for her, and she won't have to worry.'

In these opening encounters S2 recalled that 'if the issue of the baby came up, we generally would say "Look, ok, look we're dealing with the mother now for the moment anyhow, and then we'll talk about what the future was going to be and what she wants to do and what you want to do." S2 felt these 'were very sacred moments, you know, to be dealing with a family in a situation like that. You couldn't have imagined it, you know, the pain of the parents'. Thereafter, the parents 'were welcome to visit, there was no restriction on visiting really, they could come whenever they wanted to visit the daughter. And then some others never had a visit from anybody, and that was their choice'. Once they had settled in, the mothers-to-be then faced the routines of the home, which included visits from the local GP and antenatal classes at a local hospital.

Like S1, S2 was keen to indicate what she felt was minimal involvement in decisions regarding adoption:

> *I would have several private conversations with the girls, they'd come and … and she'd just say what she had to say and then sometimes she'd bring up about the baby. "I don't know what to do, I'd love to keep the baby and … but I can't". And … then you see if there was social worker involved, I always would say then, "Listen, when the social worker comes the next time you can have a chat with her about that."*

S2 remember telling the women "Your decision I suppose is you can take the baby … if you can't take the baby home how would you manage?" She explained that 'one little saying I used to have was "You want to do the best for your baby. So, like what do you think is the best thing to do now?"' S2 recalled that she would talk about this to a mother-to-be 'as much as she wanted. I was always available for them, you know? And obviously it became much more relevant when the baby was born, you know?' If a young woman's parents made it clear they did not want their grandchild brought back home S2 'would never interfere with the decision of the parents I would, I would never, kind of say, "maybe you should think"… That was totally the family decision between them.'

She observed that, occasionally, families found a way of adopting within the family and had 'an Aunt that will take the baby or… cousin'. However, 'on the whole, if the mother … if the family couldn't take the baby she had no choice. There was no help for her to keep the baby, there was no welfare assistance and all that.' For birth mothers who had been raised in residential care, S2 felt 'that was a totally different scenario all together. I mean they had no family support, they had been maybe out working then here they were landed with a child and so … so very often that child would have been sent to a nursery'. In these cases, S2 explained that the Good Shepherd Sisters might decide to intercede:

If we felt that this young person was going to be back. In another year or two we would maybe recommend to her that she might go to one of our own houses in … into St. Mary's, the adult place, for her own protection. And some of them did and then they left, they might have stayed there a year or two and then went out, others maybe stayed their all lives, because they … they would've obviously have had maybe, what's the word I would use? They weren't capable of independent living. And, they wouldn't have the ability to make choices, kind of thing, you know? So, in our concern for them and our concern for the children that would be born, we often thought it might be the best place for them for a year or two and then if they were able Sisters would have got positions for them outside the convent.

She recalled one unmarried woman who had three children and was approached by the Sisters. This individual subsequently went to a Good Shepherd convent in the Republic and 'spent the rest of her life there. Very happy and content, but I mean she was a very vulnerable young person, you know?' She had been raised in an institution and had no family network to support her. S2 believed that in cases like this 'if they had family they could have gone home.'

S2 recalled another woman who also went to live in the same convent in the Republic:

A very vulnerable little woman, God help her. She hadn't a clue, like … I suppose we did reach out in a particular way to those people who were reared themselves in an institution or who never had family. They were lost, you know? And it must have been very hard for them when you think about it like. When they saw others with parents coming to visit them and especially in a small group you know, and they had nobody. So that's where we kind of saw Good Shepherd ministry in a very special way I think. To support them and make life as best we could for them and their future, you know?

In many cases where unmarried mothers were placed in a laundry, S2 explained that this might have been following the birth of 'their second child … and the whole thinking behind it was look, that woman is not capable of independent living at all, she'll be back to us again or somewhere else, you know?'

S2 discussed the statistical analysis which demonstrated where the unmarried mothers came from and who availed of the mother and baby home at which she worked. Northern Ireland was, of course, the top of the list with a large number coming from the Republic and several dozen from Britain. S2 believes that Irish Centres in major English conurbations had been a source of contact in these cases.

S2 provided her observations on the daily routine in the home. Breakfast was around half-eight, after which the women would tidy their bedrooms. Everyone had 'a little chore in the house, you know like two or three would keep the dormitories clean, two or three would look after the dining room, two or three would look after the sitting room. The corridor, the bathrooms. So they all had a little, kind of, a chore.' If they had given birth then 'immediately after breakfast they went on and looked after the baby, and bathed it and fed it.'

During her time based at the home they took in Irish dancing costumes that the women did further needlework on: 'we'd get the dancing costume in and they'd do the stitching. They just loved doing it, loved to see the result of their work, you know? But there was no obligation. If anyone would like to do that they could do it'. Lunch was at one o'clock or quarter to one or sometime like that and the

meals were prepared up in the convent.' There was then 'their siesta time and I think that was until three o'clock.' A cup of tea at this point was followed by 'television, or they'd go back to their little bit of knitting and that kind of thing.' The evening meal was at 'around six'. In the evening 'we used to play games, we'd play cards. Or Monopoly' or 'on the brighter nights they'd walk lovely … there was lovely grounds they'd go out and walk around. And some of them loved to do a bit of gardening'

In S2's view there was 'no, kind of, strict regime or anything like that, you know it was free. And as I said they walked around. I think occasionally they went out, if they wanted to go out and do a bit of shopping or something they went out on their own. There was no restrictions … as long as we knew they were going like … there was no such thing as "you can't go", or anything like that, unless the lady was near near end of term or something like that.'

S2 explained the process of childbirth and what came after it in the mother and baby home where she worked. This included discussing those birth mothers that made the decision that they did not to see their baby. She recalls being told "Sister I don't want to see it." In these cases the hospital:

> *made facilities for that … we wouldn't stop them if that's what they wanted, you know? And, but you'd have a concern about it because you'd wonder later on would they have regrets that they hadn't seen the child? But I don't know really. But the vast majority would have come back with their baby. And then we had a sister who was trained in nursery care, so she looked after the baby and watched the supervision of the mothers.*

Most mothers would stay no longer than six weeks after giving birth, many left sooner. S2 described the process of a baby being given up by its birth mother. 'The social worker would generally come', in advance of which the mother would dress the baby up:

> *They'd buy the best for the baby and dress it up and the social worker would take it, if it was going for adoption. I mean we had nothing at all to do with that process really, we kind of just stayed with the girl. And then when the baby was gone, the mother generally went the same day. And either, as I said, maybe her parents would come for or maybe her boyfriend or a friend. Very seldom they would have left on their own. Very seldom now.*

In cases of babies that were taken into homes such as Fahan or Stamullen in the Republic of Ireland, S2 maintained that 'certainly we never took them anywhere, that's one thing … I'm very certain of that. That we never took them. So obviously it was, maybe family? Maybe a social worker?' She thought that in these cases this happened 'because the girl could not make up her mind. That was generally the reason'. The young woman was saying, "There's no way I could let that child go", and thinking 'maybe circumstances will change, that they will be able to take the baby home. That would have been their thinking.' Furthermore, S2 maintained that she did not know where Fahan was until sometime after she had left her role in the mother and baby home. In terms of Stamullen, S2 explained 'I don't think very many went, in my time, to Stamullen … it wasn't done on a regular basis anyway.'

A number of women from the mother and baby home in which S2 worked had their baby in a private hospital rather than a NHS one, but S2 was unable to explain why: 'I know a few had their babies in *hospital redacted* but why … I just couldn't really tell you. Whether they had … I honestly now I really can't answer that question. Truthfully, because I don't want to be speculating.'

On the occasions where one of the women at the home had a stillbirth in hospital, S2 recalls that a dead baby never came back to the mother and baby home: 'I know that. And I don't ever, ever remember having a funeral service or a mass for a baby or anything like that, so it was done kind of, maybe, probably with the family and then if the girl didn't have family the hospital would have said "we'll look after the baby." She explains that it was the 'culture at the time 'for the hospital to deal with the babies remains, which led S2 to say 'I'm sorry I don't know what happened to the babies on the whole, I don't know.' She was not surprised that the hospital dealt with stillbirths in this way as that was also her experience in the Republic.

Reflecting back on the mother and baby home system S2 said 'When I look back on it now. See when you're in the system I think you were focused on ... I must speak for myself ... in hindsight now of course this is, how you were focused on the care of the mother and the baby and that but later on I suppose I began to think how on earth did you part with your children?' As evidence of the good work she felt the Good Shepherd Sisters had done, S2 pointed to the fact that 'I think almost everybody that was ever with us would always write back, you know,' to offer thanks about their time in the mother and baby home.

S2 was asked what she thought about accusations that Good Shepherd mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland had witnessed forced adoptions. Her view was that 'we couldn't have forced anybody. I mean that's not on ... They might have been forced through family, or whatever but we didn't ... we certainly didn't force them to give up their babies, why would we like?' She recognised that birth mothers were 'disturbed and upset' when these adoptions were agreed. However, she asked whether asking someone 'what do you want for your baby' could be described as forced adoption: 'I mean sure they couldn't call that forced. Do you know what I mean? To say what is best for the baby? That was only a conversation'. S2 offers an alternative explanation: 'I'd say they felt forced by society and by their circumstances, I could understand that now, you know? And particularly maybe a girl who was ... who had no family ... and maybe parents would have forced them as well.'

Referring to those who accuse Good Shepherd Sisters of taking a role in forced adoptions, she pointed out that the Sisters 'didn't have anything to do with the registration of the birth that was all done in the hospital.' S2 also said 'I'm quite willing to meet any of them, any time ... Because I can identify with a lot of what they experienced and just to hear their side of the story, you know? So I'm available to meet any of them if they want.' She expressed confusion over these claims because all she could recall was positive feedback, from women who wrote thankyou letters, or from social workers, the hospital or doctors. In contrast, 'nobody ever said ... you're not treating this person very well, or, nobody ever ... ever said anything like that, you know so?' The Sisters also had to 'account for our ministry to our local leader and to our provincial leader as well. So like if there was anything amiss, I think it would've been brought to our attention.'

In the statement the Good Shepherd Sisters made to the Department of Health in relation to this research, they reported that sometimes couples would appear at one of the mother and baby homes looking to adopt. S2 was asked about that and replied that 'if they did we would ... have said you'll have to contact social services, you know. I have a vague notion that yes, one or two did that alright, but I do remember one couple coming and they wanted to adopt or whatever ... but they didn't ... they didn't adopt ... they eventually fostered out a little boy. And he had a wonderful life with that couple.' This was not arranged by the Sisters.

In the final section of S2's testimony the St Mary's homes/laundries were discussed. She had mentioned earlier that some women were sent to them from the mother and baby homes and she was asked if she had any regrets about the laundries given the recent controversy surrounding them. She offered the following reflection: 'It was very much part of the culture of the time, I'll say that.' She felt that up to the early 1960s the Sisters had not received training in social work because 'there wouldn't have been anybody with that … well I suppose there was no courses actually, and some of them went to England and some of them went … they did their training in Dublin and others did their training in Cork.' The laundries:

> *had all these women for one reason or another … a lot of them were very vulnerable people. A lot of them would have … again not been capable of independent living on their own. And therefore it was a place of protection, safety but there was a great atmosphere among them, you know, there was … I mean looking back on it today now, it wouldn't obviously be accepted but at the time … and, you know like, everybody knew that women were there. Everybody knew that it was part of the story, welfare people were there. There … I remember two or three people who would come and visit them and walk around the place and all that kind of thing so there was an acceptance and an understanding that … which again, from our perspective, I suppose we were saying that these women are being … they have a home, they've … they're … they're being fed. Yes they did work in a laundry, so did we. And that was their only source of income, there was no government subsidy for them, so we couldn't … we wouldn't have … we had no way … where would we get the money to do that, you know? So like, I know looking back on the laundry story, you know, you kind of wish it was different, but look it was part of the story at the time. It was worldwide, it wasn't just in Ireland, it was worldwide, you know?'*

S2 reflected on the longer term history of the laundries in Northern Ireland:

> *I mean when we look back on our archives, and why did we come to Newry, why did we come to Derry, why did we go to Belfast? Because they were kind of, poor towns I suppose, and in the bygone days, certainly in Belfast, prostitution would have been rife. You know, way back in 1863 we came to Belfast, if I remember rightly, 1919 we … we were asked to go to Derry by the local Bishop because of the war situation and all the army that were and all the poor girls from the Bogside you know. So that is why they were asked to provide protection for these women, you know?*

More recent history produced different attitudes she felt:

> *when the sisters started to do social work and look at things differently there was a change in attitude, a change in culture. We adopted the change then, we took on the change … And that happened in all our houses, I mean then, you know I know in the St. Mary's … I mean there were teachers in Derry came in, Belfast they went out to night classes, and all the, you know, the younger folk. So, I mean leadership would have been very keen that the younger people coming into care would have got … education and opportunities … And then there were some Sisters who were very musical … gift musicians and gifted … and they used to put on plays and operettas and the people from … you … the bishop would come and a whole flock of priests and you'd have the Lord Mayor coming in all that so like it was all part of the culture of the time, you know? … Our Sisters worked very hard, that's what I find so difficult when they start criticising.*

S2 worked herself in the ironing room of one of the laundries and maintained that 'the craic was great'. In one of the convents she worked in a home for school age girls who were located separately from the laundry women. These girls all went out each day to local schools.

In the ironing room, recalled S2, some 'of them would have been elderly women, but the elderly women would be sitting down and they would be maybe, ironing.' There was also a 'big roller for doing sheets and tablecloths and all that.' S2 recalled that 'I would be with them there, you know, and feeding in the sheets and sure they'd be chatting away and whatever'. In overseeing the work of the women in this section of the laundry, S2 'didn't have much trouble with them either' apart from:

> *an odd one who might have had a row with another lass or something like that, or a few but on the whole no, it was … it was ok. I suppose we saw it as, if we are giving these people a home and if they wanted to go … if they wanted to leave like they would talk to the Sister in charge, I had nothing to do with that now. And she would, if they insisted and wanted it, and she'd get a job for them if they had nowhere to go as most of them wouldn't have had family you know? But she would get a job for them then, maybe a live-in job or many of them went to work in the hospitals, you know?*

In concluding her testimony, S2 she hoped

> *maybe that you have got some kind of a … a clearer picture and maybe an understanding of the situation that people found themselves in and how we as Good Shepherd Sister's tried to respond to that need at that time in the only way we could. I think that would have been what I would be kind of saying that I would hope that has come across and I mean, this was our … our life. I mean there's somebody said you didn't give your life to work in the laundry for nothing, you know what I mean. That kind of a thing, you know? So that, I think … perhaps you have some understanding of the trauma and the privilege that was ours, to work with these women at that time. So that's what I would say.*

Priest 1 (P1)

P1 who is now elderly and living in retirement offered a number of perspectives on the research. As a child, he brought his family's own washing to his local Good Shepherd convent to be cleaned in the laundry. Decades later, as priest he became chaplain to the same convent

P1 explained that, like most other Catholics in the past, he felt that when a young woman was referred to the Good Shepherds 'that that was the end of the affair. Because we trusted them … They were competent and honest.' He never heard 'any word of worry coming from the chaplains' assigned to these institutions. His own personal sense of this was shaped by positive childhood memories. P1's childhood home was close to one of the Good Shepherd laundries and he explained that 'I visited that laundry many a times when I was … a young person … like a lot of other people, that's where our laundry went.' He was taken there by a woman who looked after him as a boy:

> *I wasn't even in my teens. And I used to go into the laundry and see all these young women busy working away, and of course once we came to the place – the hatch – where there was a - we got the delivery or whatever we were doing - there was great excitement. Everybody saying hello and all that. And I think it was because there was so little doing by way of visitors and all that.*

He remembered there was a separate group within the convent 'called the Magdalene' or 'the penitents' who were a separate religious community. For a period in the 1960s, after he became a priest, P1 'was asked to be chaplain to them'. He reflected on this this group of women:

> *[I] always presumed that these were people who might have been sent by the courts … but then some of them had become attracted to the religious life, and this title of the Magdalene was sort of transferred on to this religious community within the Good Shepherd. And that was about as much as we knew. I simply knew them as religious sisters, and that this had been the background of some of them. But you never made any enquiries as to what … again, the presumption was that they were in good hands.*

His duties as chaplain to the Magdalenes involved 'visiting them from time to time … the occasional celebrating the mass, or maybe talking to people if any of them wanted to talk to me about anything. But these, of course, would be spiritual matters.' P1's assessment of them was that they 'were the kind of people that you meet in a religious community which is somewhat different, in a sense, because there was a kind of closed community.' In his experience, they had 'their own sort of private jokes and their own idea of merriment'. These women 'seemed to have come to terms with whatever their life meant. They seemed to be remarkably happy people.'

P1 offered a number of valuable contributions on how life in the average Catholic parish shaped attitudes towards the unmarried woman and her child. He recounted one annual mission preached at his parish over the course of one week during the 1950s. Wednesday night had been set aside by the Missioner as 'sex evening'. Discussing the dangers of 'unsupervised company keeping' the preacher worked himself up into a frenzy. Parents in the congregation were cautioned that "someday you will go home and find that you're entertaining a little bastard in your house."' P1 abhorred the deployment of this term and its use meant 'a lot of nice people in the parish complained to the parish priest. There was a scandal, and the Missioner had to get up the next evening and apologise for his indelicacies … it was a horrible, horrible thing to say. But in those days, this was another world. You know, not like now.'

Clumsy outbursts like this one added to the stigma surrounding the conception of a child by an unmarried female: 'I think that people inherited this thing from each other. You know, the reticence and all that sort of thing and the … hiding of things.' P1 was aware of another form of clerical intervention that served to heighten already strong communal seams of shame and embarrassment around an unmarried mother's decision to keep her baby. This involved parish priests openly enquiring about the identity of a baby's father during baptismal ceremonies:

> *That would have happened in the 1950s … the important thing about that was that that question could be asked. It could be asked in front of a number of other people. And no discipline would be expected or imposed on the clergy who would do it. Now, I don't believe it could've been done by very many clergy, because I think people would've been appalled … but it was done, and it was done by, some people that I know did it … but my point always is that it being done was not sanctioned, or was not penalised by the church, by any sanction on the clergy who would make such a question.'*

Perhaps unsurprisingly, given this element of his testimony, P1 did not believe that a parish priest was always the first person to be approached when a young unmarried Catholic became pregnant. He considered that 'they were more likely to go to relatives in England.' He felt that what he called

'the hostel' had become 'Catholic respectable' and were more likely to be considered by the better off. He continued on this theme:

> *I always understood that families would be expected to pay something in these mother, you know, mother and child places. But the places that were organised by, under the auspices of the church, well obviously it would be people who wanted things done quietly but were prepared to pay for it, you know. So you had a whole section of those. So you had a class difference in what would be done. Other people, as I say, might have a girl or a woman go off to their relatives in England or something like that. But the big thing was secrecy, and not to upset the respectability of either a village or a townland or a family or whatever it might be.*

P1 thought that another solution was 'a question of marriage, maybe earlier than anticipated, you know.' In his judgement, a marriage of convenience was 'dangerous and it's unjust and it's wrong and it's not going to work.' He would make this point, if consulted, but 'then, what would happen after that, would be a matter for the family to decide.' There was the difficult prospect of a termination of the pregnancy: 'And, as you might expect there would be a horror of abortion. And, so the, having a child secretly and having a child adopted would be the most visible solution.' There was also 'the invisible solution' which was when 'people absorbed a child into their families by one device or another.'

Reflecting on issues 'about illegal adoptions and all kinds of stuff', P1 described what he labelled as 'a cloud of unknowing among people' that was facilitated by people not asking questions. He cited a Good Shepherd mother and baby home as an institution within this 'cloud of unknowing'. P1 felt that this unknowingness could work bottom-up as well as top-down with the Catholic community, with parishioners not revealing their family secrets to the parish priest. As will be seen shortly, Priest 2 also described a similar process whereby a mixture of not knowing, not asking and not telling, all added up to a recipe for subterfuge, secrecy and silence. In his final comments returned to this theme:

> *There was such a cloud of unknowing, and that there was, there were so many backstops. That, once you heard that somebody was going to the place in *mother and baby home named* they'd be looked after. Once it went to a bishop, they'd be looked after. But they weren't, not necessarily. But we didn't, didn't know that attitude then. It's only very recent times that the attitude of scepticism and, and distrust of the institutions, has appeared, do you know?'*

P1 admitted that he had never thought about the complexity of the 'so many differences of attitude' around this topic until preparing for the interview.

Priest 2 (P2)

P2 was raised in a Catholic family in a rural district and was ordained in the 1960s, after which time he found himself serving in a number of parishes in Northern Ireland. However, his first experience of the subject matter of the research was in his own home community as he remembered that there were 'a number of young girls in the community in which I lived became pregnant and that was looked very much as a taboo.' He listed two options that were available in these circumstances: 'the girl went away, had her baby, and came back and nothing was ever mentioned' or she 'went away and had her baby, and it was reared as the youngest child in the family and she never knew

that her eldest sister was her mother.' This latter example tallied with P1's point about babies being absorbed semi-secretly into a birth mothers' family.

Discussing his time in the Catholic seminary, P2 explained that he learned more about the issue of unmarried mothers by spending 'some time with the Vincent de Paul in the community, with the Legion of Mary, and we also – two students at a time – went out to work in a children's home and lived there for a period of time.' This made him aware that 'there were a lot of children in that home that came from dysfunctional families, and there were a number of children that had no parents at all.'

Following ordination, P2 found himself engaged in parish life in Catholic communities in Northern Ireland. He recalls one young woman who became pregnant and that 'she certainly was sent to the Good Shepherd home.' He recalls the shroud of secrecy around this. He had cause to visit the home for another reason and the Sisters 'made absolutely sure that I did not see her or hear about her and I certainly didn't ask.' Even when he subsequently visited this young woman's family home 'it just wasn't spoken about. They went away and it was never spoken about.' In this case taboo meant literally that and reflected P1's concept of a fog descending on these personal matters.

P2 described the elaborate networks and subterfuges that were called upon to conceal pregnancies from the wider community or even from a young woman's own family. The Catholic friend of a young Presbyterian woman approached him asking for help because the latter was pregnant and wanted to avoid using a mother and baby home in Northern Ireland. Working with the Legion of Mary, P2 found her accommodation in a home in London and he recalls that 'I certainly would have gone over to see her over there.' This young pregnant woman was one of many that 'left home and did not tell their parents where they were.' He recalled another case where young woman in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home led her parents to believe that she was working in the Republic only to receive a shock when her father announced he was coming for a visit. At this point, she invented a new job overseas that she had to take up immediately. P2 recalled 'I certainly would have given the family an address in *country redacted* and they would have had sent the letters on from *country redacted*. They had addresses; sometimes they said they were in *another country redacted* I would've got for them addresses in *another country redacted* to which their families could write.'

P2 had experience of one Good Shepherd convent which was in his diocese and he visited it to offer pastoral care to both the expectant mothers and to the women who had been placed in the adjacent laundry. He recalled quite a number of the women there came from the Republic: 'some were referred to, referred to the home by other convents in the South of Ireland, but some were referred to the home by their families.' In many of these cases, 'their families made it very clear to them that they needed to go away and they were not to bring the baby back.' On occasion, P2 was asked to mediate between parents and a young woman who was desperate to overturn their demand that her baby be adopted. One was a young woman from a rural area in the Republic whose father was a widower with a number of other children. P2 visited the father to intercede on the issue: 'I still remember it and it's so many years ago. He was fixing an alarm clock and he didn't want to talk to me at all, but he made it very clear that he did not want his daughter to...she was out in the car, she couldn't come in.' Eventually the father told him: 'under no circumstances!' and the young mother returned home without her baby. On another occasion, he had a similar conversation with the parents of a young women at the maternity hospital when they came to see their grandchild. Initially, they insisted that their daughter place the baby in a home but after what must have been an emotional evening 'they brought it home the next day. But to this day she [the birth mother] feels very hurt that this child

was away in a baby home overnight'. This woman is one of a number who have remained in contact with P2 over the years, an element of his testimony that bares comparison with those by some birth mothers who have retained relationships with some of the Good Shepherd Sisters. In this case, many years later P2 officiated at the baby's wedding. On another occasion, a birth mother left a note in the adoption records that should her child search for her in the future P2 could be a point of contact:

> *Sure enough when this girl was twenty-six years old, a social worker and Family Care asked would I meet her; that she thinks I know who her mother is. Now we did meet her. First question she asked was: "Did my mother ever ask about me?" I said: "For the last twenty-six years". Well I said: "Your birthday's on the *date redacted*" She said: "How do you know that?" I said: "For the last twenty-six years your mother has written to me on your birthday, because she couldn't talk to anyone else about it". It was … it wasn't spoken about. And the mother has met the girl, and it's still an on-going project. It's not finished yet.*

In this case the baby was born on a Saturday and taken away by a social worker on the following Monday: 'That was literally it. And she was brought … the only baby home facility they had in Derry at the time was in Fahan, which is across the border and I know could lend itself to misinterpretation of taking babies out of the jurisdiction and all, but … that, I gather, was the only facility they had.'

Despite these examples of anguished birth mothers, P2 reflected that many women gave up their babies without significant sign of dissent because they 'realised it was going to be extremely difficult to bring a child up like … One or two come to mind. One girl was an *professional occupation redacted*, and she came up to have her baby and … she wanted to let the baby be adopted and move on.' In comparison, P2 acknowledged that the unmarried fathers did not have to face the consequences of the pregnancy: 'men took on absolutely no responsibility at all, even denied they were the fathers and that kind of thing.'

P2 related how he visited the Good Shepherd mother and baby home every week in a pastoral care role:

> *We would have celebrated mass for them. That would've lasted twenty minutes and … yeah. We just talked, listened to them but we certainly would not have asked questions or anything like that. And sometimes they would have assumed names and obviously, I used whatever name they wanted.*

He maintained that the women had opportunities to speak privately with him and could have made a complaint of any kind about life in the mother and baby home. There were incidents over the years in which he did become involved. One involved two of the expectant mothers who 'went down the town even though they were pregnant, they got a few drinks more than they should have had and finished up with so-called friends they met and rang me at four in the morning to say: "Look, we're here". I said: "Right. I will go out and get you".' P2 maintained that their return was 'purely voluntarily … they knew they had to come back because their babies were, you know, due'. He recalled a number of occasions when 'one or two disappeared and went off and when we found them then I would go – usually someone would come with me – and we'd go and bring them back.' They had usually gone back to their hometown. When asked why they ran away, P2, explained 'basically, some of them didn't want to be there. But the vast majority of them realised that in Ireland at that time there wasn't much option, because living at home with … expecting a baby was not an easy

experience.' The run-aways were traced via 'some of the other girls, and the sisters. And they would try and find them and they'd [the run-away women] ring up because they'd know they had no option but to go back and have their baby and come home again.'

P2 felt that the relationship between the two Sisters in the mother and baby home and the residents was a good one. One Sister was 'the boss and responsible' whilst the other 'was the soft, human touch' and the unmarried mothers 'would lean on her.' In comparison, P2 believed that no one ever leaned on the young expectant mothers to persuade them to have their children adopted: 'I honestly never met anyone that were pressurised or forced to sign what was going to happen to their baby. And certainly, it was the social workers who looked after that aspect of things … I don't think the Sisters were that much involved in the actual adoption at all. They were looked after by social workers.'

Reflecting on the age profile of the expectant mothers, he recorded that the 'age range would have been in their late teens/early twenties. Late teens/early twenties, and then there were a few people with special needs who became pregnant and they tended to be older.' Asked about cases where pregnancy was the result of rape, P2 recalled that such matters 'had all been dealt with back where she was before she came'. The authorities in the woman's local district 'they would've dealt with that.' He framed this in the context of the role of Good Shepherds in dealing with 'girls … from very difficult circumstances … and you know the sisters accepted that. I mean there were certainly no questions asked. There were no … we certainly didn't want to know the why or the wherefore of it – we just didn't ask questions.' The Sisters 'wouldn't have gone into their background in any – I mean, apart altogether from what they were given by the social worker, and they worked on that.'

Asked to reflect on anything he felt the Good Shepherd Sisters could have handled in a better fashion in the mother and baby home, P2 maintained that he could not think of anything that might have been improved:

> *Off hand, I honestly don't know what they could have done. I mean it certainly; the girls were in difficult situations. They found it was difficult to be there and the first week or two they were they…I think they felt that they were coming into a judgemental situation. They were going to be asked, they're going to be challenged: "How did you finish up like that?" In fact that never happened. That never happened. I mean Sister *name redacted*, I'd say, had all the information but she certainly never, she never disclosed it to me – which was fine. Because we just accepted them as they were.*

P2 described the conditions for the mother and baby home women once they reached the regular maternity hospital. Staff were 'exceptionally good to them and gave them single rooms.' In his view, this was for privacy and he recalled an occasion when some local women who knew him began asking questions about the identity of the young mother he had visited. P2 also explained that over the years a number of babies had died at birth and occasionally a birth mother approached him to ask "Where is my baby buried?" In these instances 'we certainly meet them and we bring them out and show them. The last two people that came, they wanted a little plaque to their baby with the baby's name on it and the date of birth.' P2 explained that as well as those for whom the plaque has been placed there are a small number of other babies in the grave that were the offspring of women who stayed in the mother and baby home. They had died in one of the local maternity hospitals.

Reflecting on his knowledge of the laundry, P2 discussed a number of individuals. One was a woman who had died after a number of years working in the laundry and was buried in the graveyard plot owned by the Good Shepherds. He did not know how she came to be a resident in the convent. She had been there for over thirty years by the time of her death. Another tragic story was that of a young woman who 'went to the laundry after her second pregnancy at seventeen.' While working there 'they felt she became unwell and she died at eighteen.' She died in *redacted* Hospital, apparently from an enlarged heart in 197*

P2 discussed another woman with a more positive conclusion to her difficult personal journey. She 'came there after the baby was born, she worked in the laundry and then they were trying to get them out into the community, and she went out into the community. She worked for a family – a very good family – in fact I was talking to her last week, and she has now bought her own house … and has done very well.'

Discussing the conditions for the women in the Good Shepherd laundry, P2 concluded that the 'girls had a good life. They formed a folk group, there were dances in the hall – they'd a big hall – and there were a number of men who were working in the laundry, you know, as van drivers and delivery men and they and their families would have come into the dances and … they would have had a good life.' P2 described these women as 'vulnerable' and was asked to define what he meant by that. He replied 'well, I mean there was *name redacted* at seventeen and she had become pregnant. The father was an alcoholic … I think they had personality difficulties and they weren't able to look after themselves.' P2 felt this was a reason why, from his observation, 'none of them seemed to stay a short time. They all stayed quite a while and a number of them died there and the nuns looked after them.' He therefore remembered a number of funerals for the laundry women, which took place in the chapel within the convent. Asked who attended these funerals, P2 recalled that it was 'mainly' the women and nuns from the laundry: 'we'd have very little input from families at all. Very little.'

Asked to reflect if he felt the Good Shepherd Sisters could have handled matters differently in terms of the laundry, P2 commented that 'they seemed to get that right' for the fifteen to twenty women that he remembers living and working there. However, he believed 'they should have tried harder to allow to them to live in the community. I mean a number of them have done that and have done very well. Done very well … I think they should have needed more encouragement … I felt that they should have tried to get these girls out into houses in the community.' At this point, P2 referred again to the example of the woman who bought her own home after departure from the laundry who is obviously capable of independent living.

At the end of his interview, P2 explained the two reasons why he wanted to offer his testimony.

> *I've read a lot of the media reporting and I felt they give a very dark picture of it. Quite honestly, from my experience of it, it wasn't, it wasn't like that … We didn't ask questions, and we accepted them for … And a number of them write to us still and we keep up the contact … And also Sister *name redacted* had asked me would I come. That was my second reason. But I really felt that they did a lot of good work, and I don't think that has been acknowledged at all by some of the media reporting.'*

Finally, other elements of P2's testimony included the observation that that CURA was another organisation that parish priests called upon when they were approached by a young unmarried mother-to-be or her family. After that 'very often then a social worker would take over.' Once the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes had closed, there was a home opened by the LIFE organisation: 'girls stayed here for the length of their pregnancy and in some cases they brought their baby home again.'

HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

Midwife 1 (MW1)

MW1 worked in a number of Belfast hospitals following the start of her career in the early 1970s. She discussed how it was working in a sideward that was used for unmarried mothers. She explains that they were professional in their treatment of these women but admits that they were 'perhaps cold' towards them. MW1 put this down to the training she had received: 'you were told by the senior staff not to engage in personal conversation with them, and that's what you did, you didn't even know what part of the country they came from.' In her view 'it was the time, we were in it. It was the advice you were given. It was … well if you were talking to them on a personal level you could be seen as, you know, interfering in their personal life….I was conscious when you were told about, you know, about unmarried mothers coming in *name of home redacted* and other homes, not to be, get into conversation with them much or you could be seen as, you know, nosy or prying into their business or whatever. We were told that and we just abided by those rules.' This was an issue that was also raised in the testimony of a number of birth mothers.

MW1 now wonders whether the women would have liked to talk, and whether the experience of giving birth in that environment and with no family support was hard for them. She realises they must have been scared and feeling isolated by the process and the hospital did not offer emotional support: 'That's the one thing I remember, and yet you tried your best to allay that fear and anxiety but, perhaps these girls wanted to talk but you know were not encouraged by midwives to be, you know, on a personal level you know, so our role as a midwife, you were there to care for the mother and baby, that was your, your job…And some of these girls were in their teens, and you know you, ok you were caring for them, you were doing your job as a midwife, but you weren't communicating with them, and … because you didn't have the skills. That was just the bottom line. And you went by what you were told by senior colleagues that you didn't ask anything with their personal lives or their circumstances or anything like that…. but you know looking back, I mean that could also say that we had fear and anxiety just looking at them, you'd know that they were full of fear, full of anxiety and maybe some of them needed to talk, others maybe didn't. But you didn't go down that road, you just … you didn't have the skills yourself.'

MW1 explained that the patient's records sometimes included a short note stating 'adoption', 'does not want to see baby' etc. In those cases 'you brought the baby from the labour ward then down to the nursery and it was placed in the nursery and then as I say staff looked after the nursery.' In a number of these cases, she recalls the women sobbing and regrets that it was difficult, due to the instructions she had been given, to engage with them beyond offering medication for pain and so on. This suggests that hospital procedures were not well prepared to deal with the emotional distress of

this particular group of young mothers. It was a protocol which finds reflection in a number of birth mothers' testimonies about their treatment within maternity units. MW1 also recalled discovering a number of the women who were scheduled to have their baby adopted 'hovering' around the nursery to catch a glimpse of the child. 'It was difficult but then again you know, you were wearing sort of your midwifery hat, and you were there to care for them in labour and postnatally. Although, looking back if it was a case of the baby, they didn't want to see the baby or the baby was for adoption, you never talked about the baby, the baby was cared for in the nursery by staff. And often, you know, we would remark, the midwives, amongst themselves, that you would often see the girls hovering around the nursery. Wanting to see the baby after a day or two. And then if you asked them 'could you help' they'd say I'd like to see my baby in which case you accommodated their needs. Usually, on the third day two social workers would come and the baby then was removed from the nursery and staff were told they were for foster care. But you know you didn't question that because these were other health professionals and obviously they knew more than us about the circumstances.'

MW1 was never privy to decision making about adoptions and assumed 'that type of conversation would have been done with the social worker or perhaps the Head in …the mother's home they were in.' She recalled the reaction of mothers once their baby was removed by social workers: 'you'd go round and you'd check how they were and they'd be sobbing and you knew fine and well that in your heart why they were sobbing. And well you were, you'd offer them pain relief or whatever, but you knew that wasn't the reason, you know.' She intimated that 'they had pain yes, that's right but you, you, like that communication was very poor, very, very poor and you sometimes you think well, was that the right approach? Because when you think of midwifery today, well I'm not in midwifery anymore, but you know, patients like to get to know you, and 'do you have any children yourself?' you know and da-de-da-de-dah, you would engage in conversation with them.'

MW1 explained that these women usually arrived alone and remained alone to give birth. She described offering women pain relief when it was needed and the circumstances in which emergency cases would be moved to a hospital with more facilities. She also explained that her maternity unit received young women from two different mother and baby homes. One reason why Catholic women arrived at her facility was that the Mater Hospital did not admit unmarried women prior to 1972.

MW1's testimony was very reflective and honest and offered an insight into why many women who passed through the mother and baby homes had negative memories about their birthing experiences. As this interviewee revealed, staff were instructed to follow protocols that were based around offering a straightforward medical professionalism rather than tending to the broader emotional and psychological needs of the isolated and vulnerable young women who arrived in the maternity units. Moreover, the practice of placing these women in side wards added to their isolation, even if was done with the good intention of keeping them away from prying eyes and judgemental comments. As was the case with the mother and baby home system in general, society's decision that isolation, silence and secrecy was the best medicine for these young women was sadly misjudged.

General Practitioner 1 (GP1)

The second medical professional interviewed was GP1. Between the late 1960s and the 1980s, this doctor offered antenatal care at one of the mother and baby homes operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters. He took on this role because he was the local GP. Although he had an official role as a medical officer for the mother and baby home, he was not similarly involved in the St Mary's home (laundry) that operated within the same Good Shepherd convent. GP1 also had a role in delivering babies at one of one of the maternity hospitals to which mothers were sent. He came forward to offer testimony following a request from one of the Good Shepherd Sisters and agreed to do so because he wanted to offer testimony that ran counter to the critical tone, which he felt was offered by the Radio Four documentary *The Lost Children of Marianvale*.

GP1's testimony echoed aspects of MW1's account. He also remembered some women who had asked not see their baby, because it was to be given up for adoption, subsequently trying to catch a glimpse of their new born child in the maternity unit. GP1 described the private and secluded nature of the Good Shepherd mother and baby home. He did not recall any of the mothers-to-be expressing dissatisfaction about the home to him. Nor did they discuss their future plans for the baby with him. GP1 did not take any role in discussions about potential adoptions and did not play a role in the psychological health of the expectant women. GP1 recalled that he did not discuss detailed matters about labour with the expectant mothers. He left these matters to the two nuns in the home who were, respectively, trained as a nurse and a midwife: 'I would think any of those questions apropos labour, childbirth, would have been put to Sister C.' GP1 did not recall encountering any fear or apprehension amongst the pregnant women, and it does it appear that his role in the mother and baby home was narrowly defined around the psychical health of mother and unborn child. The women attended his antenatal classes once a fortnight and he carried out 'routine antenatal care. They would come in, I would examine them. Comment on the size of the baby or you know, whatever.' There was 'very little' discussion about what could be expected during labour. GP1 did not feel that women from the mother and baby home were treated any differently from other mothers at the maternity hospital. He did not any use of side wards for example. GP1 recalled no out of the ordinary health issues within the mother and baby home that occurred during his time as the nominated medical officer. He described the nuns who ran the mother and baby home as 'very, very caring.' He felt that there was 'a very good atmosphere in the place…. No problems at all. And they had basically, they had a very good relationship with the two nuns.'

GP1 also recalled no stillbirths or baby or mother mortalities during his spell as medical officer at the mother and baby home.

Social Workers

As part of the research process three retired social workers came forward to share their perspectives on working with unmarried mothers and their children.

Social Worker 1 (SW1)

SW1 began her career in the late 1960s and continued her work in several senior posts for several decades, before retiring almost a decade ago. She had extensive experience in adoption work

ranging from involvement in the initial placement of children through to assisting birth mothers and their children reunite in what was known as 'origin work'.

SW1 couched her testimony in the context of the great stigma that society placed on unmarried mothers until at least the 1970s: 'this generation has forgotten about the stigma of it, which was enormous. And …there were no facilities for them…. if their parents didn't support them, and allow them home…where were they going to live? And how, I mean, what were they going to do?' She recalled a lot of unmarried mothers from rural areas who relocated to Belfast mother and baby homes to 'hide' because 'ostensibly, you could be working or something.' SW1 suggested that in an earlier generation the workhouse was probably their only option. By the early 1970s, a new arrival to a mother and baby home was assigned a social worker, except in those homes that had a designated liaison officer. When asked if the social worker would then discuss the options available to the unmarried woman, she answered 'ad nausea…and I mean some of them did…. people tried to come to a decision, not wanting, possibly, to come to a decision that they were coming to….Hoping, maybe, that their parent was going to, their parents were going to relent.' She recalled social workers who themselves became distressed handling cases where a birth mother's family were 'just saying "absolutely not"' when their distraught daughter pleaded with them to let her keep her baby. As a rule of thumb if the grandparents' resistance to their daughter keeping the baby did not weaken when the child was born then the birth mother was unlikely to keep her baby.

A small number of birth mothers requested not to see their baby after birth and SW1 recalled writing notes to this effect for nursing staff in the maternity unit. This was, however, something that the social workers discussed, many arguing that it was not a psychologically healthy process to facilitate. SW1 echoed the views of GP1 in noting that even when a birth mother said she did not want to see her baby 'invariably they would.'

SW1 was dismissive of allegations that social workers or nuns had taken babies against the will of their birth mothers, pointing out that since the Adoption of Children Act (1929) the final decision about this 'was taken by the court. Right? Not by a nun, not by a social worker. The final decision was taken by a court…every case, a court of law has to determine whether agreement is freely given, and if it isn't freely given, to dispense with it.' Later in the interview she provided an example of a woman many years later who told her 'I gave her [the baby] to the nun', and reflected that is how she 'felt about it, right?' She intimated that the handing over a baby to a nun had been frozen in the woman's imagination, leaving he figure of the nun as the active agent in the process. In the several decades in which she worked in adoption, SW1 recalled no one telling 'me or my social workers that the nuns had done terrible things to them.'

SW1 explained that the social worker would have to take the matter to the adoption case committee where 'they would literally have been cross-examined, and I mean it, as to how this decision had been reached'. In her opinion, social workers had no motivation to press for adoption: 'there was no kudos in a child being adopted.' Even if somebody did have a personal preference for pushing for adoptions, SW1 believed that they could not achieve this 'because they were so harangued as to what they were doing' and were questioned, by an adoption placement committee or – after 1989 – by the Adoption Panel, on whether 'all implications been considered.'

Organisational changes that took place around 1972 and 1973 involved the creation of the Adoption Panel and a Placement Committee on the Health and Social Services Board area in which SW1

worked. Their duty was to examine if adoption was 'in the best interests of the child.' Whilst this process was ongoing, the baby would usually be placed with a foster family by another section of the Board. At that point, the baby went through a matching process with families on the adoption waiting lists: there were two, one for Catholic families and one for those of the various Protestant faiths. SW1 explained that the birth mother had an input into the process in terms of requesting, for example, that her child be placed with a family that did not have children of their own. However, 'most of them did not actually make any specific requests...other than religion. It was absolute'. As well as religion, the matching process involved thinking about the gender of the baby and the location of the adopting family: they should not live in the same locality as the birth mother. SW1 also suggested that 'you probably also considered – well it wasn't talked about a great deal – education and intelligence. And you were trying to match aspirations to some extent. I mean you would've had girls, you know, students particularly, would have said they wanted people who could provide the opportunities that, if they had cared for the child themselves...they could provide.'

SW1 outlined the paperwork and legal processes that were entailed in adoption. She was at pains to explain that every formal adoption was scrutinised by the courts with a *Guardian ad Litem* assigned in each case. The application for adoption was made by the prospective adoptive parents and had to be accompanied by written consent from the birth mother. SW1 recalled the occasions when she had taken a birth mother to a Justice of the Peace (JP) to sign such an agreement and maintained that the JP always explained the context and implication of signing the documentation. At this point 'the social worker didn't intervene, all the social worker did is, possibly, take them there.' SW1 acknowledged that this formal process 'could be an upsetting scenario for the mother'. Indeed, she noted it was upsetting enough for herself never mind for the birth mother who was usually very tearful.

SW1 explained that it was not possible for someone resident in the Republic of Ireland to adopt a child from Northern Ireland. She recalled that due to the role she performed she 'had a lot of enquiries from people from the south. Could they adopt?' The reply was no and SW1 reflected that some of the legal situation was 'actually rather ridiculous, you might have found somebody approved just over the border, they might have been very good, but they could not adopt, full stop.' When asked if it was possible to place a child born in Northern Ireland in a children's home in the Republic, SW replied that it was not. However, she then acknowledged that in the 'west of the Province', in particular, this happened sometimes. This was a reference to the use of Fahan baby home in Donegal. Once placed there, any such baby could not be adopted by someone from the Republic, in SW1's opinion, because they were British subjects.

In later years, particularly after 1987 when adopted children were given the legal right to access their birth certificates, SW1 was heavily involved in dealing with requests to reunite families and met large numbers of birth mothers. She reflected on this when offering further comment on the issue of adoption and consent: 'Now I have to tell you that of all those people I've seen, many said that they did not wish to consent, they would not have consented if they had been supported by their family. Right? And that was a big issue. No one said to me, "a nun made me sign", no one. And I feel I have to say this, because it didn't happen.'

The potential for re-traumatisation meant that doing 'origin work' called for very cautious handling. SW1 described some of the most traumatic moments in 'origin work' being when it became clear that a birth mother had given up a child because the conception was the result of a sexual assault.

More generally, SW1 is concerned that birth mothers who 'genuinely made a decision [to give up their child for adoption]...are now being victimised' because they are being judged by contemporary norms and because of this 'they've been re-traumatised.' She feels this can be particularly true when the adopted person 'can't accept that their birth mother made a decision' to give them up. SW1 concluded that the circumstances then were 'totally and utterly different'.

Social Worker 2 (SW2)

During her three-decade long career which began in the 1970s, SW2 worked in adoption and had experience of dealing with the mother and baby homes operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters. She also recalled that a Down and Connor Family Welfare Adoption Society was set up in 1969 and was led, initially, by Father Tom Savage who was himself a social worker. Whereas in the 1950s and 1960s many women self-referred to the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes (or were referred by their family or a parish priest) by the 1970s it was this diocesan agency that made many referrals. The statutory authorities also referred women increasingly. As a social worker, SW2 encountered 'all sorts of circumstances from people who wanted to keep their baby but weren't getting any family support, or ones where we would maybe engage with the family, and then they would get, you know, support to take the baby to its home.'

Like SW1, she made clear the difficult circumstances that the young women she worked with found themselves in: 'We were still living in an era where, to have a baby out of wedlock was, you know, there was a lot of shame attached to it and there wasn't support.' Many interviewees told us that women in mother and baby homes were offered fake wedding rings to put on when they visited the local GP clinic, but SW2 also recalled that women in one Good Shepherd home were also offered wigs to add an element of disguise. SW2 felt that social workers 'always had to work at the client's pace. I mean, being professional, we couldn't impose our views.' She discussed the issue of those birth mothers who requested that they not see their baby because they were going to give it up and recalled they she would always try and encourage contact: 'you tried to say, in future life, you would maybe want to have some memories'. In her view, the Good Shepherd Sisters also adopted this perspective. However, she did note that the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes operated as institutions with 'their routine'. There was 'an element of retraining going on...helping them to sew and knit and prepare for their baby.' Some of the nuns exhibited a 'carryover from the past institutions' when calling the young woman 'pupils.' SW2 felt that the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes operated with 'no money forthcoming except voluntary' contributions.

SW2 described the difficulties in the path of birth mothers thinking about keeping their baby. Securing accommodation from the statutory authorities meant overcoming 'a degree of negativity' from some who asked why give a home to 'a girl with her baby when there's a family doesn't have a house, you know?' She noted that sometimes family or friends provided the finance for accommodation.

When asked whether she generally favoured birth mothers keeping their baby or giving it up for adoption, SW2 replied that 'our priority was that they would make a decision they could live with and that was good for the child...There were occasions, definitely, when girls would have taken a baby home, maybe even gone out on their own, and they weren't able to care for them. They didn't, they just couldn't do it, and we had to maybe involve social services then.'

If a birth mother wanted to take time to consider her options, there was a small supply of foster carers, specialising in taking babies, who had been built up by the Down and Conor Family Welfare and Adoption Society and the Board. This was one method by which a period of time could be arranged during which the birth mother could reflect on what she wanted to do. Other than that, a child would be placed in designated baby home. The new mothers could visit these homes and 'we would work with them. We were always trying, you know, to offer facilities, but we had to always keep alerting them to the fact that you can't put a child into deep freeze.... there needs to be a permanent arrangement made as soon as humanly possible.' SW2 explained that this emotional decision also impacted on social workers and there were supervision meetings 'to ensure that we were not letting our own feelings in any way take over.... the battle was often between the needs of the parent and the needs of the child.' In cases where a decision was yet to be made on adoption 'you were encouraging them to keep contact with the child. Now there were all sorts of variations on that, but that was our clear professional way of working.' It was 'quite a traumatic, in those days, very traumatic for people' to have a child in those circumstances and, explained SW2, 'you were trying to give them time and space to see if a relationship was formed with the child.' Very practical issues, including financial ones, were often a factor. In one case a young mother who wanted to keep her baby and planned to take a degree at a university outside Northern Ireland. SW2's team 'wracked our brains to see where we'd get a sum of money that would support her, at least for the first year at university, and we managed to get it; just. There's some quite good trusts around. So there were those sorts of situations that would always try and find some way.' At the other end of the spectrum, many birth mother's families were struggling financially: 'parents just didn't, you know, the big families and all of that in those days, just couldn't take on another child.'

In the cases where a birth mother (or her family) had decided that she was not to see the baby following the birth, SW2 followed a different route than SW1. She did not write notes advising nursing staff that the mother was not to see the child: 'No, we wouldn't do that. I mean it's a human emotion we were working with, you don't write those sorts of things.' Like SW1, SW2 had great experience of the adoption panels set up to oversee the process. It was made up of 'a representative group of people'. Their role was to approve people who were 'suitable to adopt, ratifying the decision that a child was eligible for adoption, and then the third component was ensuring what child would go to what family.' SW2 also explained that there was no adoption from Northern Ireland into the Republic: 'there was no cross-border adoption...because there was different legislation. But we would've had, we would've had people in the south of Ireland who would've wanted their babies brought up here to, for adoption.' She believed this was connected to the legal situation in the Republic where a married woman who was separated from her husband had no legal rights over her children. SW2 believed that 'it was legal for the child to be adopted here [in Northern Ireland] but not in the South.' On the issue of babies born in Northern Ireland being sent across the border to the baby home at Fahan, SW2 knew of none that were then adopted in the Republic. She acknowledged that this was a complicated issue and discussed the matter of mothers crossing the border to give birth: 'sometimes, you see, what would happen, girls, even from Northern Ireland, would go to Dublin, to the mother and baby homes there. And then they would want to come, bring their baby up north to be adopted. I'm sure there were some who had their baby adopted in the south.'

SW2 speculated about some of the concerns that have been raised about adoption practices, particularly about the years before the sector was reorganised after the 1968 legislation: 'I've no doubt that people were acting in the way they thought was the right thing to do at the time. And, you

know, if you had thirty babies and you'd ten more queueing up to come in…and you had, there was no social work support…. You would have taken, and you'd have taken shortcuts to get the situation resolved. Oh yes, I've no doubt, you know, there was. I mean, in the context of today there was things that should never have happened.' She recalled that some of the older nuns had told her that in the past 'they literally went round doors to ask people would they foster the children? Because they didn't have enough space for them' in the children's home in Belfast. SW2 felt that the fact that many of the nuns in the various institutional homes gained social work qualifications in the 1960s and 1970s 'improved things quite a bit'. The increasing financial involvement of the state also improved the operation of the voluntary homes.

SW2 remembers the nuns talking about the St Joseph's baby home that was opened in the 1950s and how modern it was: 'one of the reasons for building that home was that the other place across the road, Nazareth Lodge…Where there would've been anything, maybe forty or fifty babies at a time. And they would be under pressure to make, to get the babies out, get them somewhere, because they couldn't contain the numbers, and they had what they called a topping and tail system. They had literally buckets of water outside the windows to take the nappies…no washing machines, no nothing. And there was no, there was no financial support from the state….they were dependent on paltry donations all the time.'

In the later stages of her interview SW2 reflected on origin work and the ethical issues involved in dealing with three sets of individuals: 'you had an adoptive family who had a right to the contract that they made, that the child would be theirs and there wouldn't be any contact with anybody. You had the rights of the child, who need to be protected in the process of opening up issues, and you had the rights of the birth mother…. So it was almost like, we never took one step with one person without engaging, thinking of the other ones. I mean, we had standard letters that we would write, maybe to a birth mother… very innocuous, so if the husband who didn't know about the baby found it' its full meaning would be unclear. SW2 memorably described adoption as 'a psychological transplant' and one had to be aware of the consequences of 'tampering with it.' She explained that there was no legal requirement to pursue origin work and there was flexibility about how to approach reunions. SW2 would not arrange a meeting if one of the individuals had a psychiatric illness for example, although she stressed that she always attempted to make no one feel that the pursuit of a reunion was over.

Social Worker 3 (SW3)

SW3 began her career in the1970s working with one of the Health Trust's before moving, later, to work with an adoption agency. In the latter role SW3 also worked on a lot of adoption origin cases. She discussed her experiences with mother and baby homes operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters.

She explained that even in the 1980s 'pregnancy outside marriage would have been culturally frowned upon. And I suppose the way we dealt with many sensitive issues then were to have them out of sight and out of mind, because I don't think people had the sort of emotional language to manage a situation.' She did recall, however, 'in certain ways, a difference of attitudes, for example, in rural areas and Belfast, where it wasn't such an issue.'

SW3 described how pregnant women became her clients:

> *It varied a lot. Some women would have very much had a concealed pregnancy where they didn't admit, either to themselves or anyone else, that they were pregnant. We got referrals, maybe, through a clergyman or a GP. Some of the clients would have stayed in mother and baby homes and others would have lived at home. But for those who wanted anonymity, a lot of them would have gone there. So really it could have been at any stage. We also got referrals from the ante-natal clinics because…. we'd a specialism for working with mums and counselling them on options.*

SW3 explained that there were not a lot of options for unmarried women who found themselves pregnant and for 'a schoolgirl or a student or a young woman who, at that stage, wasn't independent, family support would have been crucial.' Many families did not want to discuss options: 'the assumption would've been adoption, to maybe the parents or the family. There wouldn't have been an option in it.' Whereas 'obviously to a mother it's a different thing entirely.' She noted, however, that if the birth mother was over eighteen, SW3 did not automatically work with the family but 'if she wanted to keep her child, and it was obvious she was going to need her family, then we could become involved to see if there was any way that we could assist or work with them.'

SW3 offered a detailed description of the process of adoption, explaining that the consent form 'had to be witnessed by a justice of the peace who would have asked her was she sure what she was doing'. Then 'we would have brought the information to our adoption panel. The child, by the way, would also have had a medical.' The panel was 'made up of lay people, often with an interest in adoption or experience of it. If they decided that adoption was in the child's best interests, then 'we would look at our list of approved adopters and we would have tried to find what, in our view, would have been the best match. For example if contact was going to be important, were they open to that? Even just by letter, a card once a year, an update. We would be looking for adopters who weren't near where the birth mum lived. Practical things. So we didn't look for hair colour and all of that, we just looked at practical things.' The panel would even 'look at all the attributes and see what would be the best match, knowing that if a child went back to find his mum it wouldn't be a shock.' Different adoption agencies varied in their approach to the next stage but SW3's agency would then ask the potential adoptive parents to meet the baby at the foster home or at the agency's office. There might be a number of such sessions.

SW3 made a number of interesting observations based on her work with origin casework. Having worked with birth mothers who were seeking help to contact their adopted child, she found that 'often the perception was that they had been forced to give up their baby when, in fact, they had signed consent. But often, then, there wasn't counselling involved, there wasn't real support, so in their eyes and experience they had no option at all. So it sort of was a forced consent even though, legally it wouldn't have been seen like that.' She recalled the number of birth mothers who had approached her agency who disputed the consent forms that had been signed for their baby's adoption. SW3 reflected on whether that consent 'was informed, because at that stage the consent hadn't as much support around it.' She did not feel that there was always 'evidence of the fact that a mum knew what she was doing. So it's about protection first. And mums were often so isolated.'

SW3 empathised with those young women who had to make such a life defining decision when enveloped by 'the trauma. The fear. The pain. The uncertainty. And I would've often thought a feeling of being completely isolated. Nobody on their side, as it were. Because, again, there was

very much a culture of presumption, that if you had a baby outside marriage then the baby should go to – quote – "a good home" – unquote.' SW3 remarked on the research that has demonstrated the mental health issues that arose for women who had to give up their baby. There was, she believes, a 'simplistic expectation that... if you had a baby outside of marriage you didn't feel the same, it wasn't the same.' At one point this had been reinforced by protocols around births: 'I mean even in hospitals, probably before my time, mums were encouraged not to see their babies....Because there was a fear they would have this emotional tie which was, in any other case, seen as what you would want.' SW3 was very critical of this approach: 'experience of pregnancy, experiencing a birth, and then not seeing what's at the end of that is totally abnormal. It's like when women used to give birth to a stillborn and they didn't want her to see her child, you've no closure at all.' Her approach was the reverse of this one: 'we would always encourage a mum to see her baby, because if she was going to make a choice for her child she needed to work through her emotional process about that and to really understand what she was doing. So we would have taken photographs, we would have encouraged them to write letters...we would have encouraged her to see her child, to name her child.... Sometimes she had things she wanted to give her child, or a letter she wanted to send to the adopters. But that first six weeks, in particular, would be quite intense.'

SW3 felt that this type of information could be used in any future process of search undertaken by the adopted child. It was an approach that informed by encounters with individuals who had been adopted in the 1940s, 1950s, 1960s who had told SW3 and her colleagues '"I've no photographs of myself, no baby pictures. I don't know when I got my first tooth. I don't know when I smiled first. I don't know what I weighed when I was born." Stuff that you took for granted when you have access to information.'

SW3's origin work also made her familiar with legal and ethical challenges around aspects of the adoption experience. This included occasions where a parish priest was approached by an individual about their baptismal records and where the priest discovered that the baptismal record had been altered to enter the adoptive parent's surname. SW3 recalled that this was 'always an ethically strange thing' and the cleric would ask her for assistance in dealing with the individual. It was a difficult matter because 'agencies, legally were entitled to the information, individuals weren't.' On these occasions, SW3 could try and arrange a meeting with the birth mother.

She described the stages of origin work, beginning with a meeting with an adopted person and then moving on to tracing their birth mother. If that was a success, a subtle letter would be sent. Discretion was key, in case the correspondence was opened by someone else who did not know the full history. Moreover, 'birth mums... were often assured of secrecy. Really, well, they were assured of, that's how it was then. So they didn't expect there would ever be a contact'. On other occasions, it was the birth mothers who sought the contact and then the adopters would have to be factored into the ethical and practical considerations. In these cases 'there was a lot of work to be done with a mum who might have wanted to see her child all her life, but had no idea what he or she had become or what they thought of her, because a lot of them will still have been left with guilt.' The process involved working with the adopted adult, exchanging letters, photographs, their life stories, before 'eventually arranging a meeting.'

This could go on for weeks or months: 'it depends when people feel ready emotionally.' SW3 would stay involved in the process for the first couple of meetings or for as long as she was needed. Multiple variables are involved in creating the dynamics around these reunions, including whether the birth mother went on to have other children (that she kept) or the success of the guilt an adoptee might feel towards their adoptive parents in seeking to meet their birth mother.

SW3's philosophy was that 'the best place for a child is with his or her parents, or mum. If that isn't going to work then what you have to do is find the best alternative.' SW3 also told us that she would encourage birth mothers to meet the adopters and of the more enlightened approaches that began to emerge in the 1980s. She feels practice often was in advance of legal changes in this respect, as social workers dealing with origins cases encountered a demand for greater openness from many adoptees and birth mothers. For example, she explained how her agency rolled out training for adopters that prepared them to be open with their adopted child and to meet with birth parents. As she outlined, 'we actually went to England in the early eighties and we trained in training adopters, so you weren't only assessing them, you were preparing them.' Once they received this training, SW3's team began offering similar training to the Trust's in Northern Ireland.

Describing the mother and baby homes run by the Good Shepherds, SW3 said 'there was emphasis way at the start about you didn't tell anybody your real name. Because this whole secrecy thing was overpowering.' She added that 'I can truthfully say I didn't ever work with anybody who hated it. I mean there was routine. It was very different. The sisters in charge, typically, were kind… I think some of them [birth mothers] probably felt isolated in it.' She acknowledged that it was 'a strange, artificial place. I think, particularly, for women who didn't have a lot of contact with home'. In some cases, a young mother-to-be had not told her family she was there and enlisted friends to post letters to their family from England as part of a complex subterfuge. SW3 reflected that she 'saw any unkindness there, I have to say. Sometimes some of the sisters, I mean they weren't trained, so you're dependent on goodness and empathy and everything… I mean they're there because they wanted to, and it was the same with children's homes really. Because, and we all know what has come out of that and all, but churches, in those days, were the only institutions who really provided any kind of care, albeit it wasn't always the most appropriate'. In conclusion, she felt the mother and baby homes were there to solve a problem, and they were genuinely kind'. On their role in adoptions, SW explained: 'I mean some of the adoptions, remember, pre-'89 were private adoptions. So they could arrange adoptions, a doctor could arrange, a priest, anybody could arrange adoptions… And '87 or whatever, that came in '89, ended that, obviously. But still, although they could arrange adoptions they always called us in to do that element of the work. So it wasn't that they were trying to keep us out and they were organising things.'

SW3 felt that she and her colleagues 'would've done anything we could to help a mum keep her baby, if that's what she wanted.' They investigated whatever help could be sourced, which could mean 'help with a grant for buying stuff, it could be getting emotional support.' SW3 noted that 'maybe it's women who were slightly older who were making a choice. Even that, I mean it's almost easier for someone to take your baby off you than to actually say "I'm making a decision".'

SW3 discussed the process of adoption, explaining the six-week period of reflection that was enforced by legislation. Thereafter, it would take at least three months before a court. In the meantime, the state would appoint a Guardian ad Litem to ensure that the birth mother had been advised on the process. SW3 explained that whereas a birth mother could take her newborn child across the border into the Republic of Ireland, no one else could do that if it was for the purpose of adoption. Her adoption agency, for example, could not take a baby to a home in the Republic. Moving on from this, SW3 acknowledged the pressure on particular baby homes in Northern Ireland in the early 1980s. In one 'there were so many babies. Now the care they got was good, but they were basically fed and changed because there were so many of them. And we knew how crucial it was, in those early weeks and months, so we eventually approved our own foster carers, and we placed babies there, and a mum could go and see her baby at any time … But obviously there was a

lot of pressure because there were lots of babies. I mean lots of babies. Yeah and there were rows of cots. And, for example, when there was private adoption parents could go round to the home and say "we'll have that one". Like, you know, that's just how it was…. as long as you had a priest or a doctor who would speak up for you.'

SW3 also acknowledged that money or financial security was also a factor and this was another hurdle for birth mothers to leap: 'It was a fight for them, often, to keep their babies.' SW3 explained that 'my job wasn't to engage with any sort of therapy…it was just trying to support a mum in what she wanted.' SW3 encountered a lot of individuals 'who weren't aware that their mother – as they perceived her – was actually their granny, and that their older sister was their mum.' As a result, 'there was so much emphasis on secrecy'.

Concluding her testimony, SW3 reflected on whether or not social workers had an agenda: did they for example sometimes feel that a baby would be better off in a 'good home' than with its birth mother:

> *I think we're all, I think we all have to be aware of own agendas, be they hidden or, you know, and a lot of people in that time, in that culture, would have thought, look, this woman's, and also you have to think way back to the early days. Women who had babies were considered not quite right. You know, like I'm going back to the thirties, forties like. In other words they, they weren't fit to be out, as it were. You know, so there's always been, it's, culture changes a lot, and our culture has changed a lot.*

SW3 felt that in the past social workers often 'made a judgement for a mother'. She felt they sometimes viewed the young woman's situation and thought:

> *look, you're better off, that's how it is … And sure, look, the baby's going to a lovely home and they'll be very well to do. Because there was a perception that adopters were always very well to do. Which was not the case. But again, it's a fantasy. So we often lived in a bit of a fantasy world. We're the adults here and we're telling you you're better off.*

Probation Officers

We met with three retired probation workers, all female, who agreed to record a group interview for the project. In part, this was because they felt that as individuals they had had very limited interaction with either Magdalene laundries or mother and baby homes. Research in newspaper archives did note some placements of female offenders in the Good Shepherd convents at Belfast, Londonderry and Newry under the Probation Acts, but these were all in the years before 1960. Analysis of entry routes for the Good Shepherd Waterside convent suggests that the courts provided only 2% of entrants to its laundry. This was a total of 15 referrals between 1922 and 1969. There were no recorded court referrals after that date. This helps explain the fact that all three probation workers spoke of having minimal contact with the Good Shepherd laundries, mother and baby homes and Thorndale House. They speculated that women within the laundries had not been placed there as offenders by the courts and, for this reason, they had very little reason to come into contact with these institutions. They estimated that only 10% of their clients were female and, said Probation Officer 3, 'that is indicative; our lack of contact is linked to that.' Most female prisoners served short sentences for non-payment of fines, shoplifting and similar offences. Until its closure in 1986, they would have served their time in Armagh Gaol which rarely held more than a dozen female inmates at any one time.

All three retired probation officers noted the difficulties faced in securing accommodation for female offenders who were subject to their supervision, including those who were about to leave prison. They listed the range of options that were available to them. These included Regina Coeli, Women's Aid, the Ormeau Centre (set up 1978 by Extern), the Mater Dei hostel, the Simon Community and the YWCA. In their view the Ormeau Centre was 'the bottom line... If you couldn't get them in there, you got them in nowhere.' Most of its clients were male but it did take females. They noted that training and education were generally not a priority for them in considering a probation residence: 'you were looking for a roof over their heads.' After the Probation Order (NI) 1982, probation hostels were created and operated by the Probation Board. For younger female offenders they noted that St Joseph's Training School in Middletown, county Armagh and Whiteabbey Training School were options. They were of the opinion that the many years during which Northern Ireland did not have a borstal for girls small numbers of the more serious offenders were sent to Scotland.[1]

Probation Officer 1 (PO1)

PO1 began her career in the service in the mid-1970s and worked within it for over thirty years. She had a number of different roles, including managerial ones. PO1 could only recall one occasion on which she had a client who was placed in a Good Shepherd Convent. This was a 15 or sixteen year old who, in the mid-1970s, was serving a probation order under the supervision of PO1. During this point the young girl became pregnant and her mother was adamant that she go to Marianvale to have the baby and that it should then be adopted. Probation Officer 1 explained that it was clear that her client's mother would tolerate no "negotiation' on this matter even though the 'wee girl' did not want to follow this plan of action. Thus, a 'voluntary' entry to the mother and baby home was arranged and PO1 drove the girl and her mother to Marianvale. During the visit she only saw an entrance room and did not visit the home again subsequently. She could not recall whether she had kept in touch by phone with her client or if Probation staff from Newry had taken over the responsibility to visit. After the baby's birth it was put up for adoption and the young girl returned to her parent's house.

Probation Officer 2 (PO2)

PO2 began her career in the late 1970s and also served for over three decades. She did not recall any experience with any of the Good Shepherd convents during her work with female clients. However, she remembered one experience with Thorndale House. This involved the case of a young mother who was on a probation order who, with her partner, was referred to a good parenting class that was offered at Thorndale House for the 'training' of young mothers. This was at some point in the 1980s.

1 From 1954 there was a girls' borstal in Armagh prison. Belfast Telegraph, 18 May 1954; Catherine Cox, 'Institutional space and the geography of confinement in Ireland, 1750-2000', The Cambridge History of Ireland. Vol 4: 1880 to the present, p. 682.

Probation Officer 3 (PO3)

PO3 worked in the service for three decades from the early 1980s. She remembered visiting the Good Shepherd Convent in Belfast to pick up a woman who had been placed there. She had been in the GSC 'for a very short period...she was either homeless or had been released from prison. And she was there as a temporary refuge until something else was got for her.' PO3 reflected on what she felt was the 'inadequacy' of this woman and the sad fact that she was 'wanted by nobody'. She estimates that the woman 'was probably in her late twenties' but that she looked old because she'd had 'such a difficult life'. PO3 speculated that she was taking the woman to alternative accommodation possibly provided by the Housing Executive.

TESTIMONY ON THE GOOD SHEPHERD MOTHER AND BABY HOMES: MARIANVALE AND MARIANVILLE

The Good Shepherd Sisters operated two mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland, Marianvale (Newry) and Marianville (Belfast). Testimony was offered by two Sisters who had experience of working at both these homes and in the related St Mary's homes (laundries). Those interviews are discussed separately and in this section we discuss those who came forward with their experiences of spending time in either Marianvale or Marianville. The accounts discussed in this section of the report are divided into three groupings to assist readers in assessing the variety of testimonies and individual experiences that emerged during the course of the oral history project. The first group was made up of individuals who were very critical of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. Some of these women identified themselves as supporters of victims and survivors groups, particularly Birth Mothers for Justice Northern Ireland, but also SAVIA (Survivors and Victims of Institutional Abuse). Others were affiliated to no campaign group. All in this category were highly critical of the actions of the Good Shepherd Sisters and the Catholic Church more broadly. Furthermore, they often expressed frustration or anger at the role of social services in their treatment.

The second group was made up of birth mothers who came forward for interview because they were supportive of the Good Shepherd Sisters. These women had kept up longstanding relationships with the Sisters, over several decades, since spending time in either Marianvale or Marianville. As might be anticipated, given their positive relationship with the Good Shepherd Sisters, they were less critical of how these mother and baby homes operated.

BIRTH MOTHERS (OR FAMILY MEMBERS CRITICAL OF GOOD SHEPHERD MOTHER AND BABY HOMES)

PN

PN was born in the late 1960s, the daughter of a young woman who had been placed in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home after becoming pregnant to a married man after baby-sitting for his family. She was in her early twenties at this point. PN has pieced together segments of what happened and observed that 'more or less she was the middle child, and I think she was pressurised into going into the home…her brother had took her up there. Because Granny didn't want her because of, obviously, the shame that was brought on.'

Initially, she had stayed with 'her brother and his wife for a while. But I suppose, then, whilst I was due to be born they couldn't house her anymore.' PN described how she believes the situation then developed: 'I think, because obviously Granny was a very holy person, she worked in the chapel for years. And I suppose whenever mum announced that she was pregnant it was "take her, get her out of here". Moreover, PN's mother visited the local parish priest and he 'advised her to leave the village because she had brought shame. Now she did tell me that one.'

Pressure was placed on her to have PN adopted and for ten months she was placed with foster parents.

Soon after leaving the mother and baby home, PN's mother met a new partner who offered to take her to England and they married there. At this point, PN's mother began writing to social services to inform them that she would be returning to take her daughter to her new family home. PN has seen a form which does have her mother's 'signature' on it but she maintained that it uses a form of her mother's name that she never used. Moreover, having examined the signature, PN is adamant that 'I know for a fact that was not my mum's signature.' She feels that she may have been adopted in those months when she was in foster care if it were not for the fact that she had to have an operation shortly after birth and thinks this factor slowed up any potential adoption. Having read her social service files, PN feels that her mother had to put up 'a bit of a fight to get me back', because she was being told "Oh you definitely have to be married first …You can't have this child without being married".

PN discussed the trauma that her mother experienced because of this whole process. She explained that when 'anything was talked about in that kind of sense, you know, you could get that eerie feeling off her that she sort of, like, backed down. Sort of like a black shadow coming over, as if, "oh Christ", you know, "I don't want to go down this road and talk about this". It led to her mother leaving Northern Ireland and embarking on a series of relationships that were not very successful. PN explained to us that this motivated her to offer her testimony, to make it clear that her mum 'didn't do anything wrong. You know?' PN is often told "oh, isn't that lovely that she got you back?", but feels that yeah it is, but she shouldn't have had to get me back in the first place. It's the fact that she was placed in that home, and them homes should never have ever have been started up at all.' She feels that the Catholic Church was hypocritical 'because they didn't allow the pill or any kinds of contraception in, you weren't allowed to have an abortion, but then if the baby was born, stillborn, they wouldn't allow the baby to be buried in consecrated ground.'

SC

SC was raised in a children's home and never met her parents. She described some traumatic personal experiences that took place during her time as a child in the home. This has left its mark on SC; she suffers from depression and she found it difficult to structure and narrate her testimony. This was exacerbated by the fact that her childhood and teens were spent in a series of institutional homes. At the age of sixteen, in the mid-1970s, she found herself working in one of the Good Shepherd laundries after she was sent their when she ran away from a children's home. The part of her testimony that deals with that period in her life will be discussed in the section on the laundries at the Good Shepherd Convents. However, at seventeen, SC became pregnant and, with no family or any other support she fell fall back upon the Good Shepherd Sisters: 'I was totally alone, so I had no... I have never met my family. So I had no support as such, you know what I mean.' She did not tell the father that she was pregnant. On this occasion, SC found herself in the mother and baby home rather than the laundry. She regrets having absolutely no sex education growing up in the children's home and believes she was extremely naïve about pregnancy. A memory from her time in the mother and baby home illustrates this:

> *Just the week or a couple of weeks before I was due to have my baby, I'd seen this magazine on the table and I said "what's that?" And everybody started laughing at me and I said "what are you laughing at?" They said "it's a baby being born". And I said "what do you mean, a baby being born?" I always thought they cut your stomach, lifted the baby out and that was it. I hadn't a clue. And it was a baby being born naturally, so that shocked me, you know what I mean. I said "a baby can't come out from there", you know, and they said "it does, it does".*

For the birth of her son, SC went to the hospital where she was given pain killers but recalls that 'there's nobody holding your hand or none of that, no familiar faces, totally on your own. And [pauses] they were telling me what to do and I said 'I can't, it's hurting, it's hurting', you know. And I had to have forceps because he was quite a big baby. And loads of stitches, inside and out.'

SC described the work tasks that the pregnant women performed. They included 'cleaning floors and doing normal housework stuff, setting the tables and that and you know. You washed your own clothes, stuff like that, you know. They used to have some of us sitting doing, teaching us how to crochet and they'd sell the stuff, you know. That was where I learned how to crochet'. She was also asked to look after the baby of a 15 year-old girl who left the home immediately after giving birth at the local hospital. After SC had given birth herself, she does not recall being offered any bed rest, even though she had had an episiotomy, received stitches and also had experienced the ordeal of a forceps delivery. She wonders if the lack of opportunity to recover caused the heavy blood clots that she experienced subsequently. SC remembered the two nuns who worked in the mother and baby home during her time there as being nice. However, she is generally very critical of the system of institutional care which she felt let her down in her childhood. The impression that she left on the interviewer was of a young woman who was so institutionalised by the time that she gave birth that was incapable of challenging the view that she should not keep her son. This was particularly heartbreaking for SC because her own experiences made her aware of how the system could let down children in care.

JP

At the age of seventeen, in the mid-1970s, JP discovered she was pregnant by her fiancée. They separated shortly afterwards and she was ejected from the family home when her father discovered the news, a moment she described very vividly:

> *All hell broke loose in the house. He went mad, called me all the names under the sun, tramps, and everything, you've let yourself down, you've brought disgrace to our family, what have you done, oh you've destroyed your life, but the roaring and shouting.... he says, "get out" - excuse the language please – "get the eff out that door and don't come back, you've brought nothing but bloody shame and disgrace."*

With nowhere to go, a neighbour suggested JP try the nearest Good Shepherd Convent because the latter had spent to time working there as a paid employee in the laundry. Somewhat reluctantly, JP travelled there on foot escorted by her neighbour's husband who left her at the front door of the convent with the words "I hope you're alright doll". A nun answered JP's knock on the door and JP recalls saying "I've walked here and I'm in a bit of trouble, do you think you can help me?" JP describes herself as being naïve, partly because she had no mother from whom to seek counsel. Her mother had left the family home some years earlier. JP had very recently worked in the convent as a paid worker in the laundry but noted no recognition of that in the nun's demeanour. Instead she felt like 'I was a bit of dirt....I was treated as if I'd committed a crime'; due to what she remembered as a callous and cold reception. JP remembers being taken into the convent by a nun and being placed in a dormitory where there was an older woman who was there to take refuge from a violent partner: 'I was just took in, walked down a corridor and the door closed on me … nobody ever said are you alright.' Nor does she recall any medical check by a doctor or anyone else being made at this point. The nun returned later to ask "well, have you made a decision yet?" JP replied "what decision?" She remembered the conversation as follows:

> *'"Really" she says, "I don't think the situation you're in that you should keep this child." She's like "we'll help you then". I said, "I comes to you for help not to give the child up, I thought you might help me." "Oh", she says, "no", so that was it'.*

JP is not certain how long she remained in the convent, but thinks it was for a very short time. She maintains that during this period she was put under psychological pressure to give up her child for adoption. The Sister in charge argued that "you've nothing of financial service to give this child, you've no security to give this child, you've nothing to give this child....best thing is if you go to social worker and if you talk to the social worker, we can make arrangements for your child to be adopted". JP agreed to go and see a social worker but 'but not to give my child up. No. Because once I was out that door I wasn't going to go back.' She saw a social worker who rang the Housing Executive to explain she had a pregnant homeless young woman in the office. Accommodation was promised for the following day. That left JP with the problem of accommodation for that evening and she was fearful that she might be forced to return to the Good Shepherd convent: 'well I knew it had happened prior to other girls who went, maybe escaped the police always brought them back.' She was planning to sleep in a pigeon shed but was fortunate to encounter another neighbour who offered her shelter for the evening. The next day JP received the keys to an unfurnished flat and began to plan a new life, which included giving birth to a daughter who has had a successful life of her own. JP feels that she was 'one of the lucky ones' because she got to keep her baby.

IA

IA is the daughter of woman who was placed in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the early 1960s. She only discovered these details very recently, having been raised by her grandparents as their child. She grew up thinking her birth mother, who is now dead, was her sister: she was only told the truth about this when she was seventeen. IA's understanding is that she was moved to Fahan as a baby and that there was an intention that she be adopted from there by a couple from the USA. However, when her grandfather discovered where she was he went to claim her back and may have paid money for this to happen. IA has a lot of unanswered questions about her early life because there are irregularities in the documentation she has in relation to her early life. For example, she has one recorded birth date in December and another in April. IA is also angry at further inaccuracies she believes exist in her files. For instance, they incorrectly record her grandmother as an unmarried mother and states that an aunt has mental illness.

A good deal of her birth mother's experience in the mother and baby home is known to her through another woman who acted as her godmother when she was baptised at the home. It was common practice for another of the home's residents to stand as a godparent for the newborn babies. Her godfather was a priest based locally to the home.

In explaining how her birth mother came to be in the mother and baby home, at the age of nineteen, IA related her belief that her grandparents 'wouldn't have threw her out, rung the priest, or stuff like that. They would have kept things private between themselves.' However, IA has discovered that:

> *when my birth mother come home and told them that she was pregnant, my grandmother said don't worry, we will sort it out. And apparently, she went to work, and told her supervisor. So her supervisor rung the priest … and it was the priest then that come out and started to dictate to my grandparents that she would have to do this, and do that, and do the other, so I suppose that in that day and age they probably thought that there was nothing else they could do. So she went in there'.*

IA's godmother has told her that she was taken from the mother and baby home to Fahan but that her birth mother did not know she was there. She understands that it was a local priest who made her grandfather aware that she was in Fahan. Her grandfather travelled to Donegal to retrieve his new granddaughter and, as recalled by a daughter who travelled there with him, this was not achieved without him 'causing a scene' and by him handing 'them a substantial amount of money. I don't know how much, but it was a lot of money.' IA wondered whether or not a court order of some kind would have been necessary to take her across the border to Fahan. She told us that her enquiries have not produced any evidence that satisfies her on this point. IA also maintains that her birth mother did not sign any adoption consent. IA had never discussed this with her birth mother, but she offered this argument on this issue:

> *Even if I had seen the signed consent, I think because of what my godmother told me, and a lot of other mothers what was in there, you know, you were brain washed and forced to sign papers, do you know what I mean? I know, like because, the way I look at it is right, it doesn't add up. If my mother signed something to give me away, my grandfather and grandmother are not going to come and look for me and take me back, do you understand?'*

As IA's aunt told her that her grandfather made some sort of financial contribution or payment to remove her from Fahan, she concludes that the home 'had me set up to be adopted by an American couple, which I have worked out myself because they charged my grandfather that much money, this American couple must have paid them for me, so I suppose they had to be refunded some way.' She is very unsettled by the thought that this was a possibility and is angry about anyone who may have taken part in any such process. I feel that young people who are now becoming priests or nuns 'shouldn't have to carry the stigma of all, of their predecessors, you know, it's not fair on them, they didn't do anything wrong. But the people who did do wrong, why don't they just come out and tell the truth. You know, why don't they clear their conscience?'

KF

KF was also the daughter of a woman who was sent to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. In this case it was the late 1970s. KF traced and met her birth mother about ten years ago and has found out some of the details surrounding her pregnancy although KF explains 'I kind of hate pressing her about things because she always just goes "oh I can't remember" and then I feel bad.' KF also discussed the emotional issues that both she and her birth mother have faced around revealing each other's existence to other family members, including KF's adoptive mother. Like a lot of people in the position she feels guilty about searching for her birth mother when she was raised by a loving woman that she has always called her mum.

KF's birth mother is from the Republic of Ireland and spent her childhood in institutional care. When she was sixteen the nuns who ran the home where she lived found her a job with a family, as a childminder. The man of the house, KF explained, 'took advantage of her and I was the result. You would probably call it rape now, but it was a long time ago so she [her birth mother] says "taken advantage of." She went back to the nuns when she thought she was pregnant'. They arranged for her to travel the long distance to the Good Shepherd mother and baby home in Northern Ireland where she was to await the arrival of her daughter. As is the case with many birth mothers, KF's mum has 'blocked out' many memories from this period. However, she remembers coming up on the bus with a nun… who told her that she had family up here and that she was going up to visit them.' KF's birth mother was 'very, very scared. She was … but she was used to being around nuns and all anyway but obviously that was a different place, and they all spoke differently to her, you know the accent and all.' This may have prompted her to run away from the mother and baby home, an escapade that ended rapidly after she was apparently returned by the police.

She explained to KF that she remembers working in the mother and baby home and also that the nuns there were nicer than the ones she had experienced in the children's home in the Republic. KF does not know 'if that is a good thing or not, because the ones in *place name redacted* were not particularly good to her.' She has also told KF about the process of giving birth to her: 'she was on her own … when she gave birth to me. I remember her telling me that'. She was 'basically in a wee room on her own…until it was time that they couldn't leave her any longer.' KF's birth mother compared that experience with what occurred when having her next child, following her marriage. She recalls 'the difference [and] having people coming in and out and checking she was alright.' After her birth KF was taken to a baby home and her birth mother spent some time in London before moving back to her home area. KF's birth mother signed the adoption consent during the time she was in London.

KF's birth mother initially did not want to give her up for adoption but she had no family and did not feel there was an adequate benefits system to support them both in the Republic. Moreover, 'she says the one thing she didn't want to happen, was for me to have ended up in care, the way she had'. Adoption offered a way to avoid that. KF also believes that 'reading between the lines, the nuns didn't give her any other option.' KF also discussed the process of trying to trace her birth mother. She was grateful that she knew of someone who had already done this and she sought their guidance. KF was not happy with the way information was supplied to her once she started making enquiries about her mother. Initially, she was told her birth mother could not be traced. Around ten years later she was informed that her birth mother was trying to make contact with her, having received counselling in the wake of the Ryan Report in the Republic. KF describes the process of connection that was then managed by the social workers, which included a phase of letter writing and an exchange of photographs, with the social workers reading the letters: 'it was like she's my mother, I'm her daughter, why do we have to do all this through you, you know?' After a year, there was a supervised meeting on neutral territory in Dublin. From KF's perspective this:

> *was strange, to say the least … And it was in a hotel bar area, it wasn't anywhere … they do have some offices where they can do things like that, but for whatever reason they decided it would be better to sit and have tea and biscuits like … civilised people have morning tea.*

In the car journey back north, the social worker explained to KJ that what she was told ten years earlier was untrue: 'apparently at that first meeting with her all those years ago, when … I was twenty one, I was young…apparently I came across as a bit bitter, apparently … and that was … so they didn't search for her then.'

KF is resentful that because of this decision she lost another ten years during which she could have got to know her birth mother. It is notable that this testimony can be cross-referenced with that from the social workers we interviewed who explained to us how they approached 'origins work' and their concerns about the powerful emotions that revolve around family reunions of this kind. However, for KJ that approach seemed cruel rather than prudent and cautious. When KJ first met with the social worker, she had just had her own first child and 'I was probably saying things like "I don't know how you could give your baby away" and all, but I did understand that it was … it was the seventies, and things were very different.' Her view of the social workers involved in tracing Catholic birth parents and adopted children was that 'they sort of make you feel like a child and you're being controlled and then they worked closely still with nuns and all, so they do … I'm sure you know that.' This was a view that KF's birth mother shared. KF recalled that the first time she began to search for her mother the social worker's office still had 'crosses on the walls and all'.

KF feels that the Catholic Church owes a lot of apologies to birth mothers 'for anything bad that happened to them from the minute they contacted the Catholic Church about it to the minute they left, you know?' The revelations she has read about mother and baby homes and adoption in the Republic of Ireland have left her asking uncomfortable questions. With an element of dark humour, she commented on allegations of trafficking suggesting that in her own case 'as opposed to a baby being sent across the border. The whole package was sent across the border!' KF noted that her distrust in the Catholic Church caused her to mull over a further uncomfortable question:

> *[what] I would like to know out of this too and this sounds awful because I had a lovely childhood and I love my parents, was did my parents have to pay for me? As in, a donation to the church? I would love to know that. And I know it sounds terrible saying 'pay for' you know?*

TR

TR provided some of the most traumatic testimony and some of the most difficulty because it contained allegations of serious sexual assault perpetrated against his late mother in a Good Shepherd convent and baby home. His mother was from the Republic of Ireland and was married there and lived there until her mid-thirties. At this point, in the early 1970s, TR believes that her husband had an affair, an outcome of which was that his mother was sent to a Good Shepherd convent in Northern Ireland: 'She turned to her family for help and they sent, they got her sent' to the convent. TR understands that they 'more or less didn't want her.'

At this point in time, she was the mother of three children and they accompanied her. Two of TR's older siblings were adopted but his mother retained the care of her then youngest child (TR was born later). TR's claimed that his mother experienced ill-treatment whilst in the convent: 'She was kicked herself whilst cleaning the floors. Kicked and punched, and dragged by the hair. By a nun.'

However, TR's most disturbing allegation was that his mother was sexually assaulted by three males who had access to the convent. He explained that 'as a child, you know, growing up … she used to cry and sit and tell me all this.' Asked if his mother had ever made an official complaint about sexual assault, TR responded 'I don't think so … No she never made any complaints, but she was telling me a lot of bad things that happened in the place'. However, his own knowledge of the detail was limited due to the fact that he was born after his mother left the convent and because she rarely offered any detailed account of her time in the convent. He reflected that 'I don't think it's the sort of thing you would talk about … when she spoke about it, she was always crying. But if you sort of, spoke about it … she wouldn't talk.' This factor meant that TR was not clear on how long his mother had spent within the convent or how she came to leave it. Moreover, his older sister was only four at this point and unable to offer any further clarity.

His mother suffered terribly as a result of her time in the institution and was 'never the same mentally after.' TR's mother also explained the work routine she was engaged in which involved lots of 'scrubbing floors'. His impression was that the nuns treated her like dirt. And done the same to a lot of girls in there like'. TR still lives in the locality of the now closed convent and discussed the attitudes local people had towards it: 'they would talk- some people went into the place and they never came back out of it. They disappeared….' Young girls were put in because their families … they had children outside of marriage. But back then, that was … it was like … they seen it as wrong. It's a shame and disgrace on your family. So you're abandoned and you were just left in there and you were basically, then they could do what they liked with you.'

KO

KO is another person whose testimony centred on one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. Her mother entered the home prior to giving birth to her daughter in the late 1960s. Unlike the majority of birth mothers, she gave birth in a private nursing home and not the local NHS hospital. A few days afterward her birth, KO was moved across the border into the Republic of Ireland. KO received the appropriate birth certificate in Northern Ireland, which correctly recorded her place of birth and parent. However, another birth certificate was generated for her; this one in the Republic. It recorded her birth parents as being the American couple who were soon to adopt her and relocate her to the USA. It also changed her date and place of birth.

Following the deaths of her adoptive parents, when KO was in her teens, she became curious about her early life and contacted Ireland to try and found out more details. This was many years ago and she can't recall if she approached the Good Shepherd convent or the children's home to which she was moved in the Republic. However, she recalls the response being that there were no records related to her case. KO moved on with her life until seven years ago when an aunt produced some other paperwork related to her adoption. These included the second birth certificate (issued in the Republic of Ireland) amongst other items. She 'was really astounded by the whole, the documents that seemed to suggest there was movement of me from, over, across borders, and that this was probably not a unique case. That the convent and the orphanage were probably doing this with a lot of babies.' KO began to ask renewed questions to surviving relatives of her adoptive parents as well as to the various organisations involved in her early life history.

They told her that they could not remember the intricate details of the process, but an aunt and uncle explained that they had been visiting relatives in Ireland at that point and had assisted: 'they said that they would drive up to Northern Ireland and take me back to my grandmother's house, which is what they did. But that was all they did, they didn't know anything about the paperwork or anything, so they couldn't tell me anything more about that.' KO's mother (who was from Northern Ireland) had signed a consent form which indicated her consent that her daughter to be adopted by an American couple: 'That was signed sixteen days after my birth, and then I think a day after there was the Republic of Ireland birth certificate. I think it's dated later than one of the birth certificates.' She is aware that her adoptive parents 'already had a name for me. I mean, they seemed to have known, they seemed to have had a specific birth date in mind'. KO has copies of the character references, written on her parents' behalf, which were sent to the adoption society based in a baby home in the Republic of Ireland operated by nuns. However, the process of moving KO to the USA was not straightforward. The baby girl was sent to live with her adoptive mother's sister in the Dublin area:

> *My mother came over to visit frequently. This took a year and a half. I didn't come over to America until I was fourteen months old. So she came over several times, and they hadn't, if the orphanage had done this before, that is, get babies over to America, they hadn't set up any sort of process for her to do so easily. So she came over to visit me several times, and those times that she came to visit, she tried several means of getting me out of Dublin. So, or out of, to America. You know, out of Ireland. She went to the American Embassy, she told them that she had been pregnant when she came over, they said they wanted to give her a medical exam to prove that, so she went away. Then she found a doctor who was willing to sign a document saying that she had given birth to me in Ireland. And that's when they were able to issue me the passport. But she'd gone back to America by that time, so I don't know if one of my aunts actually was the one who did the paperwork for that.*

On the issue of any possible cash transactions being part of her adoption, KO is 'pretty sure' that this: 'I mean, at least some sort of, you know, like, a donation to the orphanage perhaps. Or, yeah, a donation to the convent. But there is no sort of paperwork that has any sort of numbers on it.' KO is also aware of further stories that circulated in family lore and of the fact that they were impossible to clarify one way or another:

The other thing was that, now this was just a rumour, that the person who was in charge of, I think it was the convent because it was a Mother Superior, was, during my childhood, calling my parents and extorting money from them to keep silent about my whereabouts. Again, this is just a rumour, I don't know if it actually happened because I was just a child.

KO has not tried to find her birth mother and wanted to make public the evidence she has from her case because she had watched the media coverage of the Tuam mother and baby home with horror. She is aware that her story offers:

a document trail, so it's not something that might catch people's attention so readily, but if there is some sort of case being made, then I do have things that I can contribute, too, and contribute to that....I know that there are a lot of atrocities going on in the world today, but I do think that this merits some attention, and I don't think that it's getting the kind of attention that it deserves, and I hope that your report and your study, and similar studies, will give some, I don't know, allow this to progress in a way that will bring some attention to the mistreatment of women and the transportation, the human trafficking that's been going on, and that has been engaged in, apparently, by governments and by the Catholic Church.

Asked whether trafficking was the correct term, KO replied: 'yeah, I was moved across, you know. From Northern Ireland to Ireland and, yeah, and then to America, and I have three birth certificates. I mean, obviously something's going on, so.'

CS

CS is another person who came forward to explain tracing their own origins back a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in Northern Ireland. After spending her first days of infancy in Northern Ireland, she was sent across the border to a baby home in the Republic. In this respect, her movements in the early weeks of life, mirrored those of KO. In CS's case, however, her birth mother was a married woman whose husband was not CS's birth father.

CS explained her complex search for the truth about her origins in a long telephone interview that took place close to the end of the research project. At the outset, she suggested that her birth mother travelled north to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home to be:

*as far away as she could get from *home location redacted*. Plus it was another country. That's probably why she got, she didn't use any of the mother and baby homes in the South.... And probably because she knew she would definitely, definitely not be, not be, not be known or seen.*

CS's birth mother had become pregnant, during the mid-1960s, in particularly scandalous circumstances, as CS is certain that her birth father was a priest. In a Catholic culture that stigmatised unmarried mothers as a dominant norm, often labelling them as morally loose, this particular pregnancy had the potential to cause great local scandal if news leaked out in the local community. Moreover, CS's mother had only just married into a respected family with a successful business. CS believes that her birth mother (and her husband's family) hoped that this illegitimate baby would end up being adopted by an American couple. Furthermore, she believes it was a further factor in the choice of mother and baby home.

*Now this is my understanding, this, and I actually do have, I do have people who would concur with my story. That place, *name of Good Shepherd mother and baby home redacted*, where she did go, they did send an awful lot of their babies to America. And so she probably hoped that that would happen. And when she went up there she gave false names and a false address, and she gave her false status. She said she was single when she was actually married. And so, and if the baby was to go to America [there] was no way that she could have ever been traced.*

The Republic of Ireland's 1952 Adoption Act only permitted the adoption of illegitimate children and this is further reason, CS believes, that her birth mother used a false name and hid her true marital status:

Well the reason why she changed the name and said that she was single, because in Ireland only, like, only illegitimate children could be given up for adoption. You could not be given up for adoption if you came from a married unit. So she had to say that she was single.

Although the subterfuge around false names and the back-and-forth movements across the Irish border made her task difficult, CS eventually decided to trace her birth mother when she herself had her own children and began to wonder who in her birth family they resembled. She narrated the multiple difficulties encountered in the search that led her to stop on occasions:

And I said right, that's it, no more, putting away the file, I'm not interested, they can feck off. I'm happy as I am, you know? I don't need these people. I mean I did say that. And then you'd be listening to the radio or there'd be something on the television and there, something would say, and I would just start it all up again. And just keep going back. I just kept going back, and my husband would say "oh Jesus, you're back at this again. I thought you told me that you're not, you're not bothered". And I said "I know, and I really meant it at the time, I really meant that I didn't care. I really did". But then I was just, "no, no, honestly no. I want to find out this". So I, I got off again.

CS already knew part of the story of her infant life from her adoptive parents, with whom she grew up in the Republic of Ireland. She explained that they were 'kind of on, on the list to get, to get a baby.' After waiting a while they were offered twin girls from a nun in the baby home/adoption society they were dealing with in the Republic of Ireland:

*And my mother tells the story that, oh she got so excited because they had one of everything but, and she rang my dad and she said to my dad, could they have two? And my father went "absolutely not, no way, no, one baby. I wouldn't be able for twins". So my mother had to ring back the nun and she was bawling crying, and she had to say that, no she wasn't allowed to have the two girls, that she had to just wait for the one, and the nun was so lovely to her on the phone and she said "listen, I'm telling you, the next little girl that comes available, I swear to God, she's yours, she's yours, she's yours". So then my, so then they get a call to say, "yes, there is this baby girl but", and they said to my parents is "you have to come up to *name of baby home in RoI redacted* and they were told to come over when it was dark, and they arrived and a while later a car arrived with me and the papers.... they were waiting, they were definitely waiting for me to arrive. I came down and it was dark, and then I went off with them.*

As part of CS's search, she contacted a social worker in Northern Ireland who wrote to her birth mother on her behalf on a number of occasions. However her birth mother denied that she had ever been in Northern Ireland. The social worker also provided CS with the contact details for an elderly nun who had worked in the Good Shepherd mother home at the time of her birth and she visited her:

> *I wrote to her and I asked her if I could come down and see her, so she said yes. So when I went down to see her... She actually said to me "you actually were supposed to go to America". And she was just so delighted that she, she remembered me. And I said to her "how do you remember me? You would've had millions of", well not millions, hundreds of babies going through your, your convent". And she said to me that "all the girls there were single and wished they were married and able to keep their babies. But *Name of CS's birth mother redacted*, she was the married one pretending to be single, who didn't want her baby."*

There was another reason why the nun remembered CS:

> *I was then put into the children's, into the baby home, into the mother and baby home for a couple of weeks before I was adopted. And this nun was the one who actually looked after me, because the rest of the babies were actually looked after by their mothers, but my mother had skedaddled ... with her husband to start a new family. Yeah that's, that's, sure I was gobsmacked when she told me that.*

Asked about the legality of her adoption, particularly the possibility that she could have been placed with an American couple, and the nun's thoughts on the matter, CS replied that 'well she certainly didn't seem to think that babies going to America was a problem. And an awful lot of children did to go America from, from, from the north. And from Dublin as well, sure it's well, that, that's well documented anyway that they all had passports and they were all flown over to Christian, Catholic families over there.' However, CS's understanding of adoption involving a child born in Northern Ireland into a family in the Republic was 'it was legal enough, yeah. Yeah, I don't think, if you were a Catholic there was no problem.'

CS's search for the full truth about her birth parents has been a long one and has involved parish priests, social workers, the media, Facebook friends and others. By accessing her baptismal records she was able to find her birth mother's real name and CS was also resourceful in numerous other ways. She has met her birth mother, but has not established a relationship with her. CS has also met the brother of the priest that she believes was her birth father and this meeting confirmed her understanding on this topic. A particular breakthrough came when she was given access to her notes from the Good Shepherd mother and baby home where she spent her infancy. However, CS's story is unfolding as she is yet to contact her birth father who has left the priesthood and is living in retirement with his wife.

LC

LC was interviewed in her home outside Belfast. She was born to a single mother and was in Mater Dei as a child and explained that 'I was told that I was there until I was a year and ten months. I was then adopted into a family.' She understands of her birth mother that 'her family put her out of the house' and this is how she found herself in Mater Dei. This was in 195* and her adoption was

finalised three years later. However LC has been 'in touch with Family Care … and they can't find any record of me in the Mater Dei.' The information LC has is from her adoptive parents.

Unfortunately, LC was sexually abused as young girl by an adult male and an outcome of this was that 'a lot of abused children I can look back at it, you know, and my childhood now, and I'm in a different place and can see things. I became… I suppose, a little bit of a party girl.' LC became pregnant and when her adoptive mother 'found out I was taken immediately to a doctor, and within a very short period of time I found myself in *name of a Good Shepherd mother and baby home redacted*. There wasn't a lot of consent, I was just told I was going and that was it … I didn't even know where I was going. I was put in a car with the local parish priest and my mother and off I went.'

LC was seventeen at this point and it was 196*. Her recollections of arrival are as follows:

> *When I got there, I remember going to this, like, an office, like a room, and my mother discussed with this nun all about what was happening, what was going on, da da da … And then I said goodbye to my mother, and the next thing, then, they informed me that I no longer would have my name, that I would have another name, and I was not to discuss anything about where I came from or anything about me or my name, and that was the start of my sojourn.*

She was given the name 'Bernadette' for her stay. She is not clear on how long she was in this mother and baby home, and at the time of the interview was waiting for information on her file from the Family Care Society. It was a considerable amount of time: months rather than weeks. She remained longer than most because her son's first planned adoption fell through: 'so', she explained, 'I was there for longer than normal. Most girls stayed there 'til the eight weeks', after giving birth, 'I was there, I think, twelve or fourteen, I'm not sure.'

LC harboured hopes that her parents might relent and let her keep the child. She remembered that 'they came to visit and I thought, you know, once they see the baby they'll say "yes, we'll bring him home". But they didn't. So that was a last hope was dashed.'

This meant that when the failed adoption occurred she had 'very mixed emotions. I was glad and sad. I was, I just didn't know what to, you know? At this time I was eighteen and I was coping with all this. And there was a lot more went on when I was in the home.' LC is not sure but thinks 'there was an element, something to do with money, I can't really remember' involved in the failed adoption.

On the subject of money, she maintained that 'we never got any money, any pocket money, anything'. This was despite the fact that the nuns 'were claiming benefits'. In addition, LC claimed that 'they put me out to work.' This involved going to a nearby house to 'clean for this couple next door. I never got paid for it. It was very difficult. It wasn't far away but I was leaving my baby to go and work in this house with these people that I didn't know.'

LC described her time in the home as demoralising. One event stuck out in her memory:

> *It must've been Easter or St Patrick's Day or something - this, this is a vision that never has left me in all these years -we had to put on a show for the nuns. Pregnant girls dancing and singing. And that vision's never ever left me. We were like, I can't even think of the word I want. Entertainment. Something in a circus.*

The nuns felt that this was something the young women should enjoy, but LC certainly did not. She felt that:

> *there always was this element, as well, that we were bad girls, fallen girls, immoral girls. This was all, this ether was always there. And things were said slightly and, you know, I can't put it into words, but there was always this element. We had to atone for this awful crime that we had committed, you know? There was young girls there, there was girls, thirteen, twelve, you know? I knew some of their stories, some of them I didn't … they were probably, you know, they were abused by maybe a father, an uncle, whatever.*

She suggested that this concept of atonement 'carried with me, I think, all my life.' Being made to feel 'unworthy, like second-class … Not good enough.' LC became emotional discussing this and in contemplating being 'rejected as a small baby' and then experienced 'rejection from my adopted parents because I had the audacity to produce this child and, you know? There was no looking into why it happened or how it happened'. LC had not spoken to anyone about the sexual abuse she suffered and its impact.

LC explained how she felt the Good Shepherd Sisters contributed to making her feel unworthy. She felt it was 'subtle':

> *We were made to scrub floors, and we had to do these things, and everything was very regimented and we weren't allowed to do this and we weren't allowed to do that, and were to keep quiet at certain times, and all those elements. As I say, they were very subtle. They took us out for walks, that's another image I still have. You know the way you would see a crocodile of small children? That's the way we were taken out for a walk.*

LC found this 'demeaning' and came to treasure a point where 'they kind of trusted me a little bit, because I was allowed to go to the hospital and all on my own, which was, you know, a bit of a breakthrough.' She took this opportunity 'to go and sit in a little café and drink a cup of coffee before I come back. It was my only thrill.' However, LC remembers the treatment at the hospital as 'terrible.' There was an:

> *attitude, not from my own staff, now, but from some of the staff. You know, single girl, young girl, pregnant. Some people were sympathetic, some people weren't. But at the time of my son's birth it was horrendous. I had a midwife who was very unsympathetic. I was brought into the delivery room and I was left alone.*

LC explained that she 'knew the mechanics but I didn't really know what was going to happen, and it was scary, it was really scary. And there was no-one to support me, no-one to talk to.' She experienced a difficult birth that led to 'a whole flap' among the staff and LC was 'was nearly beside myself.' After the birth she 'sutured up very dismissively, and went back into the ward again afterwards, and again, alone. No visitors, no nobody, in a public ward with everybody all gawping at me and looking at me.' It is worth pausing here to note that some birth mothers were place on side wards or in private rooms to relieve them of the feeling that they were being gawped at. Some of them viewed that as a sign of special treatment that they viewed in a negative light, but it appears that LC wanted that type of arrangement.

On her return to the mother and baby home, LC's baby went to the nursery. She added her belief that the nuns have 'denied, that there was a nursery, but there was a nursery.' LC remembers that she was exhausted and 'I went to the room and I lay down and I slept, and I didn't hear or wake up in time to feed the baby. And, oh dear, did I feel so bad, and I was made to feel very bad. How could I do this? Oh, this was dreadful. "We knocked the door, you didn't get up"…. It made me feel as if I was the worst person in the world.'

LC recalled that no one offered her any help in feeding her baby. She was initially in a single room at this time and has a feeling 'but I could be wrong – that they were being paid extra for me to be in a single room.'

LC maintains that she was quickly reassigned to her chores on her return from the labour ward, despite having stitches. She also 'had to go to chapel. No matter what you felt like you had to go to chapel. And I had a merciful row with them over it. I don't really do authority very well…I had a massive row with the priest, and the nuns, because I didn't want to go to chapel. Why should I?' She felt tired and unwell, but there was 'no sympathy….There was no, you know, "Oh go and lie down for half an hour", or "you're looking tired"'.

She developed 'a massive boil' under her arm because 'I was run down' but recalled receiving no attention for this. Nor did she recall any aftercare. The standard answer to her to '"take a shower", "take a bath", whatever. That was it. And again, even then, you know, at that stage you had no privacy. You know, they were there all the time. What were they watching? I don't know, what were they looking at?'

On her baby's adoption, LC said 'you went there, you had your baby, they arranged the adoption. You had no say in the matter. That was it. So then when you're finished and the baby went to wherever it was going, you went home. And I went home, it was never spoken of again, ever.' She remembers being given a few days' notice that her baby was leaving the home and, therefore, had 'time to realise what was happening, and I sat down and I wrote a letter. And I put it in, I had a bag of things, clothes, little toys and I put it in with them and I just hoped and prayed that the nuns wouldn't take it. And that was it, it was the hardest day of my life. I will never forget. You had to hand over your baby'.

In recalling the process, LC also reviewed the emotional damage it entailed. She described handing the baby over to one of the nuns and watched:

> *her walk away down this long corridor. And I can still see that. It was a very difficult day. And then, that same day, I went to my home, and I had to walk out through that door and go home. And it was never spoken of again, as if it never happened. So again, all those things got buried right down again. And it is damaging, you know, I know that now. You can only supress emotions for so long, so.*

Not long after having her baby adopted, LC left her family home for a new location and job. She also changed her Christian name and reflected ruefully that 'I've had so many names. I had my birth name, my adopted name, and then my third name … and I've used it all my life since. So the person that I was before is no longer.' LC felt she had to do this to try and remove 'all that pain and heartbreak and, it was the most demoralising horrible part of my life.' She also married and told her husband about her experience and the adopted child. He made it 'quite clear that if he'd have met me with the child he would have found it very difficult to rear that child.' LC felt this was 'kind of another slap in the teeth.'

LC's son did, in fact, re-enter her life. She had considered trying to find him but was 'afraid of wrecking his life, afraid of rejection, afraid that he didn't know he was adopted. So many fears.' Rather like OC's story of searching for her birth mother, LC would look, then stop, 'then I would look another wee while, think about it another wee while'.

She also found her own birth mother, helped by her rare surname, and arranged a meeting but 'unfortunately it was a bit of a disaster. There was nothing there. I think, now when I look back on things, life had treated her so badly that she was just sucked dry, there was nothing. She talked about her girls, and she did give me cards, a few cards and things, but it's like talking to, I don't know, I can't even explain it. There was nothing. Just nothing.' This meeting happened in the early 1980s.

This failed attempt at reunification, fortified LC for the meeting she had with her own adopted son after she received a request for contact some years later. She received a letter from a social worker 'and, you know the way they sort of write this letter, it was very kind of vague, that this man is looking for his mother, and could it be you? And if it is can you contact?' Before the meeting she experienced trepidation, wondering 'will he forgive me for what I done? Is there any animosity?' But there was also 'excitement and joy, to a certain degree' that 'after forty odd years I was going to meet him. And it was, it was lovely … It all worked out well. He's a lovely man.'

However, LC was somewhat annoyed that her son had been given inaccurate information about where she was from and insinuating that she was a heavy drinker. She observed that 'I think the holy women in that certain establishment told lies.' Her overwhelming sentiment about meeting her son is relief and she noted that 'I talk away about him now, I don't hold back.'

At the end of her testimony LC reflected on the events of her life that are germane to the research project:

> *I never felt that I was physically abused. But I do feel that I was emotionally abused. Mentally abused. My life, all my life has been coloured by the treatment that I received. I don't really know what happened when I was a baby, but there's something very wrong somewhere. My life afterwards, from the adoption, I feel as if there was something funny with that adoption too, because they were a lot older and they shouldn't have been adopting children at that age. It's now an age limit, and there was an age limit then, so there's something wrong there too. So that coloured, there's things happened in my life that came, stemmed from where I came from, that can't be changed. And then to end up where I did, and the scar, the emotional scar that those women [the nuns] placed on me, somebody needs to answer to it. And to let children be put in a place like that and treated the way they were, it's immoral and it's wrong. It'll never get me back the years, it'll never, but it'll draw a line under it, and I think the church, the nuns, they have to answer for their behaviour. Their inhuman behaviour, really, at the end of the day. I mean they took, they took our identity, they took money from the government to keep us there, with a bit of food and that was it. You washed your own washing and everything else, like they'd no outgoings expect for a bit of food, and it wasn't great food either. They did that and they won't hold their hands up to it, and I think it's time that somebody spoke out and said "you need to answer to this". And as I said to you, I have completely disowned anything to do with the Catholic Church, nuns, priests, I want nothing to do with them. I know you can't tar everybody with the same brush, but the institution is there and they allowed that to go on … So*

that's the way I kind of feel, that if somebody, somebody has got to bring these people to book. And there's so many women and girls who are now dead, there's so many women and girls who are still living with this and can't speak out because they're afraid, because they haven't told their families, so it's up to the few that can speak out to speak for them. So that's really, basically what I feel.

TS

TS was another individual who spent time in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home, in 197* at the age of eighteen. In her case she managed to hide her pregnancy from her parents until quite a late stage. When the news was revealed she explains that:

I was whisked off to the doctor's by my mother. She went into the doctor's first … mammy would have known him very well. So I sat in the car whilst mammy went in, and when mother came out she was very annoyed … when mammy came out she'd been upset, she was upset, I knew she'd been crying, and she went in, or then I went in and was examined by, embarrassing, you know, to be examined by, that. But anyway, that was on the Monday, and on Saturday I was there, I was in that place, so I'm assuming it came from the doctor. Mammy, mammy and daddy probably wouldn't have known about these places.

TS did not need to pack her belongings before heading off for the mother and baby home because she had already done so: 'my bag was packed and under the bed for months, for I thought I'd be threw out, like.' She had spent weeks and months 'in denial' and in fear that she would be made homeless if her parents threw her out: 'I did pack a case and put it under the bed, because I thought, I just thought my Da will kill me like.'

Before the journey to the mother and baby home, her father took TS to see their parish priest and 'he suggested that this baby be up for adoption. And there was another priest there … and his sister had adopted a baby.' Adoption was the word she was hearing from everyone as 'mammy had said from day one the baby wouldn't be coming home. So that was it, doctor, priest, and then in there on Saturday, so clearly that was all done in behind the scenes.'

Describing her family's arrival at the Good Shepherd mother and baby home, TS remembered that:

it was lunchtime, and when mammy and daddy took me in the nuns were so lovely. Like, this one in particular was so lovely. With hindsight, now, looked so lovely to my parents and painting a rosy picture of everything, this will be lovely, and all the craic there would be and, you know, we commented on how gleaming the place was, the parlour that we were taken into was gleaming. The wooden floor, it was magnificent. So mammy was saying "these people must be up the break of dawn". But that was us, you know. Now my mammy and daddy wouldn't know the half, you know, I never ever, we never discussed it anyway. But, so I'm probably getting off the beaten track now … and so, yes, this nun, Sister C, she, all bubbly and all, and then she'd say "does she sing?" and all. And I do, or did, and she says "oh we'll have plenty of craic"'.

TS felt that her parents were given to believe that:

> *it would be alright for me to be there. But it wasn't like that. And then they left me at lunchtime and I was taken into the, everybody was getting their lunch at that stage, but I was distraught, you know, at leaving them … People didn't go anywhere back in the day. Unless you were with your mammy and daddy. No, so I'd never been away from home. And it was traumatic, now, that I was in there with strange people and crying and, you know, not being able to control it, and probably they had all been through that too. So, then, I think that was Saturday, and then on Saturday evening you had to go to confession. And I was panicking, what am I going to say to this priest, like? So I just said to him, "well you know why I'm in here, so guess what the sin is". I didn't say it as cheeky, you know. Do you know?*

The father of TS's baby made contact with her over the phone when he found out where she was, but despite the fact that she was eighteen, the nuns informed her parents about this conversation and her parents issued orders of 'no communication', which the Good Shepherd Sisters enforced. This collaborates the testimony of Sister 2 which indicates their desire to respect parental wishes over those of the young women.

Like a number of others who were resident in the same Good Shepherd mother and baby home, TS recalled the individual cubicles in which the mothers-to-be slept. She also explained the daily routine, which involved rising around 0800, prayers, breakfast, cubicle tidying and then working in 'the huge big work room'. The latter involved making 'those wee Irish dolls that you see in shops. We sewed the costumes on them things.' Later TS knitted 'the wee baby jackets and things that went to the baby home.' In addition there was washing up in the kitchen and cleaning of 'the absolutely gorgeous parlours'. She did not resent having to do this work, explaining that otherwise 'we would never have got the day in there'.

She also had more negative and unsettling memories about work in the home. One was that chores were given even to the most heavily pregnant women. About two weeks before going into labour, TS recalls 'I was outside up a ladder cleaning windows. So you know, that stays with me. I'm not saying, you know, I probably shouldn't have been doing that like. But I'm not saying I was up that high, but it was a ladder. I shouldn't have been on a ladder at all.' She also detailed one event when Sister C, who wasn't particularly kind', called her out of the room for 'a shouting session' because there were no clean napkins:

> *Obviously they always impressed by bringing out the best china, bringing out the best whatever. So obviously napkins must've been on the agenda somewhere, and they must've been dirty and I had sent them to the laundry, and there must've been another set of visitors coming and there was no napkins. So I got, I can see her standing there ranting at me yet.*

Sister C was 'hard I think', observed TS, 'I mean it wasn't a physical abuse or anything, you know, nothing like that. But you were, you knew you were a fallen woman like. You knew, if your skirt was too short; I didn't have a wild pile of clothes like, and so, you know, she would've said about you, it was humiliation a bit, really.' TS was afraid of this nun 'in that it's just humiliating, you know? It's how they would, how she would've spoken to you. And you just kind of knew, maybe, that she didn't like you.' TS met Sister C many years later in a different context and said to her "well you probably don't remember me, but I spent some time in *name of Good Shepherd mother and baby home

redacted*...I just want you to know that I married the daddy of my baby and I have my baby now and he has children of his own'". Sister C replied that she did not remember TS but told her "I hope I wasn't too bad to you". On this TS observed 'I just thought to myself, you know rightly. You know. And I'm not saying she was bad to me in a physical way or anything else but, you know, she was a bully I just think. You know, how she spoke to you or how she shouted at you over napkins'. TS is particularly irked, contemplating this, because when her parents visited the home they 'always came bearing gifts. You know, it might've been biscuits, it might've been tea, it might've been whatever' and Sister C 'was huggy, kissy, and "ah she's a great girl, and she's this and she's that". In TS's assessment this was 'totally a performance', which was facilitated by the lack of power the women in the home had, because they were 'shamed' by being there. TS actually came to identify Sister C's behaviour with bullying when discussing workplace bullying with a counsellor many years later

When the mother and baby residents went to mass on Sundays they had:

> *a place off to the side, and I know that the orphans were somewhere different as well, God forbid you'd be seen. It was just all about hiding people and deception, and I'm sure people knew rightly that this group of pregnant girls over here were what they were and that.*

Going to mass represented a rare departure from the home, as TS explained that the only other time she was allowed out was to visit the local GP surgery, although she explains that the Troubles played a factor in her not being desperate to head out into what was an unfamiliar district.

TS's memories of the labour process are that it took place over twenty-four hours and that she was given pain relief and she notes that 'I have to say the nurses were very good.' However, she did give birth without any family member to offer support. The possibility of her mum being there 'wouldn't even have been on the radar.' After the birth TS 'didn't know what was going to happen to be honest. That sounds really silly like. But there must've been paper to fill in or something to fill in, because I ended up with *son's name redacted* back at the baby home with me for two weeks.' She remembers that in the car journey back to the mother and baby home, her own mother told her "don't you be talking to that child now, it'll let him get to know your voice". She believes that others were filling in forms on her behalf at this point: 'clearly, somebody filled something in or said that that had to happen. Because I knew, I was away like a lamb to the slaughter. Whatever they told me to do I was, I'd be doing it.'

She is not sure why she went back with the baby as it was not the usual practice in this mother and baby home: instead babies went fairly swiftly to a local baby home if they were being readied for adoption. Her son did eventually go into that home but TS has 'no recollection of it.' Like many of our interviewees, she has drawn down the metaphorical blinds on this traumatic experience in her life. She can 'remember every minute of my mummy and daddy in that car, taking that child back when we were going back to' the mother and baby home after giving birth. But as for the journey to take her son to the baby home, TS said 'I don't even know whose car we went in, whether my mammy and daddy took me ... I have absolutely no memory of where he went to.' TS does remember visiting him twice in the home and feels that her mother was watching her reactions closely on these occasions: 'I think she was trying to gauge me, you know, should this child come home'.

Shortly afterwards 'whenever the papers were to be signed, mammy had said to me one day "do you want to bring this child home?" And I didn't know what to say. I was afraid to say yes in case they

didn't want him at home.' However, she did say yes and recalls explaining the change of mind to one of the nuns who was a social worker. TS feels that 'she wasn't best pleased at all like … I can see her face as well, and I just know that it hadn't gone according to her plan anyway.'

The baby boy's return to his mother's home was not conventional however: 'well, he came home and he came home as, to my mother's … in a roundabout way, that he was somebody she had adopted. So then there was even more deception.' TS explained that it was 'made clear, not that it needed to be made clear, that he was my responsibility.' It was three years before she married her baby's father and she explained some of the difficulties around that. The couple are still together and our proud grandparents now.

TS remembered the death of the baby of another woman who was in the mother and baby home after her. This was due to, she thinks, gastroenteritis and she deduces that 'so, there must've been something in that home.' This was a reference to a baby home and not the Good Shepherd mother and baby home. TS was concerned that the researchers investigate this home. When her own son was reclaimed from the baby home he had a rash under his chin 'That was raw. And then that side of his face had a rash. But that's probably where he was on it all of the time. But it took months for him to even out.' She felt the cause of this was due to the baby 'probably was lying there all day every day.' In this respect, TS testimony bares comparison with SS and Social Worker 2.

TS is philosophical about what happened to her because she simply became pregnant. After the death of her parents, her brother said: "Oh you must resent them? You must?" TS replied '"I have never thought ill of my parents or resent them for doing that. It's part of my life, it's what was going to be for me, and Mammy and Daddy did what they thought was right at the time". And took advice, obviously, from the powers-at-be which is the priest and the doctor – who were the go-to people, obviously, back in the day … I think it was the shame, you know? I think if you'd have killed somebody it would not have been as shameful as being pregnant – and that's … I … it was such an awful thing to bring to your door.'

She also added a gender dimension to her reflections: 'But it was men that put them in mostly, those girls, in those Magdalene laundries, whether it be daddies or whether it be brothers. And they were never allowed out again. In a lot of cases they weren't allowed out again. And that's disgusting, like. That's what annoys me more than anything.' TS noted that if a male was revealed to have had sex 'it would be looked on as a notch on the, you know? As opposed to this awful fallen woman, you know?'

Once she came home, TS never discussed these events with her parents. She explained that 'I never would have told them how unhappy, or how harsh, or how … because I wouldn't want them, because I just think that would upset them that they had put me in that position. And I wouldn't want them hurt by that.'

Asked what end results she hopes the research project might produce, TS replied:

> *I don't know that I needed anything from it? Because I have, you know … but I am always thinking of the other ones that were not as fortunate as me. And, you know, I think it's important that people know that these things existed up until very recently. And that it should never be allowed to happen again. But it's the male thing, you see? I don't know. You can't do anything about that, that's just how it is. Priests, doctors, parents, daddies. But I would like it – I just think that it should be told. It's a story that needs to be out there. And I'm not expecting anybody to*

> *come and apologise. I think that if anything is learned from it, and if there are institutions in places again, that these people that are running them … are just … have a human touch? That we are human beings the same as them.*

On the issue of who she holds responsible for being sent to the mother and baby home offered a mixed observation:

> *My parents made that decision. You know? I can't blame the Catholic Church, or – because I'm sure there were plenty of other pregnant girls that were never sent away there? But of course my parents were very Catholic. And if the priest said it, or the doctor said it, then, you know, that's what's best for me. So they think, obviously, those people knew better what was best for me more than my own parents did, you know? But we've all taken ownership now of our own lives and our own children, and we make the decision, as opposed to taking advice from the powers-at-be that don't really know.*

NO

NO explained the experience of getting pregnant in the 1980s at the age of sixteen. Her mother 'rang the priest and the social worker and the doctor – and they all came out to the house. They were, like, discussing my whole life in the kitchen, and I was closed in the living room.' The outcome was a drive to one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes 'with this woman that I didn't know', the social worker.

Her view of the nuns was 'I didn't think the nuns were very nice, to be honest … they would have made you do chores all the time.' She also remembers that 'they would rush you to the mass – all of that kind of thing. And there was like an oratory? Like a chapel, in the place? And Sister *name redacted*, she used to march us away down there every day.'

Like other birth mothers who were interviewed NO remembered carrying out physical chores to the last stages of pregnancy and had a particular view on why this happened: 'I remember whenever I was about eight months pregnant, that they made you clean the stairs. Up the stairs and down the stairs. And I know, the day, that that was to induce your labour.' She remembers that feeling 'so tired' but was shouted out: "Get up and clean them stairs".

NO explained that she was isolated in the home: 'my mother never contacted me all in that whole space of time.' She felt incarcerated as she recalls 'bars on the door. And you were really locked up all day. The only time I ever remember going out was when my sister called.' However, this did not always go smoothly. The nuns provided NO with maternity clothing to wear which were 'big white dresses'. On one occasion the doorbell rang and a nun answered it to NO's sister: 'and my sister looked at me and she says: "I couldn't walk up the street with you, love, looking like that".' No recalled that the nun then shut the door with the words: "You're not having your visit today". Two of NO's sisters came to see the baby when he was born, as did the baby's father, but 'the rest of my sisters just called me a tramp'.

These sisters were drawing on their mother's viewpoint. NO explained that her father died before all of this happened and also that her mother's anger was heightened because her baby's father 'was a Protestant and I was a Catholic.' Her mother's immediate reaction to the pregnancy was

that 'she came up and she started to kick me round the place. And it wasn't long after that that she sent me away.' She was 'about five months' into her pregnancy at this point.' NO recalled that her mother 'used to say to me I brought shame on the family and everything. And I suppose I grew up a lot of my life thinking she hated me, too.' This had long term effects on NO and she revealed that 'I used to blame myself all the time and, I suppose, my whole life after that I just turned to drink and I would have drank a lot.' She had serious mental health issues that related to the adoption of her son. NO hoped 'I'd be able to keep him and … All of the time, in my heart, I just wanted him. But it didn't work out that way.' When her mother visited her after the birth of her son, NO remembers 'crying and asking her to hold the baby, and she didn't want to. She didn't even want to look at him. But eventually she did hold him. But just, like, for a second.' However, NO was unable to break her mother's resolution that adoption would take place. This account tallies with what the retired social workers explained about the key moment when grandparents met their grandchild for the first time. If their resolve on adoption was not weakened then, it probably never would be. NO recalled going back to the mother and baby home, with her child. When showing him to the other residents her mother and the social worker sent her to the nun's office and then slipped off with the baby, who went to a foster home at this stage.

Sometime later, an adoption was arranged and NO recalls that 'I was just fighting to get this baby back.' However, her recollection is that the 'social worker used to come to where I worked and sit outside all the time and say to me: "You have to sign these papers. You have to sign these papers". Just, you know, just really hassling me all the time?' In NO's view 'they made me sign these pages'.

It was in the context of her efforts to win back her baby that NO provided an interesting element of testimony about a letter that she wrote to the Good Shepherd Sisters shortly after she left the home. It said 'Thank you, again, for the lovely time I had'. NO explained that it was sent because 'I thought, because my mother was so down on me, I thought if I wrote a letter to them that they were nice to me, that they maybe would help me.' By this, she meant to retain her son. She complimented them to win their support and sympathy, even though the letter did not represent her true feelings. Her real view was that 'I definitely know that they were not nice.'

NO's view is that 'a lot of the stuff that went on in that place … was abuse. They just didn't care how they treated people. Like, they were all young girls that was in there with me. And I'm sure, all their life, it's just traumatised like mine' It is in this context that another element of NO's testimony must be read. It echoes elements of what SS and BC revealed about their experience with Sister Z (now deceased):

> *And I remember having a horrible experience with them, where I was in my room and didn't know what was wrong with me, like. I was really bad, in pain, and came out of the room and walked this big, long corridor, and I remember rapping her door where she was. She came out and she says: "What is wrong with you?" And I says: "I don't know whether I'm going to have this baby or not" … She brought me into another room – I think it was another room, as far as I remember – and told me to take off my clothes, and she gave me an internal.*

NO became upset talking about what happened to her next. She explained that she had been sexually abused as a young girl and what happened with Sister Z was a similar experience: 'I remember crying and saying she was hurting me and all, and she says: "Just lie there, lie still, and

keep quiet". I remember her talking to me like that.' When this incident finished, Sister Z told her "You're a very, very stupid girl. Go away back to your room". No recalls 'leaving her office and crying, literally, the whole way back to my room and just lying there crying.'

SS

SS was a resident in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the mid-1970s. Her testimony included some very traumatic accounts of her experience. She lived in an area that was heavily impacted by the Troubles. She explained that there was very little sex education either at school or home. Her mother had simply terrified SS by telling her that 'if girls did bad things they were taken into a room in the hospital and suffocated between two mattresses' Meanwhile, picking knowledge up in other ways could be difficult. SS recalled that 'even if they were to kiss on TV my father would have nearly broke his neck trying to get it over.'

Not long after leaving school, she had a brief relationship with a man in his thirties and became pregnant. His response to the news was to meet with her and drive her to the home of a woman in another part of the town where SS lived: 'And the woman looked at me, and she says, "Do you know what you are here for?" And I said "No". I thought maybe, you know, he was getting me a room, somewhere. And I says "No, are you going to show me a room that I can stay here", and she says to me "How old are you." And I says "Just turned 18", and she says "Do you know what you are here for?" And I said "No", and I started to cry, and she took my hand, put money in the hand that he had given, given her, and I think it was something like £30 which was a lot of money. And she rolled my hand up, like that, and she says to me, opened up the front door, and threw me out, and says to me "get away home!" And closed the door. And I stood there and I knocked the door, and she came and she says 'What do you want?" And I says "What am I here for?" And she says "An abortion" and closed the door. "Get home!" and closed the door.'

Later on, back in her family home, SS asked her father what an abortion was and after he had explained it she remembers breaking down in tears: 'because I knew then, that was how little he [the father of the child] thought of me. That he would want to destroy something that was part of me'. It was then that she explained to her father that she was pregnant and 'I went up the stairs with him, and under the mattress I had the money … and my daddy looked at it, and threw it in the fire.' SS's mother then had to be informed and her reaction left SS feeling betrayed because her mother had always been 'the one in the street, within the neighbourhood, would have been so helpful, never speaking about girls who were not married, would have been all praise for their babies'. But when 'it came to me, it was out of the house and in to this place' [a Good Shepherd mother and baby home].

Her first impressions of the home were of locked doors and 'the corridor, and how dark it was, and how high, highly polished it was, and how the wood was dark, and the place looked … scary.' She was with her mother and the social worker who had driven them there. The paperwork was filled out to arrange for her welfare payments to go the Good Shepherds and then she was shown upstairs: 'they showed me to this room, it was like a box room, a small room, but there was no ceiling on it. You know, it was like a box with no lid. That's it. With a door. That's all you could describe it as, there was a wardrobe, and a bed, and a dressing table, and plain … it would have reminded you of cubicles going to the loo, that way, only a bit bigger.'

SS does not have positive memories of her time in the home. She recalled that after having a bath 'you had to leave it sparkling clean, and I can remember that there was shouts and screams if this was not done.' The expectant mothers sat in the dining room and:

> *made dolls, sewing clothes on Irish Cailín dolls, and I hate the sight of them. And then there was other girls and they were hand embroidering, eh, hankies with the shamrock, and these were all sold, on. I eh ... and that is what you done, all day long. You went and said your rosary, you said your morning prayers, your rosary.*

SS felt that the nuns were 'very rough. And nothing was explained to you.' She was particularly upset by one experience when 'one nun who must have been a midwife, I would have said, she examined me a couple of times, but she was very rough, because I can remember being very, very sore afterwards, and it was like, when I went "Oooh!". When I cried out in pain, she said, "Well maybe if you'd kept your legs closed, this wouldn't have happened to you." SS spoke of two separate occasions where after physical examination in the home she 'felt humiliated, and violated, and scared...on both times, I wanted to say, "No, get away from me!" And both times I just said nothing, so both times they just said "well you deserved what you got". And the whole time I was waiting for people to come and take me away, and put me between two mattresses and suffocate me': a reference to the ominous old wives' tale that her mother had warned her through. SS maintained that she had been asked by one nun to scrub the floor of the home as it became clear that her labour was beginning. This was only stopped when the second nun saw her and intervened, saying 'get up off your knees, and don't be doing that. What are you doing that for? Go down and get a cup of tea and get your feet up, and I'll make you a wee bit of toast. And phone for the ambulance.'

SS was taken to a maternity unit and, after a difficult labour gave birth to a daughter. She thinks that she may have haemorrhaged after the birth. Thereafter, she spent eight days recuperating in the ward, fortified by visits from her parents who brought a christening robe for the baby. At the end of the say, SS received a visit from an official who told her she was being discharged and was going home but that her daughter was scheduled to go to a baby home. SS disputed this: 'I said, "No, she is not". He says, "she is. You have signed the papers." And I said, "I have never signed any papers." At the end of her interview SS indicated that one thing she would like to know from our research was who had made the decision to take her baby from her. However, in relating her story, SS did recall that 'then my mommy says to me "sign that, you have to sign that", and I signed it.' Unfortunately, what was signed on this occasion was not clarified in an interview in which SS became very upset and although she agreed to our use of her interview she has not continued communication with the researchers.

She reflected her reading ability 'is not very good', although it is better now because she went back in to education in later years.' After this encounter SS accompanied her child to the baby home: 'I will never forget that day. That drive, and me holding her, in me arms. And then having to hand her over to this ... wee girl that was no more older than I was'. SS returned to the home to see her daughter on a number of occasions, although she was not allowed to nurse her. On one such occasion she was alarmed by the sight of her daughter being sick and then having her feeding bottle pushed into her mouth by the young woman assigned to nurse her. She then observed a nappy change and noted that her daughter's bottom was 'red raw....Her wee nappy was soaking, and her bum was raw.... And I couldn't do a thing. I couldn't lift her, I couldn't love her. And so I went home and I said to my daddy, I went straight home and I stood and I said, "I can't do this anymore Daddy. I need my baby." .Her father then gave her the money for bus fares and some baby clothes and SS returned to

the baby home where she walked in ‘past everybody, went up, lifted her, changed her. Took, stripped everything off her, nothing belonging to them, and I dressed my baby girl, and I wrapped her up and I kissed her, and I loved her, and I kissed her, and kissed her and said you will never leave me again, and I walked out and they says to me “you can't do that”, and I says to them, “she is my daughter”.

SS brought her daughter home. After treating her sore bottom, SS took her to the hospital because she was concerned about her health. The hospital was concerned that she had gained only two pounds in weight in two months and gave SS a lecture for not breast feeding. She did not reveal that her baby had been out of her care for those two months. At the hospital ‘I got the face eaten off me for not breast feeding her, I never said a word. I got scolded because I was a young unmarried mother, and I should have known better to take her to the hospital sooner, that this had been going on for far too long. She should have such a weight’.

SS did not defend herself ‘for the simple reason you never put down the Catholic faith, you never say anything bad about it. But you see *name of home redacted* it was full of neglect, it was full of hurt, it was full of child cruelty, because that is what they done on my child.’

The family received a visit from social services and the police as the result of SS’s actions. She recalls that ‘my mommy sent them with a flea in their ear. I think it was maybe adrenaline in, I don't know what, or maybe it was she seen me so sad.’ After the authorities ‘kept a check, the health visitor would have kept a check to see how I was coping and all the rest of it, but because I was with my mommy and daddy and they had the responsibility, they didn't take too much, you know, like, they just did the normal checks.’ SS remained in the family home until her daughter was a teenager. She also remembers that when another expectant mother was found to have head lice. ‘I could remember them taking her outside, and putting her on a chair, and nearly shaving her hair all off, and I thought to myself, I could remember when my brother got nits, that they got stuff from the ... you know, put it on his head.’

On a more positive note she remembers watching TV, including the Eurovision Song Contest and that the food ‘was wholesome...you were not starved. There was...It was homemade jam, homemade marmalade, whatever fruit, vegetables was in season, we got it.’

SS explained that the nuns did not discuss a potential adoption with SS as ‘the social worker did all that.’ She recalled being told the social worker’s view that she ‘wasn't capable of having, or rearing a baby, because I was mentally immature.’

HS

HS became pregnant in the mid-1980s at the age of 19. Initially she faced ‘the fear of being pregnant in the first place, having to hide it for six months.’ She confided eventually in a family member who told HS’s mother and she found herself sitting about waiting for her ‘father to come in to see whether your allowed to come home or not. That’s what my mother said to me. She come into work and says to me “Is it true? Well you’ll have to stay here. Don’t come home till I have a word with your father and see what your father says’. So I’m sitting in work till eight o’clock at night waiting to see if I have a home to go to.

HS was taken to her GP soon after this for a check-up and it was he who explained two options had been arranged for. This involved either going to stay with a family in Dublin or into a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in Northern Ireland. HS explained that 'it was taken out of my hands by my parents … At no stage did anybody discuss that I could actually keep my son. The main intention of sending me there was that the baby was to be born and it would be taken away, and that was it. And that was the last I would ever see of him.' Her parents never discussed the option of keeping the baby then or at any time thereafter. Nor did the nuns, although HS believed 'they were obviously having this discussion with my parents or somebody. Nobody was having the conversations with me at all. I was just the carrier of a baby that somebody was going to take away and do whatever they wanted with.' Due to this ongoing secrecy she is not sure how they dealt with the issue of the young man who fathered her child. He emigrated and she feels that he was encouraged firmly to do so.

Having chosen the second option reluctantly, HS was driven to the mother and baby home by her parents and was greeted by a nun who explained:

> *a basic set of rules …You weren't allowed to discuss where you'd come from … You weren't allowed to have an open discussion with each other either in relation to what your family connections were, where you lived. You weren't allowed to say what your second name was, what your surname was, just in case anybody found out your identity or for whatever reason.*

There were also restrictions on washing 'because it was the cost of the heating and water and all that sort of stuff'. Describing the daily routine, HS recalled getting up around 7 am. She thinks she had to tidy her cubicle at this stage and then come down for breakfast. Later there were cleaning duties and HS has strong memories of :

> *a big marble hall, it would probably run the full length of here, and you had, I had to get down to clean that with like a nail brush that size, very heavily pregnant … you were always made to feel that, you know, you had to repent for your sins basically … Cleaning floors would have been ok with a mop bucket and a mop. But when you're down on your flipping hands and knees doing it with a nail brush and a ******* cloth, it's a different story like.*

She also recalls that there was time spent on prayer in the chapel within the home. On Sunday morning they went to church in the local chapel but:

> *had to wait till kind of Mass was nearly starting … We were never allowed to sit down in the chapel. We always had to stand at the back door. We were never allowed into the chapel, because again, everybody would know where you were from and you were sinners and you were unmarried mothers.*

The home's residents 'were allowed to make limited phone calls out, but it was just basically to home. You weren't encouraged to ring friends … It was like a secret society'. HS provides a sense of the traumatised disconnection that she experienced: 'I think I met my social worker twice, but again even that was … it was just, it's almost like a blur, it's like a blur. It's about six months of your life that you just went through the motions of something that somebody else wanted to do.'

Reflecting on the quality of the meals within the home, HS believes that they 'weren't great, but it was food. And you know they were actually quite strict about you eating it and they would have searched the bins to make sure you didn't waste any food, you didn't throw anything away.' HS remembers

that the residents 'were never allowed to go and sit in the garden.' The pregnant women were allowed to leave the home at pre-arranged times, but only in pairs and 'you were limited as where you were allowed to go to.' At other points, HS observed that 'all doors, all everything was locked down'. A regular destination was the local post office to cash their welfare allowance. On their return the women, 'handed the money in … at the office, all of it …. [a Sister] would have given you back maybe, whatever, money out of it, to get your toiletries and if you wanted a few treats …. [or] to get yourself the fresh fruit and veg that you're supposed to be eating.' On the return from the Post Office:

> *there was a code for the bell at the front door as well. Like there would have been a certain number of rings if you were coming back. You might have had to ring the bell three successive times and they would have known it was a resident. If it was a stranger obviously coming, they would ring the doorbell as normal or whatever.*

HS explained that she did not feel able to challenge any rules and regulations because of the 'fear that you were going to be put out on the street' have 'nowhere to go'. She felt 'totally vulnerable, totally powerless to do anything. Couldn't make a decision because nobody would talk to you about anything. I felt actually very isolated. I would have spent a lot of time maybe in my room on my own, maybe drawing and stuff like that.' She remembered a sense of foreboding when the Sister who was in charge approached because 'you knew something big was going down'.

HS feels that the mother and baby home apparently offered the opportunity for her pregnancy 'to be brushed under the carpet' and to 'take away the sin', with the promise that HS could 'just go home and live a normal life.' However, her experience was that in reality 'it doesn't happen like that. Like life's just not like that, you know'. She is angry that there was never any emotional help or assistance offered in the home:

> *You were never sat down and asked, you know, how you felt. You know, you were never told there was another option. You know, options weren't discussed. It was just literally. It's as if you were kidnapped in the middle of the night, dumped in a home for a period of time till a baby was born. And I'm being really blatantly honest with you. And I don't frill things up, maybe, I'm very black and white, and it's maybe because of that, the way I've had to live my life. But it's just basically was a function, somebody else in the peripheral was carrying out the paperwork, discussions, phone calls or whatever. I was literally just taken in, carried out a function. The end result of that was a baby there, wherever that baby was going or whoever was buying it and whatever the case may be. I don't know, and it was never discussed. I think the thinking behind it was the least discussion we have, the easier it's going to be for us to do whatever we need to do. Don't give them an option, because then that might stop them doing what they're here to do.*

HS had a difficult labour experience, as it was a forceps delivery. She recalls that she was given an epidural to relieve the pain. She had been taken to the hospital by a relative who lived near the mother and baby home. When her son was born, he was immediately taken away for two days and she is unsure why this happened. HS knew the 'rule of thumb' within the home was that the:

> *babies were born, they were taken away. Six weeks later, you'd come back to the home and sign the papers and you'd never see the babies again. That was the understanding. That was the bits and pieces we could talk about. Yeah know, that was only in residence and that was*

> *only like what we were kind of hearing. Once the girls went out like when I went to the hospital and had the baby, you were never allowed back to the convent again. So you couldn't have that conversation with the girls that were there.*

Because her parents told HS "you are going to have to sign away", she assumes they obviously had it all sorted. And I suppose whenever the baby was born, then I was going to be told that, "look we'll go back six weeks later", or whatever the case may be. Nobody said there was another option at any stage.' HS was therefore not sure what the protocol was when a baby was given up for adoption. Finding herself sitting with no baby 'on a ward with four other women and they all had babies', she was approached by a nurse who asked said "would you like to see the baby?" HS 'didn't know if I was allowed to, I didn't know. I still didn't know what I was doing. No idea what I was doing.' However, she replied "yes, I'd love to see him'" and then went down to the nursery for five minutes. HS thinks that her mother was there at this point but that, again, there was no discussion about what was planned:

> *And the baby, as far as they were concerned, whatever arrangement was made between the convent and them, I don't know any of that. So I don't know. Obviously somebody has filled in paperwork or had a discussion between the doctor, my parents, the convent, the hospital. Because for them to take him away and not discuss any of this with me, their intention ... I don't even know what the intention was when I left the hospital. Was he going to an adoptive mother for six weeks before the papers were signed? I don't know any of the answers to that because I took him home.*

The day after seeing her son for the first time, HS summoned up the courage to phone her parents, having borrowed some coins for the phone box from the woman in the next bed. She told her parents "look, I'm taking this baby home, whether you like it or you don't'.' She was determined: 'either way I was taking him home. And there was nobody who was going to stop me. Nobody was going to stop me and I took him.' Although she feels her parents were unhappy with her decision, she did return to the family home with her child. She also returned to the workplace where she was based before the pregnancy. Her supportive employer said 'look, we know your situation or whatever. You go and do, you know, whatever you need to do and whenever you're ready to come back to work the job's still here for you'. Most of her wages went on paying a childminder but her mother and other family member also did help out. HS and her son lived in the family home until he was nine and she described the financial struggles of being a single mother. It was also a struggle socially and culturally given the horrible attitudes of some individuals. She often hesitated before taking up an invitation to go out for an evening with friends 'because you're always frightened of somebody coming up and calling you a slag, or calling you a ... you know what I mean, you know what people are like.' She ruefully compared this with the fact that the unmarried father could:

> *walk away scot-free. But look, that's, that will never change. That will always be the way of the world and it always has been the way of the world. That's not going to change anytime soon. But it's just the fact that, yes, it was ... the women ... that were taken and scolded and shunned upon and frowned upon and right through their whole life.*

HS reported her upset about friends who 'sort of drift off too because they don't want to be associated with you. Do you know, it's like oh God we can't be seen with her type thing.' Factors such as this obviously led to the degree of 'humiliation' that is a legacy of these events for HS that

has impacted her self-confidence and her trust in others at moments in her life. However, this has created a strong drive and independence within her: 'I have always got this drive in me to make sure that I'll always have a roof over my head and my children will always have a roof over their head because when you're faced with that…. you've been cut out of your home at the most vulnerable time of your life and nowhere to go'. HS does not speak to people about these experiences because 'you just feel ashamed and especially with more of the stuff that's coming out in the papers and about all the laundries and about … you know, I don't want people feeling sorry for me. I don't want people, do you know what I mean?' For her this was 'a time of my life that I'll never get back and it still haunts me. It always will. You'll always feel that you're a lesser person than other people.'

Reflecting on her pathway to the mother and baby home HS offered up a complex range of factors. She felt her 'parents could have given me a choice. They could have sat down and talked about it. They could have given me another option.' Behind their thinking was 'the religion played a big part in it and I think it was the fear of the Catholic Church that made so many Catholic families push their daughters in that direction.' She realised that 'every house isn't the same' and that in some cases 'it was a better thing to have a baby adopted.' However there should have been 'clearer options. There should have been clearer rules there. The discussion should have been had.' HS also noted the role of 'the state institutions, the government, everybody else was involved. Everybody is answerable in some measure to the situation.' At the very basic level of her child's conception, HS reflected 'I have to take responsibility for the fact that I got pregnant in the first place. I have to take responsibility for that. But it happens. The other person who was involved with me also has to take responsibility for that. That didn't happen.'

Explaining why she had agreed to speak to this research project, HS said that she:

> *just wanted to make people aware of what happened in the homes. As I said, ours probably wasn't the worst. There are worse stories out there. But again, it's the options people, people weren't, it wasn't discussed. Like I was literally whisked from my home into the doctors for my first appointment and almost the next week I was stuck in a home somewhere without anybody discussing what was going on.*

The existence of the research is, for HS, 'a bit of a relief… somebody's taking it seriously, somebody's thinking like this is a serious thing that happened and wasn't nice, you know, and it is something that you shouldn't have to continue feeling ashamed about for the rest of your life.' She also has a practical suggestion for Northern Ireland's politicians:

> *you see the whole carry on with Stormont and all the rest, whatever's going on, there are people out there that genuinely need help to get over this … there's women out there that are really struggling with this. And if the financial help is there to help them with psychologists or whatever help can be offered, give it to them. That's the least you could do. You know, you can't take back thirty-odd years. You can't change it. It's there, but make the best of whatever's left.*

BC

BC had a baby in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home in the mid-1970s. She was still at school when she was 'groomed and raped by an older man' and became pregnant. Unfortunately, her parents 'were absolutely horrified because they thought obviously I was a promiscuous child … There

was assumption, there was assumption that it was my fault.' As far as she is aware her mother then 'contacted the church, the priest, it was all organised.' BC remembers 'a lot of talking behind closed doors, it never ever included me.'

BC recalled the 'strict routine' in the mother and baby home. Her memory is of being wakened every morning at 08.30 by an alarm clock placed in 'a biscuit tin, so it would make more noise.' After breakfast, much of the time was passed on domestic duties: 'there was no cleaners in the place, you had to do everything. It was all on rota. And there were dining rooms. They were obviously very highly polished floors...highly polished tables, silverware ... so there was all of that.' In particular she remembers cleaning while down on her hands and knees. However, one of the nuns allowed her to 'do activity that was a wee bit lighter' which involved drying pampas grass which was picked from the garden to be sold by the Good Shepherd Sisters. She thinks this was 'maybe because I was probably the youngest there'. BC also sensed that 'easier jobs were given to people who behaved properly, who didn't step out of line and then more difficult jobs would be given to people who didn't ... who didn't behave properly. So there was certainly a rewards system by less work'.

BC recalled an older woman who was 'very cheeky with the nuns. And I say cheeky I mean, she stood up for herself, and they really gave her a hard time. I think she tried to run away twice... I think it was her second baby and I think the baby was taken to care and nuns treated her appallingly.' This was represented psychologically not physically because, BC feels, the women 'were incubators for their rich people who were going to take the babies. You know?' She is very distrustful of anything she has been told about the adoption process and is uncertain that her son went to the professional couple that she was told about at the time. She reflected on the broad class differences between her teenage self and the social worker who was 'really, really very posh', indicating the power differentials that existed within the system particularly in the case of very young women.

BC does not recall the home having a TV in the recreation room. There was only 'old fashioned record player and I remember one of the few albums there was Jesus Christ Superstar. And I remember I must have listened to it about a hundred times, because there was no other ... there was no other albums.' She described the cubicles in which the pregnant women slept as being like 'horses' stalls'. Also part of her testimony was the recollection of Sunday visits to the home by an older sister and, less frequently, by her mother. BC was visited by an older sister each Sunday during her time in the mother and baby home.

Striking imagery was conjured up to describe how she felt about her time in the home. For BC, it was 'horrendous ... it's like suspended animation, it's like something that you would see in The Matrix ... you're there and life doesn't exist outside of it, and you're in this place and you have no power and you have no self-determination. You know, you can't choose what you do, you can't choose what you think, you just go in there and you're a robot and you do what's told and whatever.' This was negative imagery, but BC feels that she is a very fair person' and for that reason reflected of the nun in charge of the home that 'I don't think she was, at heart, a bad person, but she just didn't have any empathy or love or concern in her.'

She also offered disturbing testimony on the nature of gynaecological examinations she received whilst in the home from a person who is now dead. She had a revelation about this matter over a decade later when having another child: 'it was just this very slow realisation started to come, and I was thinking God they've completely changed how they look after pregnant women. And I remember thinking at the time, oh obviously that was very intrusive' what had happened in the mother and

baby home. Looking back now, BC concludes 'I realise it was abuse ... sexual abuse.... I remember thinking to myself ... this is when I was pregnant with *name of second child redacted* god, that was very intrusive what they did, those internal examinations they give us twice a week.' She recalled that the person examining her would say "I need to do an internal examination to see how much you're dilated and whether everything's healthy up there."' BC has 'blanked out' much of this experience from her memory but recalls 'feeling really uncomfortable during them and they seemed to go on a long time. But anyway, I didn't realise at the time what it was because I had no notion of sex abuse or anything like that.' Pregnant again, over a decade later, she thought to herself "I wonder why they haven't given me an internal examination?" BC concluded that the person involved in the examinations on her (and others she believes) 'used ... us young girls for sexual gratification'.

BC gave birth alone, an experience that was not softened by the staff of the maternity ward on which she gave birth, which she described as 'one of the most cruel regimes I've ever come across in terms of the nurses. We were treated with such contempt, some of the things that were said to us.' She overhead one nurse talking to another unmarried mother who screaming out with labour pains telling her 'you'll just have to behave yourself, when you conceived this baby it wasn't sore going in!'

She had a baby boy and BC explained that 'I never was given an option other than give him up for adoption, and that was done through social services and the Catholic Adoption Society.' As part of the adoption process BC does recall that 'I had to go to another interview after it had all been done and dusted because they weren't sure whether I should have the child adopted' and that 'I had to sit on a panel of some kind.' The details are vague and like a lot of traumatised individuals, BC realises that 'I think I've blocked a lot of that'. She traced the origins of this psychological defence mechanism to the moment where she last saw her son, in the hospital she was taken to for treatment in the wake of the labour process. He son was going to be baptised, with her sisters as godparents, and was brought to the hospital with his christening robes for BC to see him. She remembers saying "please just take him away." Because I knew I wasn't going to see him again.' She then narrated the aftermath of that moment:

> *But I remember very clearly, I was, I was absolutely hysterical, and nurses, because I was so young, would spend a lot of time with me, and there was one particular red-headed nurse, came down and she sat with me and she held my hand, and then I remember just thinking just like I've done there, I remember swallowing and thinking 'this is too painful. So I just shut. And I literally, I went to the other side of the bed, and I was gone. Every ... I just literally put a shutter on it. Now that's not to say that I haven't cried about it since, but I literally, psychologically put a shutter down on it. Only way to function. It was the only way I was going to survive.*

The care of the nurses and doctors in this hospital was contrasted with what she encountered in the maternity unit. BC reflected positively on this example of 'the kindness of strangers', recalling a doctor who helped her when he saw that she was struggling with a feed bottle for her baby. This kindness contrasted with what BC experienced when she went back to school. Her teachers were aware of her pregnancy and her school friends had been given a fictional tale to cover her absence. The following year when the girls went through an annual ritual in which they were given blue ribbons to join the Legion of Mary, BC did not receive one. 'Obviously I wasn't pure enough', she reflected ruefully. Shame was placed on her by these religious symbols and even by the weekly ritual of mass: 'I remember going to mass, right, and cringing every time they said 'the virgin Mary.' Cringing with my family. [I] knew I wasn't a virgin. Shame. Complete and utter shame. And do you know how many times virgin was used in a mass?'

BC described the long term impact upon her of these events. She reflected that this was something that 'your own family did to you, your community did you, your own church did to you .... because of Catholic shame'. She felt the Catholic Church had failed to respond adequately to the needs of a girl 'who had been raped, and was left almost comatose, not speaking, in a place … taken out her family home and put in this place.' BC concluded sadly that all this 'has damaged me irreparably' and she explained the problems she has had fighting depression and in some of her relationships, whilst also relating details of her own successful career and those of her children. She also relates attachment issues that she has had with friends and colleagues are related to the day her son was taken away from her in the hospital.

BC believes her experiences are why:

> *I'm so self-aware now, that's why I work so hard at myself is because nobody's ever going to take me back to that place and take my power away again. Never… because they took everything from me, they took my identity, they took … they took all of the softness of me, they took it all away and left this … and the thing about it was they didn't replace it with anything substantial except just an empty space. They just sucked the life out of this kid.*

Despite her success in raising a family and her career, BC has a fundamental 'schism in my psyche' that makes her feel 'I'm not good enough … I'm just not good enough … And do you know something? I really envy people with self-confidence'.

BC feels that her trauma was exacerbated by the difficulties she encountered when she decided to try and trace her son many years later. The process was 'like a puzzle' and she felt that those involved 'ran me a merry tune because I didn't actually realise and still don't know if I have any rights in terms of … of freedom of information of getting my file now.' Eventually, BC just found it 'a very, very difficult process, so I didn't continue with it. I don't know why, but … obviously I'm very damaged by what happened, you know, psychologically, but … they didn't give any support whatsoever and … just made life very difficult for me.'

ID

This woman from the Republic of Ireland experienced two spells in mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland during the early 1960s. Her recollection is that in both homes she was the only resident who hailed from the Republic. On the second occasion, her stay was extended via a period of time in the St Mary's home/Magdalene laundry that was part of the convent complex. Two different homes were operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters. The first time she became pregnant, ID was still at school; with the second pregnancy being about five years later. ID feels that the spell in the laundry was a form of punishment arranged by her mother. During that time she recalls visits to a local hospital for some form of treatment and she is concerned that she received some unspecified medical treatment to which she had not consented. Indeed, that was one of the major factors that prompted her to contact the research team and offer to give her testimony. ID believes she visited the hospital seven or eight times, accompanied by a 'trustee' from the St Mary's home.

Her first experience of a mother and baby home began when, from her boarding school, ID wrote a letter to her mother in which she remarked casually that she had missed a period. Her mother's immediate response was to have her examined, revealing the pregnancy. Her parents then 'found

friends who would hide me for a period of time and all the work was done behind my back' before she was sent on the journey north to a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. As a girl educated by nuns her 'experience there were quite normal because it was so similar to boarding school.' ID observed that 'there were no problems of any sort while I was there' and is of the opinion that the others there were also 'satisfied with their conditions and their treatment.' ID felt that she might have received 'special treatment' because she was from 'down South' and her stay was not financed by the state. She assumes that 'my parents may have had to pay something which is why I got the special treatment.' This included being placed in a single room rather than a dormitory. Her room had a wash-hand basin, so although she 'went to the bathroom for my shower or my bath' ID recalled that 'I could wash myself in my room'. For a bath, the women had to sign up on the rota that allotted one bath per week. ID also remembers that there was a woman working in this home that would go out and buy things for her is she needed them. Her mother had given her some money and she remembers asking for pepper to be purchased to season her food.

She also recalls having a private room at the local maternity hospital and remembers that 'they brought a menu around every day. And I was so impressed with this, I wanted to stay there.' ID had a baby girl and was 'very pleased as someone told me it was easier to have girls adopted than boys, particularly in America. God knows where I've got that memory from, but I am dragging it up from my boots. I don't remember the first time I saw her, but I remember the twelve days that I had her, because I went into a dormitory at that stage, with other, I think four other mothers and their children.' During her stay at the home there was 'certainly no counselling... no talk of what happens next. We were told on X day your family will come and you will go home so be packed and prepared and ready'.

Twelve days after her first baby was born, ID and her mother drove to Dublin and the child was placed in the care of an adoption society that ran its own infant hospital. She also signed a number of legal forms at this point at her mother's urging. ID became emotional recalling this information as it reminded her of the lack of 'control' that she had during this seminal period in her life. Faced with a series of legal documents, ID read the first of them which dealt with an insurance policy for her baby and came face to face with the reality of the situation. She could not bring herself to read any more of the document and, feeling numb, signed them all.

Five years later, when she was in her early twenties, ID became pregnant for a second time and her mother repeated the arrangements previously made and sent her north again. This was 'to get me as far away possible as I could from county *name of county redacted*' and ensure her anonymity. The second mother and baby home was 'not as nice' as the first, 'but it was perfectly fine .... The building was older, the conditions were a little bit rougher. There was more dormitories, less single rooms. But, it was adequate for the job it was doing.'

Reflecting on her time in the mother and baby homes, ID said:

> *we did jobs but apart from cleaning our room there was not an awful lot of jobs that we did, but we knitted and sewed ... we knitted for our own babies, and we knitted for other babies, and we sewed for them. And it was more an occupational therapy than jobs, just ... our rooms cleaned, our catering areas cleaned, as one would any place that one lived.*

Having experienced the regimented discipline of a Catholic girls' boarding school, ID did not 'remember any of the nuns being worse than any of the ones in boarding school.'

However, her education meant 'I had all the guilt that the nuns put on you' and this fed her belief that the situation 'was my own fault and this was my punishment. And I deserved it.' At the time, ID compared herself with her sister who was 'a virgin when she was married, and so you know, she was entitled to the good things of life, and I wasn't. God, those nuns did a good job didn't they.' In discussing the various nuns she encountered in the two Good Shepherd convents in Northern Ireland in which she was placed, ID cited two who were 'nice' and others who she categorised as 'petty nasty' rather than 'nasty, nasty'… they weren't cruel, not deliberately cruel. They were not pleasant, far from it.' One example of this included the fact that one of the nuns in the second mother and baby home made the other women aware that ID was having her second 'illegitimate' baby. This marked her out as 'a more fallen woman than the rest of them.' However, ID explained that the other women 'let it be known to me that this had been said to them. But it didn't bother them, they were just there to get on with their own lives, and they couldn't give a damn what I had or had not done.' A more mundane example of what she labelled pettiness by the nuns were occasions when individuals were sent back to 'your room to comb your hair properly because they were not happy with the way it had been done first.'

She was overly excited by the culinary element of her experience, describing the food as 'stodgy and bland' while also noting that the pregnant women 'were not underfed.' The facilities for education and entertainment were poor:

> *you had no library. That might give you notions above your station. Ah, you had no entertainment, and yet you were not allowed talk about yourself. You know, I never saw anybody play ball, or, or I never swam there was no such thing as chess or draughts, or Ludo, or packets of cards.*

ID does not remember either of the mother and baby homes having a television, although one had a radio.

She offered an interesting reflection on the requirement that the young expectant mothers not discuss their family background:

> *At the time we were told that was because later on, in later years, when we met outside, that we would not be able to identify each other, but I think it was more of a control thing, that they were taking as much as they could away from us. No, you don't talk about your family, you don't talk about your home, you don't talk about your friends, you don't talk about anything that, that has happened to you up to today. It is only from today on that you may discuss, so you can discuss what you are going to have for your lunch today but you can't discuss what your mother used to give you when you were a child.*

Following the birth of her second baby she travelled, by train, to the Republic of Ireland to hand over her child at a baby home. On this occasion, as with her first child's adoption, ID understands that her mother paid a weekly maintenance fee to the respective baby homes until the adoption was finalised. The sum involved was £2 a week. Following this journey ID returned to the Good Shepherd convent and found that her bags had been packed in her absence and she was directed to enter the laundry. This was more or less immediately after she had given birth. She explained that 'there was no discussion with me about it, it was all arranged with my mother.' ID did not feel able to question this. As a former convent schoolgirl she described herself as passive respondent to the directions of the Good Shepherd Sisters. ID was 'very, very scared of my mother' and this was exacerbated by the fact that her father had died, meaning she was 'more dependent on her goodwill.'

In the laundry, ID found herself amongst a group of women who ranged in age from twenty to ninety. ID recalled that 'Oh gosh, the women there, they worked, they worked. Some of them worked out in the farm, because it was self-sufficient. Some of them worked in the kitchens, and some of them worked in the laundries, but boy, they worked ... I, I, I can't tell you.' ID explained that 'the rule of fear that we now read about was in the atmosphere but it was no longer necessary to be physically cruel because everybody knew their place and they got on with it.' In her time in the laundry, one woman did run away but, apparently, she was not pursued. ID speculated that the nuns reasoned 'what can we do if we chase her, we could not bring her back at her age [she was in her thirties]. So, they didn't.'

A disturbing aspect of her testimony was that she did not know when she would be able to leave: 'Yes, I was twenty-two by then. Ah, and there was no end date, no release date, I was just told I was going to be kept there until my mother decided otherwise, and I had no say in the matter.'

Perhaps reflecting, once again, her mother's financial contribution to the Good Shepherds, ID explained that she 'got a reasonable job in the laundry' in that she was directed to sort out 'the clean laundry, and what hotel or restaurant it was going to go to, or whatever. As opposed to the harder job of actually washing the darned stuff.' The laundry did 'all the heavy work' from:

> *the local hotels and restaurants mainly, there was some private houses, that sent laundry there, but there were not a lot. It was mainly the hotels, oh, and of course, the priests, they all sent their laundry there. There may have been other convents, I am not certain, but it was all big items, it was not the usual shirt vest and underpants, it was the tablecloths ... and it was washed, it was ironed. It was sorted, it was ... the whole lot.*

ID became even more unsettled when she was 'called to go to a local hospital' and was brought there by another woman from the laundry, 'because you were never let out on your own'. She described her travelling companion as 'a trustee' who 'came everywhere with us, whether you were going to the dentist or the doctor.' At the hospital she recalls that:

> *I was brought in and put on a bed and given an injection. And sometime later I woke up, very groggy, took me a while before I could sit up, another few minutes before I could actually put my feet on the floor. And then gradually came too, and I sat there until somebody came in and said okay, you can go back now.*

She is certain this happened on perhaps six to eight occasions. ID is does not know who authorised this treatment. She asked 'Did I consent to it? If I signed a form, then I did, but I would not have had a clue what form I was signing. Nor why I was signing it, because at that time when you were told to sign a form, you signed the form, because it was only either my mother or the nuns to tell me this and both of them were, were my, my controllers.' She never received any medical feedback on this and speculates about whether there are any hospital records of her treatment. ID also wonders if this 'was something that the nuns did to young women who had had two children or more'. If so, she 'would like to know, on what grounds they felt they had the right to do this. Was this supposed to put us off sex?' Obviously aware that ECT treatment was used commonly during the 1960s to treat those labelled sexually deviant, such as homosexual men, ID remarked: 'I believe now that I had electric shock treatment.' This is an aspect of her treatment during her stay in the Good Shepherd convent that she would like to see investigated.

Discussing the 'trustee' that took her on these hospital visits, ID described 'the layers' of women within the laundry:

> *There were the unmarried mothers, then there was the women who worked in the laundries, and then there was a group called Magdalenes, who weren't nuns but wore habits like the nuns. She was not one of those, she was simply a trusted ordinary worker, who if she had no jobs to do would work in the laundry, with everybody else. But if, if something had to be done outside, she was the one who did it.*

ID deduced that this woman had come through the laundry system herself 'but possibly had no place to go to and had decided she would stay there because at least it was a guaranteed roof over her head. And goodness knows what options she too had had in her time, because, to me she was an old woman; she was probably forty.'

During her spell in the laundry, ID remembers mixing with some children who also lived in the convent: 'they were obviously phasing them out, because there was only about six children, there while I was there. And they had a little contact, not very much, but they did have a little. They had more with the Magdalenes.' She also recalled that 'the nuns were kind to them'.

ID's return to the outside world came one Christmas when she was removed to a laundry closer to her hometown and spent 'five or six weeks' there … and 'then I was allowed home and life went on.'

LP

LP was a university student when she became pregnant in the early 1980s. As was the case with a lot of the birth mothers who offered their testimony, LP had received little sex education: 'I wasn't sure whether it was pregnancy or it was a tumour? Because I was very naïve. I mean, nobody had ever explained the facts of life to me, apart from what you'd done at school, you know? I was a very, very naïve girl.' The father was 'very juvenile' and made it clear that he would not be part of child's upbringing.

A friend of LP had recently gone through the same experience and opted to travel to England for a termination. LP thinks they had a conversation about this 'but I think I knew that that wouldn't be an option for me. I mean I felt that I'd got myself into this and that I was, I was going to have to get myself out of it.' Instead, she went to see a Catholic priest in a parish close to her university. This 'didn't feel comforting' but she suspected that there 'were places for these, you know, unmarried mothers to go' and that 'he would practically be able to help me'.

LP was fearful of her 'very Catholic' and rather emotionally detached parents. She knew 'for certain that they wouldn't want the child. But I also thought that I would be ostracised as well.' By the time that LP revealed her pregnancy to them, she had already arranged to go into a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. She informed them of this 'and they just went: "All right". In a piece of information that evidences the existence of the fairly common practice of the birth mother's parents raising their grandchild as their own 'late arrival' baby, LP's parents 'told me they were too old to take on a child.'

She explained that her parents were not very involved in their children's lives and decision making. For this LP described herself at 'self-sufficient. I think I thought I knew what I was doing.' She decided that the baby was to be adopted and reflected on that decision during her testimony: 'It was definitely the easiest solution for everyone. It was the one that caused least disruption to everyone. It was the one that kept everything secret and quiet and caused them the least embarrassment'.

LP described her interaction with the social worker who took on her case and felt that there was a conflict of interest involved:

> *she worked for … this is the other thing that was so wrong, was that the people that were offering you advice actually worked for the adoption agency – the church-funded, led, whatever – adoption agency. So it was to their advantage for you to say, you know, I think this baby ought to go to a good, loving Catholic home – but not mine.*

Asked if she was claiming that pressure to consent to adoption was placed on her, LP commented:

> *I think it was always assumed. I'm trying to be fair, here, because … It's easy in hindsight to think certain things, but … I'm trying to be fair because I think she – I mean her mission was to get babies for … Catholic parents. To get Catholic children for Catholic couples that couldn't have children of their own, you know? That's definitely her mission in life and what I would say was that I, I probably gave her the impression that that's what I wanted, because it was – as we said before – it was the easiest thing to do. It was the thing that caused the least distraction. It meant that I could go back to university and pretend it never happened. And it was a solution of sorts.*

It was the social worker that drove LP to the mother and baby home and her first impression was that it 'was very austere. It was a very clinical place with dormitories and old-fashioned bathrooms and things.' She singled out one of the two nuns working there as 'a wonderful lady' with 'a cracking smile' which compared positively 'to what I'd come from, which was a very cold'. The other Sister was 'a nice lady too, but she was much quieter – probably a bit more stern.' LP 'couldn't fault either of them. They never did anything hurtful or anything to me.' In her view it 'was the system that was wrong. They were servants of the system, so whether they share some responsibility because of that? But I think at the time *date redacted*, I think they thought they were doing the best thing, you know?' LP remembered that in home 'I felt that I was safe now because I was somewhere where I would be safely with my pregnancy and it could be resolved.'

However, not everything was perfect during her time in the home. She recalled the GP assigned to treat the women as not being 'particularly nice' but more concerning was the behaviour of one priest who heard the pregnant women's confessions at one point. LP recalled being asked to:

> *confess all my sins about what an awful girl I was, and…And I remember at the time him – which I thought was really odd – this man of God who's supposed to be celibate, asking me what I, where I'd had sex and whether I'd masturbated or anything like that, which I thought was really…really odd. Yeah. To divulge all my, my awful, awfulness so that he could forgive me …. He might have been a funny old boy, you know? There's a few of them about, I'm afraid, in the Catholic Church. So he may have … but anyway, I found it very odd and I felt very … upset by it.*

LP also reported that her chores included 'scrubbing floors, cleaning loos' even when she was heavily pregnant. However, her reflection about this was somewhat conflicted by the contrasting emotions she was going through both then and when narrating her testimony she did not consider this to be tough because she was such a young woman and reasoned that 'pregnancy's not an illness, it's just a process.' LP explained that the impression she 'was given – or that I had – was that I ought to be very grateful for where I was….. So me cleaning their toilets wasn't a big thing, really, because look what they were doing for me?' However, she also reasoned that:

> *looking back on it, it was very oppressive. Looking back on it, there was lots of girls that … their self-esteem was so low… [who] were treated badly by having to do those things … Cleaning somebody else's toilet is sort of, you know, it's indicative of what your position in life is – or what your position in their society is.*

LP described a diverse group of other women in the home. This included young women from Belfast who 'were worldly-wise' who 'could have taken them [the nuns] on any day.' But 'the majority of girls that were there when I was there were foolish little girls that had got caught and they were from different parts.' One was 'a 12 year-old girl there who'd been raped by her father – who was probably still sitting in the front row of the church that weekend.'

During her labour, LP received a lot of pain relief as 'I was a bit out of it.' She recalled the traumatic experience of signing the consent for her baby's adoption and explained the long term mental health problems that this caused her. She is particularly saddened that her adopted child has not tried to re-unite with her.

LP explained the fissure that was caused to her relationship with her own parents: 'their Catholicism was so ingrained they just couldn't get over it. They couldn't see beyond it.' She articulated the thoughts of many of the birth mothers encountered during the research:

> *But there's always this feeling that you don't deserve to be in his life … That you don't deserve to be known to him, or … that you don't deserve a lot of stuff in life. And I mean that's really what I've battled with for thirty-odd years, is that it has had a flavour through all of my life.*

Despite a good marriage and family and career, LP still feels like a piece of the puzzle is missing:

> *I don't think I've coped with it, ever, very well. It's always been there every single day. Where is he? What's he doing? Is he married? Have I got grandchildren that I don't know about? But do I have the right? Do I have the right to upset his life by trying to find him? And the answer has always been, no. You don't, because you gave him away. You weren't strong enough to stand up to them. You didn't say to them at the time: "Hold on a minute. Why is this the best thing to do? Who says this is the best thing to do?" But they did, obviously, because they wanted my child.*

As stated at the outset of the summary of LP's testimony, a decision could have been taken to place this with the testimonies that was more overtly positive about the Good Shepherd mother and baby home. After all, one of LP's concluding remarks was about the nuns: 'The nuns I couldn't fault. I mean I couldn't. They showed me love and care – they showed me far more than my parents did.' However, her testimony still revealed a lot of hard-hitting criticism of the homes, even if she valued her relationship with the individual nuns she encountered.

GT

GT was interviewed in a venue close to her home. She is a birth mother who was placed in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home when she became pregnant at the age of 17 during the 1970s. Her journey to the home began when her family took her to see the parish priest after her condition became known.

GT was another interviewee whose narrative made clear the trauma that she experienced. She described how her 'mind just went numb' as she listened to the priest 'rambling on about … you know it was a sin and what … And I really didn't get a word in to say to him exactly what had happened … He was really just dictating.' GT explained the priest 'really, really made me feel that … it was like I committed murder.'

A GP was then called to examine GT to confirm her pregnancy. She was uncertain about what was going on as she 'knew very little about sex or anything at that time … A child of eleven nowadays would know more.' Again, her trauma was conveyed in GT's description of the events; 'my mind was starting to shut down at this stage … I was kind of semi-conscious, you know? And he had told me to, to lie down on the bed. I was sitting on the side of the bed and he told me to lie down on the bed, and he kind of pushed my legs up on the bed. And what happened after that, I just found myself like a … as if I was on a piece of, you know, floating on water.'

Following this, GT spent most of her time at home until Social Services arranged for her to enter a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. Recalling the journey to the home, in a social worker's car, GT said:

> *It's quite a distance from here to *location of mother and baby home*. I suppose it's about seventy miles. And that seventy miles was like a thousand. I didn't know how long it was going to take, how long I was going to be there for. Nobody explained to me how long I was going be there for. Absolutely nothing. Nothing was explained to me. So the journey, going up, was very lonely. Because there was not much conversation, there was no conversation at all … I was very emotional inside. And I couldn't [talk] to anybody because I felt everybody was my enemy. You know, everybody was totally against me. And there was just nobody. There was absolutely nobody for me.*

She recalls that the social worker gave a welfare payment book to the Sister in charge who then began to read the 'rules of the house.' This included not using her full name and not revealing personal details to the other pregnant women in the home. In addition, GT explained that:

> *I was to keep everything to myself, completely everything to myself. I wasn't allowed to have much conversation with, with the girls, and there was rules of cleaning, and times for getting up, and you had to obey … So, basically everything was stripped. Everything was stripped from you whenever you went in. So I, I had to do that. And again that was another knockback for me. That kind of knocked me back another, into a further, I suppose another further piece of trance that I was already in.*

GT remembers early morning starts because the women and girls 'had to go to mass.' The women 'sat at the back of the chapel every morning and the nuns sat at the front.' After this, there was

breakfast 'which consisted, probably, if we were lucky, a boiled egg and, and a slice of bread.' She did not remember much else about the food but did recall that 'I went in there and I was, I suppose I was about, maybe I would have been about ten stone, ten and a half stone at the time ... And when I came out of it I'd lost about three stone.' Chores included washing, scrubbing and cleaning as well as some work in the garden. GT explained that 'even like later on, whenever, you know, it was, the girls were heavily pregnant; they were still doing that heavy work.'

GT spent a several months in the home before her child's birth, which was a very traumatic episode that involved a C-section. She does not recall signing any consent for this or being told that it was to be performed. GT was sedated during the operation. On awakening, the baby was nowhere to be seen and she explained that 'I didn't even know what sex the baby was for a couple of days after'; at which point, a nurse said "Do you know you had a baby boy?"

GT is upset that she had no chance to see the baby and feels that inaccurate statements were included in her hospital notes, which advised nursing staff that she did not want to her son following his birth. She also feels she had very poor post-natal care and the invasive nature of the surgery has had a long-term impact on her health and wellbeing. Moreover, she recalls that physical chores continued when she returned to the mother and baby home even though she had had a C-section. Her view was that 'they didn't care if you were, if you were, two legs were missing. You know? And you were only a piece of meat. What they wanted was, was gone, you know? The baby was gone.'

Within the mother and baby home itself, GT explained that she had experienced abusive behaviour. She told the researchers that this included being prodded or being 'pulled by our ears.' Most upsetting for GT was one particular episode:

> *One of the nuns had called me out, and I could see her, sometimes, that she would have been, maybe it was because I was so quiet, and again, she may have taken other ones out. I don't know. And she asked me to come to the showers with her. I thought I was, I was going actually to clean the showers again, you know? And she told me to take off my clothes and take a shower. And she watched me taking that shower. And she just walked out ... No explanation. There was nothing. I mean, and you daren't ask. She just took me in, told me to take a shower, and she left. She watched me taking the shower. She'd ask me to turn round, and she just looked at me and left. And I was, at this stage, about six months pregnant, and left. Whether she got a high in it or what, I don't know, but I was totally degraded after that.*

GT explained that she was afraid of this particular nun and this was related to 'the control they had over you, you know?' She explained that this feeling was deepened by her isolation in the home: 'I didn't trust anybody that I could have talked to ... nobody wanted to know how I was feeling.' Family members did make 'a couple of visits' but GT recalled that these were 'mostly supervised.'

Reflecting further on these events, GT offered further evidence of their traumatic impact: 'I actually sometimes feel that the light inside me has gone. I used to cry. I used to cry, and then I got very angry. And then I cried again. It was like a, a circle. That I was going round and round and I just couldn't get off that hobbyhorse.'

On leaving the mother and baby home, GT recalls being told 'just never to talk about it ... The nuns had told me that I was never to breathe a word of what happened in the home.' Eventually she met her child when her son came to find her. She explained that 'we're friends, you know, but it's like

walking on eggshells.' GT vividly relayed the emotional difficulties she faced in this encounter and in the events that created it:

> *This person came and met me, you know, this young man. But my baby was gone. And to this day, my baby is gone. Like, we're never going to have a bond, ever. Like with your mother and child bond. It doesn't matter what I tell, what I say, I can never be even, I'm not even grandmother to the children. And I don't, I'm not prepared to tell children lies, so therefore I find it hard to go down and even visit, because they don't know who I am. I'm another secret. You're just wondering where, when is this ever going to end for me? You know? Just for having a baby my life has been a mental health issue from the day I went in there. And before I went in there I was a normal person, and I came out there with a mental health issue which was driven into me. It was driven into me. The nightmares that I have, that I waken up with every day, it's like a maze trying to find my way out. And I just really wonder who's going to actually take us seriously? Who's actually going to sit down and say "These women have been through enough?" It affects your whole body. It affects your mind. It affects your concentration and everything you go to do. But I don't think we're being taken seriously. It's like a root that has grew inside me. It's a nasty root that has come from my toes right up to my head, and it has branched out even to my fingers. It has caused pain in every joint in my body, and that pain doesn't stop. In fact I, you know, the experience that I, I go to bed and think is this a nightmare? This is a nightmare. This is just a complete dream. This is something like, you know, I feel like I'm still sleeping and I'm going to waken up. It, it's hard to believe that you actually went through something like that. No, these things actually happened in Northern Ireland.*

GT believes that she was offered no options other than adoption by the Sisters or social workers. She explained that the Good Shepherd Sisters' attitude was that 'what you've done is a sin and you'll have to repent for what you've done.' GT recalls being told that her baby was better of going to 'a good Catholic home.' This, she views as 'brainwashing you into, like making you feel that, you know, that you weren't worthy to raise your child.'

GT maintains that she did not sign any form consenting to the adoption of her son. An adoption form does exist and would have been overseen by social workers and the courts and GT has seen it. However, she told the researchers "I have evidence that's not my signature [on the form].' GT argued that her case is not an isolated one: 'I say, this is only the top of the iceberg. There's a hell of a lot more evidence out there, and deeper stuff.' Alluding to some of the media stories that have emerged about mother and baby homes in recent years, she observed that there is 'no difference in Northern Ireland than that in the Republic of Ireland. It mightn't be on such a, as big a scale, but like, I can only tell you about what happened, mostly what happened in *location of Good Shepherd mother and baby home redacted*.'

GT observed that the secrecy instilled in everyone in the homes was designed to ensure that families did not know the full reality of life within them. If they did, they would not have put their daughters 'into the fire.' GT feels that families were misled when they were informed that 'we were going to be looked after. The picture was painted that, you know, and things were going to be okay. We'll handle this, you know, we'll take care of it. They handled it alright, in their way. Everything was taken out of your hands.'

Towards the end of her testimony, GT said 'there has to be some kind of an investigation. I want, I want justice ... I want Northern Ireland to be told the truth about what happened. You know, I want

people to go “Oh my god!” You know, well people out there don’t know.’ However, she is not confident that a public inquiry will be the outcome and is suspicious of the authorities and institutions.

BIRTH MOTHERS WHO WERE LESS CRITICAL OF GOOD SHEPHERD MOTHER AND BABY HOMES

DF

DF was a research participant offering a generally favourable review of her stay in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home. This occurred in the early 1970s, when she was nineteen. In her case, she was able to contrast this home with one in Dublin to which her parents sent her initially and which she remembered as being much more unpleasant. She was from a big family, a big Catholic family, and ‘so it was a bit of a disgrace, you know what I mean? And … so when I was about five months pregnant…. my mother and the parish priest, they sort of organised for me to go to Dublin.’ Shortly after, her married elder sister took pity on DF and brought her to live with her until three weeks before the baby was due. At that point, she went to one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. Of this move, DF reflected:

> *I actually can’t remember me being part of organising it, like I was just doing as I was told because I’d been a bold girl, that sort of thing. I mean I don’t mean that in a negative way about my parents because actually they were very concerned about me and obviously they were looking out for my best interests as they thought … The social worker who was involved with, and my mother they just wanted me to consider adoption because, you know, of the implications of having a baby at nineteen, and unmarried and not really having a career structure or anything and being quite young, you know? So they wanted me to consider that and at least give the baby, you know, give the baby into care for a week or two until I would, you know … you know … and at least have another view on it, not having the baby beside you the whole time. So that’s why I went.*

The daily routine in the home involved ‘sitting around in a big living space, sewing teddy bears, I’ll never forget it. Sewing and stuffing teddy bears.’ DF felt this ‘wasn’t like a sweatshop, it was just chatting.’ In terms of the chores she was given, she deemed ‘it was no more than what I would have done at home, which is like somebody brush down the stairs, somebody … you know? I wouldn’t have called it anything other than helping around the house.’ DF felt that she was not asked to do any task that was difficult to carry out because she was heavily pregnant. She contrasted this to the Dublin home where ‘I did see bad terrible things ….I mean literally, people on their hands and knees, washing the floor, you know?’

The two nuns in charge were Sister C:

> *and another nun … and I can’t remember her name…. But I have to tell you, they were dotes, they were really nice. I found them very, very nice people. No problems at all… there was none of this “oh we’d better say our prayers now”, you know? “You are all terrible women!” I didn’t get any of that, I really didn’t.*

However, she intimated that the length of her stay was a factor in her personal reflections and noted that her stay was relatively straightforward compared with others:

> *other people might have had different experience, if they were long enough there … I mean there was a bit of … I think there was a couple of people sort of [said] "oh you're only here for three weeks … you haven't been here a couple of months", which must have been a different story all together.*

DF was 'horrified by some of the stories' from these longer term residents. One:

> *weird thing that … some of the girls were there and would tell you this and they were pretending to be in London or pretending to be in … in New York, and their letters were being sent over there, and then getting stamped, franked and coming back. So I just thought God that's so horrifically … a lie.*

DF travelled in a taxi to the maternity unit, with Sister C, because her labour started in the middle of the night. She was alone for the labour. Her baby son was subsequently transferred to a nearby baby home in readiness for potential adoption. Asked if anyone other than her mother had put pressure on her to have her son adopted, DF said there was a 'bit from a social worker that I saw, you know.' This had minimal impact because DF felt 'I could not imagine, you know, giving away this baby because it would've bad implications for me in the long run, I think.' She recalled talking to a young priest who 'wasn't spouting religion at all but he was like, a real, wise person … And he says 'don't be worrying about fifteen years away, never worry about the future. Just worry about today, tomorrow, don't be worrying. Do… whatever you think is good for you.'

As a schoolgirl, DF had been in the Legion of Mary and had visited orphanages with this voluntary group of lay Catholics. She conjured up memories of those visits as she explained 'I promised Mummy that I would try it, you know … but … I was never giving that child up for adoption.' With her son in the baby home DF visited 'every single day and spent the whole day with him, so like it was a waste of time, and … come Friday I said "Mum, I … it's not working I can't leave him there any longer". DF was also concerned at what she had witnessed on her visits:

> *I had noticed when I was there, there was a few, quite a few babies there, you know? Now not, I don't mean dozens, just mean a few, and there was these wee lassies looking after them, you know? Lovely girls, lovely … but like sixteen you know? Very, very young. And I don't know if this is in part of your history anywhere but there was an outbreak of E-Coli.*

DF made the decision to bring her son, who was eight weeks old, to the family home. He was 'peaky, fontanelle all sunken in, green water gushing out of his bum'. The decision was taken to take him 'straight to the fever hospital' where it was confirmed that he had e-coli. I mean … I mean I literally only got him out in time you know?' DF's memory is that a baby did die as a result of this outbreak of e-coli. Her own baby son was in the hospital fever hospital for eight weeks. Thankful that she had intervened in time, DF reflected that 'those wee lassies were from the orphanage … and they had no training you know, about basic hygiene, about changing.'

Thereafter, DF and her son lived in the family home until she married a few years later. She recalled that 'the only thing mummy said was like, you know "This is your baby. This is not my baby, this is your baby. So you have to, you know, do for him." She complemented her mother on her wisdom:

'well my mother actually came with me to go and see him and it was ... my mother also absolutely wouldn't have let me get married unless I wanted to get married ... She would've thought that was the worst thing to do ... there would be no shotgun in our house like, at all, no way.' Her son's father was not part of his upbringing.

DF's own father was also a positive and supportive presence for her and her son. She included a memory of him in discussing the complex and difficult issue of female sexuality and reproductive rights during her youth. She remembered that her father said to her:

> *Well cute girls don't get pregnant. You know what I mean? In other words, like if you were sensible enough but forward thinking enough, to have used a contraception of some description ... you know, you weren't a wee innocent you know what I mean? I think a lot of Catholic girls, a lot of girls even, never mind if they're Catholic or not, would've, you know ... like you wouldn't see yourself prepared, because that would mean you were, you know, expecting to do this ... bold thing!*

In answering questions it was clear that DF had little knowledge of how she might have accessed contraceptives in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s: 'I don't think the pill [was available] ....you sort of get the feeling oh well, it would have to be the boys that would get the condoms, like you know? I don't know. Probably a ... like, you know ... the good old pulling out in time or something'.

In concluding her testimony, DF explained that she came forward for two reasons. She wanted to highlight her experience of the e-coli outbreak and to record that she did not have the type of negative experience that she had read about in some of the media accounts of the mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland. Her sentiment was that the home had provided a 'haven' for her. It was 'completely different' from the home in Dublin that she went to first: 'because there girls told me they ... they had to stay with their babies for six weeks and then sign the forms, and some people ran off and ... because they were demented, you know?'

PW

PW was still at school when she became pregnant in the mid-1970s and found herself in one of the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes. She was from 'a very devout Catholic family' and recalls that her parents quickly involved a social worker and that she was in the home within 'a few days... there was no messing about'. This took place after the emotional turmoil that was involved in informing her parents about the pregnancy, which PW described memorably:

> *It was one of the rare times I've ever seen my mother cry. So I had left the gate open at the front of the house because I thought oh God, get out of here if she starts. But no, she just ... she was draining a pot of potatoes, I can still see her, into the sink and my older brother was with me and whenever he said "this one's pregnant" she dropped the pot into the sink and turned and said "is it any wonder you're putting on weight?" and went up the stairs past me crying. And I felt so, so small but the old fella had been away, he worked in *location redacted* and he didn't come home ... that was a Monday or a Tuesday, he didn't come home to Thursday. And when the car pulled up at the door, Mummy was waiting and she says "get into the bathroom, lock yourself in the bathroom and don't come out till I tell you to. No matter what he says you stay in there." Which I did, until she spoke to him and calmed him down and whatever. But, my father was of*

> *the era where he had said, when I did eventually come out of the bathroom, it didn't matter who I ever married, or if I got married, the child would always be a bastard.*

PW intimated that her mother wanted her in the home because even though 'she never said it … I do believe she was afraid that he would give me such a hiding.' For PW, then the home was a refuge and she offered this reflection:

> *I have read in the papers and that about the bad negative experiences that people have had and I felt that I have to come forward almost as a debt of honour. It is a debt of honour actually, because it was a safe place for me to be in. I was away from my father, my mother was very, very good. My father … no, it would have been … even when he died ten years ago, it still … he never forgave me for having a child before I was married.*

PW described entering the home and meeting with the Reverend Mother who was in charge in what she thinks was 'the nuns' parlour'. She:

> *was very nice as well. It was … she talked about what were you going to do with your baby? And she said … she didn't worry about the girls who came to the convent and had their children, she worried about girls who went to England. And at the time I didn't realise, being only sixteen, that she meant abortions. I … I just didn't twig at that time that's what she meant.*

Thereafter the nuns arranged for her welfare payment of £12.45 per week: 'They got most of it but you got some of it for toiletries and things like that, but it was your upkeep'.

PW described the 'structured regime' within the home which involved a 'time for getting up, a time for eating, a time for chores, going to bed, rest, whatever.' She maintained that 'there was no … none of this down on your hands and knees scrubbing floors or anything like that. It was housework duties that you would do every day at home anyway'. PW had a miscarriage scare and was given the lighter task of dusting. There was bed rest after lunch and then:

> *you knitted or crocheted, painted … well I was in to knitting and crocheting, so that's what I done. You done baby clothes, like matinee jackets, wee crocheted dresses, you know? All of those things that were, at the time, in fashion, shall we say? Where for boys was just Babygros. White, blue or ye … lemon, that was it. In the evening if there was nothing on the television or that … there was one particular girl there and she was learning to play the guitar and she played in the evening time. And all … it was the first time I'd ever heard Bobby McGee and Me, and every time I hear that song to this day I still think of that girl.*

The young women were 'taken up to Mass on the holy days, Sundays, confessions, all of that but you weren't made to go to confession or anything, it was there if you wanted it.' In fact, she remembers 'one particular girl was from the Protestant faith and she went to Mass with us. But she was treated the same as everybody else.' PW also spent some time in the home doing her CSE exams.

She described the process of leaving the home to have her baby in a local maternity unit. On their return if a baby was to be adopted it was 'then the social workers intervened and it was them that took the babies away.' In PW's case 'there was no pressure ever put on me at any time to give my baby up for adoption or fostering or anything, thank God.' Some of the other young women had 'no other option, they felt, but adoption.' She recalls some of them discussing 'putting their child in

for long-term fostering.' In fact, there was one woman whose child was fostered locally while she continued to live in the mother and baby home and go out to work nearby. In PW's opinion, the decision on adoption 'to me it was families and circumstances that dictated that these girls give their babies up.'

PW suggested that the other women in the home, who she knew only by their Christian names, included 'qualified nurses, there was professional girls, women and non-professional people, but you know, there was a variety across the board of girls, women who were in it.' She also recalled that they were 'free to go in and out' as they pleased. The home itself was 'lonely, there's no two ways about that, it was lonely. But it was a safe place.'

When it came to returning home with her baby, PW recalled the different expectations of her mother and father. Her 'father's expectations' was 'that I wouldn't marry, that I would stay at home. The child would be reared as a wee late one...and then I would be there to look after whoever needed looking after. It was the old Irish way.' Her mother, however 'was different', and was open with the neighbours that her daughter was pregnant and that her baby would be coming home with her. She also encouraged PW to become independent leave home with her child when it was two and PW was only eighteen,' at which time she married and went on to have further children. Her mother's strong-willed personality and influence is also revealed in her reception of PW when she returned home with her baby. PW recalled how 'Girls I went to school with would, when I come home, would've crossed the road...whether it was because you were an unmarried mother or whether it was because they didn't know what to say?' In this context, her mother had bought an impressive new pram and PW was told "now, you wheel that pram and you don't get off the footpath for anybody and you don't drop your head, you keep your head up at all times." PW and her mother went out together on the baby's first doctor's check-up in what was:

> *like a march, a military operation that you know, nobody was going to stand in her way, and nobody was going to stand in the way of her first grandchild and that. It was ... she was very good, she was ... for a woman ... she'd have been in her, in think in her forties then and she was determined nobody was going to look down on anybody belonging to her.*

PW reiterated that 'debt of honour' she feels towards the nuns who were in the home at the point that she was a resident. Reflecting on some of the media stories that featured in the headlines in the past few years she observed that:

> *I'm not saying that the atrocities that has happened in some of the homes and that across Ireland both North and South didn't happen. I don't know. If there's remains of babies and that there, well that's a story that tells itself. But I didn't experience that and I don't believe any of the girls that were in Marianvale same time as me would've experienced that either.*

She acknowledge that the viewpoint she offered during her interview would differ from that of many other women:

> *some people would've had negative experiences. And other people may not have. But maybe mothers whose children have tracked them down, as adults, and ... it is a fraction of them now, a fraction of them saying "well I had to do this, this is what I had to do and I was made to do it" and you know, a part of me thinks that.*

She also acknowledged that the very central role played by her mother was likely to have influenced the behaviour of the nuns and social workers she encountered: 'my mother would've been very much straight out and I'm kinda like her in that way myself. You know? If something's to be sad, say it, move on, forget it then.'

CR

CR became pregnant at 18 in the late 1970s and entered one of the Good Shepherd's mother and baby homes. After her departure, she kept in touch with one of the Sisters and 'built up a relationship with her because she looked after me very well'. As a result, CR 'got to hear about the project and then Sister *name redacted* … asked me would I be interested in participating and so I said "yes I definitely would". Reflecting upon her entry to the mother and baby home, CR describes making a decision that as 'there was lots of people that didn't have children [she] we would have the baby and just give it away and that would be ok.' At that time she had 'a very difficult relationship with my mother…and there was a great sense of shame in me becoming pregnant at eighteen…. My mother was distraught because of how it would be seen in the community'. As a result, adoption seemed the best 'solution.' CR felt that the mother and baby home offered a 'safe haven' from the family turmoil outside. In her words, Sister T and Sister C who were in charge of the home 'were like a mummy and daddy who looked after all these girls who got into trouble basically.' The former was 'a bit more stern' whereas the latter 'was lots of fun' [and] 'they were like an old married couple. They really complemented each other, the two of them.' She described feeling 'really good vibes' when she entered the home and considered it to be well run. CR was particularly gushing in her appreciation of Sister C who she described as a 'fabulous, fabulous, fabulous, fabulous women. Really fabulous woman.'

CR noted that Sister T and C treated the young women 'like the children that they never had in a way'. While her emotional response to this was clearly a positive one, CR acknowledged that 'some people going in there would have found that patronising, perhaps. Maybe in the late eighties, maybe some girls just thought who do they think they are' At the end of the day, they were doing a job.' CR reiterated that 'for me, they provided such a safe haven. The months before I went into [the home] were not good … It was so safe for me in there and … it really, really angers me to hear, you know … I know things must have gone on in these Magdalene laundries, but that wasn't *name of home redacted*, that absolutely wasn't.'

CR recalls there being 'between seven and eight of us altogether'. Although it was a difficult time in her life, 'it was very calm and it was just so the right place to be to help you gently go through and make decisions about your life. That's the way it was for me.' She had a single bedroom and recalls:

> *a large TV/work room where we sat making Irish Colleen dolls for the tourist industry. All these seven or eight pregnant girls sitting doing these. It's so bloody ironic when you think of it. Or cushions … so, I mean, you weren't made to work, to be honest. It was something there gentle for you to put your day in. Like, what else were you going to do, just sit there, you know?*

At other times, the women 'were asked to clean the windows, yes, and to help with a bit of "housework" in inverted commas. But it was like living together, it was like chores that you were doing. And you didn't have to do them.'

CR only found fault with one element of the home's operations:

> *probably looking the whole system, and this would be a fault in the system, in that, and I've heard things in the media, that the way the system was set up about you got dole money, you were entitled to benefits. And then there was the whole … the way the system should have worked should have been, I suppose, that I got that benefit directly to me and I paid the home for my care … the money went directly to them and then they gave you the change … but I'm sure that wasn't Sister T's or Sister C's fault. It's the way the system was set up and they didn't do it with any malice, but if anybody's going to find fault with anything then maybe could have been improved on. But it wasn't a big thing. It was anything that anybody complained about while I was there.*

CR remembers that from the welfare allowance from the state there 'was £3 something left out of that. And you got £3 three pound back every week and I saved up all those £3.'

CR described the home as having 'a very supportive environment.' She acknowledged that a set of rules were in place but interpreted them benevolently: 'you know, you didn't pry into another girl's background because the confidentiality was a big thing. And it was only first-name terms. You didn't say where you were from, or you didn't say your surname, or anything about your background.' Despite this element of discretion, CR explained that 'the camaraderie between us girls was great. That's what kept us going, you know, it really was great.' Some of the young women would go out together to the local shops or post office, but CR chose not to because she was fearful of being spotted by someone she knew. She vividly recalled an unconventional outing from the home:

> *And there was one day there was a wee young priest that came in and I can't remember his name … And there was a bit of banter with him and a bit of craic. And I remember one day, he decided to take them all out, take everybody out in a minibus, can you imagine? I obviously didn't go out but all the rest of them went out. And they had a whale of a day. He brought them out somewhere, can you imagine just this wee young priest and like seven pregnant girls or something, very obviously pregnant right, can you just imagine that? And it was up in the country somewhere. They had an absolute ball and they came back and they were all buzzing. Sister C was not happy, or Sister T they were not. But it was a hoot, it really was.*

CR also acknowledged the difficult circumstances that brought the young women there and the inevitable outpourings of emotion: 'there was days when we would have gone down into the sewing room and some girls would have just been in floods, you know, or would have been in a bad place.' In particular, she recalls 'one girl appeared to be completely disowned by her family … And I mean, as a mother I can't get my head around that … because they had sex. For God's sake.'

CR felt that at this point, the late 1970s, 'times were beginning to change, that girls were beginning to feel a bit more confident. If I want to keep this baby, and be a single mother and have a baby, well then I'm bloody well going to do it. And two fingers up to whoever's going to tell me I can't do it.' This might help explain why, after being in the home for a few weeks, she began to think 'maybe should I try and keep it and all of that, so especially when you felt the baby moving inside you' and this is what she did. CR explained that she approached Sister T or Sister C to discuss this and remembers that 'they would have said "ask your social worker, ask your social worker". They never would have got involved in making major decisions. They always put you back to the social worker.'

CR recalled that she encountered no resistance to keeping her baby. In fact, she felt the opposite was true. Her social worker 'would keep on giving me scenarios, she would say 'what if you and your boyfriend then do get married and then you do decide to have children, and you find out you can't have any more children? And the only child you've had, you've given away. How would you feel that way'? So she kept on giving me scenarios.' She does recall Sister T, who was 'quite business-like', saying 'something like,

> *"sometimes it's [adoption] for the best". But she was saying it in a gentle way. She wasn't saying … she was very professional, that's the word I'm looking for. She was very professional in what she did, in giving you the information that you needed. That was, my understanding was the ethos of the home, from the Catholic point of view, was that so you didn't have to have an abortion. Right, so you had the baby and that's just the way it was done, so she explained that, you know. So there was no, there was no pressure, absolutely no pressure put on me to, absolutely not to give the baby up.*

While describing her experience with the Good Shepherd Sisters in positive terms, CR was more critical of others that she encountered during her pregnancy, such as the inexperienced social worker who 'used to come up to me and talk about stupid things that … I mean, I remember one time she came up and she told me about a sore tooth that she was having'. She also recalls the maternity ward on which she had her child and being surprised by 'some of the nurses in that hospital. I mean there was definitely a judgemental thing about an eighteen-year-old girl having a baby. There was definitely that in society, and as if like, the jaw dropped, you know for god sake we bloody had sex.' CR recalled being made to feel 'like you were a tramp on the street. When I was in labour and I went into *hospital name redacted* I remember going 'Jesus Christ! Like that there with one of the labour pains. Because it hurt. And then one of the nurses…she was very brusque and she said "now, now, now, we'll be having none of that, we'll be having none of that". And I felt like saying, 'you ******* well aren't having this baby'. Reflecting on why she experienced negativity towards her as an unmarried mother, CR feels that 'it was society. There was stuff put there in society about these dirty wee girls having these babies'. CR gave birth alone and recalls being given gas and air but does not think she received an epidural.

TY

TY is another woman who spent time in a Good Shepherd mother and baby home after becoming pregnant, in the late 1960s, aged in her early twenties. Unlike a lot of other birth mothers who spoke to the research team, TY managed to conceal her pregnancy from her parents by telling them she was working in England for the summer. Instead, she was hidden away in the home waiting to have her child. Initially, TY had gone to England to have her baby but was told by a social worker that the adoption service was better in Northern Ireland. TY explained that 'she arranged for me to come to *a Good Shepherd mother and baby home.' When TY asked about how she would manage the problem of her parents believing she was in England for the summer, the social worker suggested 'you can write to them, send the letter to me, and I will forward it to them'. The possibility of adoption arose after TY asked her sister to break the news of her pregnancy to their parents. When the sister arrived at the family home, her parents were out and she went, instead, to seek counsel from the parish priest and he said "has she thought of adoption? This is a way she could keep it from her parents". I remember thinking "yes". And then I discussed this with the social

worker [in England] at the anti-natal.' TY particularly wanted to avoid having to reveal her news to her father because he had encouraged her to carry on in higher education and was very proud of her achievements. TY felt that she would not have been able to carry on studying if she kept her baby.

On her return to Northern Ireland, TY's sister drove her to the Good Shepherd mother and baby home, where she was greeted by one of the nuns who 'took me into the parlour and took all your details and everything and, you know, a wee bit of disapproval in the voice, but, you know, they were going to sort me out anyway.' TY recalled that she was given a private room and 'at that time I thought my sister had paid for that, but she hadn't.' She has concluded that 'there was a wee bit of snobbishness in that I was educated. I think that's why I got the single room.'

She was positive in her assessment of the conditions she encountered and had exchanged Christmas cards and visits with one of the Good Shepherd Sisters in the years after she left the home:

> *You got three meals a day, you were fed. It was warm, it was comfortable. And we had to do a wee bit of maybe polishing and stuff ... We'd to polish the floors and do a bit of window cleaning. But, you know there's, we were allowed to watch TV at times. I remember watching... Top of the Pops....Those of us who hadn't had our babies did a wee bit of housework, but it wasn't that you were ... you had nothing else to, it occupied the time. You had a table that you sat at for your meals and I remember us actually having a bit of fun, do you know, between yourselves ... Once you had your baby, you looked after your baby. You had no housework to do or dishes or anything like that. You looked after your baby and you took turns in the nursery at night. I think I only did it twice. I was only there after *daughter's name redacted* was born for about three-and-a-half weeks ... At night you took turns in the nursery. You slept in the bed in the nursery. And then when a baby awoke, you went in and got the mother and she would feed the baby during the night.*

At this stage, all the babies were bottle-fed 'because you'd be leaving because most babies were adopted after six weeks.'

She remembered that 'nobody knew anybody's surname' and the efforts that were made to maintain this element of secrecy. The 'the nuns allowed *name of baby's father redacted* to write to me. I would get my letter face down beside my breakfast table when he wrote, which I thought was really good.' TY also recalled that the nuns 'allowed me to write to him. So that was great, that was a comfort because it was like a lonely time, if you know what I mean, even though you had the girls.' As was seen in earlier interviews (such as that with Priest 2) in TY's case nuns and priests were involved in a web of secrecy which involved deceiving some parents of pregnant women: 'what the nuns allowed me to do was, every-, mum and dad used to visit my sister every Sunday. And the nuns allowed me to go into their parlour and phone my sister and mum and dad come on and thought I was phoning from *location in England*'. This element of secrecy extended to giving birth in the maternity hospital:

> *I remember a ring that I had, putting on this left hand like this as if it was a wedding ring, do you know? All the other women, but they must've known that the girls from *a Good Shepherd mother and baby home* came there. And I think I told somebody my husband was in the Army. I think I told them, that was why I wasn't getting visited from, from him you know. You know, you told all, it was all, like, the pretence you know.*

TY explained that she could not 'remember if I had to go to mass every morning, but we certainly had to go every week, and we had to go to confession every week. Now what had you to confess? We were making up that I had bad thoughts and things like that. Which I hadn't, you know, anything to make up for to go to confession.'

TY remembered that the home had a parlour and:

> *people would come to the parlour on a Sunday to adopt babies and your baby was brought up. Now, if they decided to take the baby, I can't remember whether they went there and then with the adopted parents or whether you'd, they came back and then they came during the week or something.*

However, TY's daughter was, instead taken to a baby home in advance of potential adoption. TY took the baby to this home herself and recalled the day she left the Good Shepherd home with her daughter. One of the nuns 'who wasn't nasty or unpleasant' but 'sterner looking' than her colleague brought TY 'into the parlour and [she was] given some holy pictures and, you know, a few sort of, I can't remember the words used, but like warnings to behave myself when I got back.... no more sex more or less, that's what they were saying.'

TY was relatively sanguine about her experiences in the home and a variety of factors that eased some of the difficulties for her at what was a very traumatic time in her life. She was aware that not everyone had the relatively straightforward experience that she described: She did not know if the nuns:

> *were the same with everybody.... a lot of those girls, their parents had put them in there. Now there was one girl when I arrived there ... and she was thirty. And she had a baby of three months, I remember... And he was gorgeous, he was three months old. And I remember asking Sister A, years afterwards when I went to visit her, "whatever happened to *name redacted*?" And she says "*mother's name redacted* was from a small village in Ireland, and she stayed with the nuns for a full year in the hope that the father would marry her, and he didn't. And she'd to give that baby up at a year old.*

TY also recalled another 'very good looking girl with auburn hair, she was beautiful. She remembers this individual "my worry is not giving up my baby, my worry is going home with no money. My mother thinks I'm working and I'm getting money to bring home to her, and I haven't a penny to bring home". TY's mother thought she was working too and because TY 'sent her money home in the summer', her sister gave her the money to send home and thereby continue to hide her situation from the parents.

TY then returned to her parents' home and recalled that 'all I could think of was I've gotten away with this ... I've actually gotten away with it'. The nuns 'actually offered to look after *daughter's name redacted* for me until I married *baby's father*, if I wanted to do that. But I just says "I can't tell Daddy".

She was eventually reunited with her daughter over twenty years later after many years of hoping that she would hear from her and the complex set of family relationships involved in such a situation have worked well. However, TY does have some regrets. One was that 'you didn't get then was

counselling [at the time of the adoption]. When I think back on it, really, you know, going through that you should've had a course of counselling, which nobody did then anyway.'

Like a number of other birth mothers who offered her testimony, TY was prompted, at least in part, by the relationship she had with the Good Shepherd Sisters who had been in the home when she was a resident. She still visits one of them who she described as 'lovely' and who always encourages TY to "tell the nuns what it was like" when she was in the mother and baby home. TY was happy to explain her view that 'there was no abuse, there was no nastiness. As I say, you had to go to mass and you had to go to confession but, do you know? There was no hardship really.' TY held the view that:

> *there's so much bad press about the mother and baby homes, and rightly so if that was the case, which it obviously was. I saw the film The Magdalene Laundries, and look at the case in Galway with all those babies buried, there must've been something happening there. They couldn't all have died, do you know? So when the nun from *redacted* asked me if I'd be interested, I said "certainly". And I always would have been willing to do that ... because, as I said, we had clean bedding, clean rooms, you're fed your three meals a day. I don't remember going hungry, I don't remember being cold or miserable, and the few chores you did, I don't remember thinking "I can't do this anymore". You did a bit of polishing floors, or plenty of, or cleaning the windows, or dusting, or, it wasn't, you know it wasn't hard work. And the nuns were very helpful as regards to letting me phone home, letting *baby's father's name redacted* write to me, offering to look after *daughter's name redacted* you know, all those things.*

OC

OC is the daughter of woman who spent time in one of the Good Shepherd convents. As a teenage girl, OC's mother was repeatedly raped until (at the age of fourteen in 195*), she became pregnant. The culprit was a labourer who worked on her father's farm. Her father was a heavy drinker who was often in the local pub rather than on his farm and her own mother had died. OC's mother:

> *didn't know anything about the birds and bees, she didn't know anything about, she knew what he was doing was wrong to her, but she didn't know what the consequences of it was or, you know, what, what was happening. So the first she knew that there was anything wrong was that she was taken from the school gates by a local priest and driven ... nothing was explained to her, she was just from the school gates and into the car, and off they went to *Good Shepherd mother and baby home*.*

OC's mother told her that on arrival at the convent 'she met the Mother Superior, and apparently the first thing that was said to her was "get down on your knees and pray for forgiveness". Now mum said "forgiveness for what?" She didn't know anything, and she said she still didn't know that she was pregnant.' After the birth of her son, OC's mother was transferred to a different Good Shepherd convent. She remained there for seven years even though 'she had wrote and wrote and wrote to her father and asked him could she come home'. However, he responded that 'he didn't have any money to take her home – and why would she be coming home?' He finally 'reneged' on this view when 'he was on his death bed'.

In her interview OC explained that she had met with two of the nuns who had been in the convent during her mother's time there and discovered that as far as 'they were concerned, if somebody claimed you that was it …. they weren't there to detain anyone.' In the same residential care home where OC and her mother met with one of the elderly nuns, they also encountered a woman who had been resident in the convent with OC's mum in the 1950s. OC reflected that:

> *Mum wouldn't have been one to probe and say: "How come you're still here?" It was the nuns that told us after that, you know, that basically she had no one to claim her, is the way they used to put it. So they continued caring for her. And I just couldn't stop thinking afterwards: that could have been Mum. It really, it really affected me in the sense, like, that none of us could have been here. That Mum could have been left to, sort of, you know, wither away really and have no quality of life, you know? She had a tough life when she got out – but at least she had a life. And, you know, she was a big part of the community. She made it. She made her life for herself, do you know?*

The nuns OC and her mother met, explained the nature of their relationship with the women placed in the convent. OC explained that one [nun] said "Look, you know, that was just the way it was. We weren't allowed to have relationships with the girls. We weren't allowed to talk to them". In OC's understanding:

> *A lot of them didn't even know the background as to why the women were in, so they wouldn't have known that Mum was one that was raped – unless Mum told her that, which Mum wouldn't have been able to tell her, and wouldn't have known the words [as a 14 year-old] to tell her.*

OC was not entirely certain about what happened to the man who raped her mother. She thinks he was sacked, but no more. A second daughter also lived on the farm and she was taken into residential care, but a son was left to live with his father.

OC explained that aside from the horrible introductory comment by the Mother Superior, her mother remembered her time in the two convents with some positivity: 'apart from the one comment from the Mother Superior, she said her treatment after that was really good, and as far as she's concerned it offered her stability and security. She had three lovely meals a day, clean bed to sleep in. Her life, as she put it, was far better in the home, than it would ever have been at home.' In conversations with her mother, OC learned that 'the nuns had an order of silence' and that 'they couldn't talk'. So they worked alongside one another but there was no conversation during the day.' She also told OC that 'yes, you did work hard, but it wasn't really that hard work'. Her mother also claimed that 'never ever, ever, did she hear anybody complain about abuse or say they were abused, or did she witness anything.' Her mother's conviction on this point was illustrated in an anecdote that OC related:

> *I can remember watching The Magdalene Sisters on the television when it came out, and she went ballistic and wanted me to turn it off, and said "none of that happened, that's a disgrace". And she was very adamant about it … to the day she died, she still wouldn't watch any of those kind of programmes, because she said that wasn't her experience.*

Moreover, she remained in contact with the nuns after she left the convent, even visiting them with her husband. Between the convent and her marriage, OC's mother worked for a professional family

'as their sort of au pair come housekeeper, I believe arranged by the nuns'. She met her husband at a local dance hall and they married even though:

> *a local man, apparently, had approached Daddy and said to him: "You do know that she was in a mother and baby home and had a baby" and kind of tried to talk sense into him before he got married. And he said: "Yeah, I do know that" – 'cos she had told him. So she had opened up and he accepted her for it.*

Their wedding 'was a very hidden affair. They went off and they got married, sort of, in the local church with only two witnesses and she was in a plain coat and a hat. That was their wedding day. They'd no honeymoon or nothing. It was all very quiet.'

OC's mother's adopted son contacted her after forty years and at which point she wrote back to him, her first words being 'I've waited forty years to get a letter like this'. Giving up her baby had been tough but as OC understood it, 'the way she looked at it was she knew she couldn't provide for him' because her father was refusing to allow her to return home. In this context, OC'S mother believed her son 'would have a better life because he was going to be chosen by somebody that wanted a baby – and would love him. So yes it was really hard, and she never, ever, ever forgot him.' Before her reunion with her adopted son, OC's mother often sighed "I wonder what my life would have been like if my mum hadn't have died"', but OC and her siblings 'never knew what was behind that statement.'

It was when the truth finally out in the open, that OC's mother asked told her that she wanted to see two of the nuns again and OC drove her to meet them. At this point, OC's view was:

> *like, I probably would have been sceptical listening to all of the programmes. I would have watched The Magdalene Sisters, I would have read a lot about people's testimonies and stuff. And I was actually reading a book, as it happens, about a person's story who had been in a Magdalene laundry at the time my mother broke the news to me.*

OC was surprised by what she witnessed during the encounter:

> *I would have been sceptical that the nun's would have been treating mum the way she said, you know? That it couldn't have been that good, you know, all these people can't be wrong and you're right? But when I went down and witnessed first-hand the welcome that they gave her, and said: "Where have you been all these years? We lost contact". And they were so genuinely delighted. They both cried. And we stayed overnight and we had a lovely chat.*

Despite the warmth she felt towards the two Good Shepherd Sister's, OC's mum said 'she was lucky to get out.' It appears that the convent was a place of safety for her in the context of the sexual assaults she had suffered at home and not somewhere that she wanted to reside long term.

Reviewing her mum's time in the convent OC described how fascinated she was 'in terms of how ingratiated she became with the nuns.' She was given a new name, which in her mum's case involved a very slight alteration to her Christian name. It is clear the OC's mother became a trusted resident within the convent. Not only was she engaged in the laundry, where 'she did the ironing mostly', she also was given responsibilities in respect of the mother and baby home that was part of the convent complex. Before Vatican II, the Good Shepherds were part of a closed Order and it was in this context

that OC's mother found herself, as 'a good girl who always did what she was told' under instruction to 'bring the babies – on a bicycle – to the train station and bring them to, like, which would have been a children's home, back up to *town name redacted*'. On her return to the convent she might find that she 'had to share the dormitory with the mother who you've just given their baby away – and you know you're told you can't say anything.' And she didn't say anything. And so she did that on a regular occurrence.

In terms of the other routines in the convent, OC's mother told her that they would:

> *be up a six o'clock, literally, and they'd go to mass first. That was the first thing. And then off you went to work, and you worked side-by-side and the hotels, particularly, would be coming in with lorry loads of sheets and stuff. So the nun would teach you how to fold a sheet properly so that when you put it on ... and even to this day, or like towards the end, she was telling me: "You're not ironing that sheet correctly" ... So there was a lot of ... it just had to be done right, and they had to be starched and she was very proud of it. Proud of her work, I suppose. Yeah. And actually, I think she, she probably was praying away to herself and, you know, it may have ... Well, when you ask that question now and then and see where she came from so, yeah, silent for so long that when she got out she'd never stop talking. So, like, we'd go as kids to the local town to go shopping – and you know what kids are like, you'd be so boring – and Mum would speak to everybody she met. A twenty minute or half an hour trip to the shops turned into, like, about three, four hours because you just couldn't get away. And we'd be like "Oh, Mum, come on". So yeah. The silence probably drove her into the opposite.*

OC believed that her mother was given 'a small allowance' for her work in the convent, 'but she would never have got out to spend the allowance'.

OC described her mother as a strong woman. She remembered her saying there had been no pain relief during her first pregnancy. OC felt that her religious belief helped her and that 'the biggest – thing that she got from the convent was, actually, her faith. And her faith, I would say, probably kept her going the whole way through her life'.

In explaining why she came forward to assist in the research, OC explained that:

> *I wanted to come forward 'cos, like, as I say, nothing I was reading was like anything like Mum's experience. I sensed somebody needed to bring some balance – and in Mum's name. Mum would have been proud. And, look, I want – strongly, and I keep saying it – I'm not particularly holy myself. OK, you can see a crucifix behind me and everything, and I do go to mass, but like I wouldn't be one that'd be praying every night or anything like that, or doing the rosary – but Mum would. Mum never went to bed without saying the rosary – and about fifty prayers afterwards. But yeah, she just wanted that. She wanted somebody to hear that her life was not what others experienced.*

OC believes that her mother 'never felt wronged by anyone other than the man who raped her.' OC would like to see a 'full enquiry' to 'establish the facts about the institutions in which her mother was placed: 'Because mum kept it such a secret, because the community were complicit in that secrecy, I'd just like details, paper, I'd actually love to even go into *name of convent redacted* and see what it was like.' She was clear that 'none of us [OC'S family] are after any money.'

VV

VV was not a resident in a mother and baby home, but as a schoolgirl she spent time in a Good Shepherd Convent as a result of domestic problems at home and the collapse of her parents marriage. Her testimony was wide-ranging but involved some observation of the mother and baby home and the Magdalene laundry that were part of the convent.

VV's testimony can be linked to ID's in that the children ID encountered during her second spell in a Good Shepherd Convent were very likely to have been from the home that VV resided in. It was part of the convent complex and VV was there for a number of years. In her testimony she offered reflection from a teenager's perspective on aspects of the convent's operations that included its laundry.

VV approached the researchers to offer testimony on her experience of living in a Good Shepherd convent during her childhood. She was resident there in the years that coincided with her secondary school years because of domestic problems in her home, which included the breakdown of her parents' marriage. After her mother left home VV's sister was taken into care by a court order and VV entered a home for girls within the local Good Shepherd convent. She made this choice herself, contacting social services to request it because she was experiencing domestic violence. VV is not sure whether or not the state paid for her place in the home:

> *I have no idea. I think it is possible that my father paid something for me, I think … I think he paid something for my sister, you know because he was working. You know? But I don't know where my keep came from, at all. In fact, it is on my mind that I am going to inquire about this part of my story. There is bound to be records to know if I was officially I there. I always had a sense that I was there unofficially because I was the only one who asked, can you look after me?*

In her testimony VV reflected on the different functions of the convent and the range of distinct institutions that functioned on the one site. She lived in a children's home with a small number of other girls. In addition, there was:

> *a congregation called the Magdalenes, who wore a brown uniform, they lived separately. You had the nuns, the nuns' quarters, which I never, ever accessed. I was never in the nuns' quarters. You had the laundry, and you had the mother and baby home, which was over the wall from the convent in a field on its own. We did not interact at all.*

VV explained that the 'Magdalene sort of nuns made altar breads and did embroidery for priests, cardinals and bishops, and they also, the one time we saw them was at mass.' Mass was the one time there was some minimal interaction but generally 'you were not allowed to talk to anybody in the laundry, you were not allowed to talk to, in fact, you were not allowed to talk to each other. Secrecy. And prohibition about talking about yourself even, was the order of the day, which, we just accepted.

During her time in the convent, VV believes that she witnessed the early impact of Vatican II.

> *I think the roots (of the Good Shepherd convent) were in redeeming women who had fallen, but I had no knowledge of that, but at that time there were signs of change, but they hadn't quite changed except in so far as they were looking ahead, to see could they run down the *name deleted* home where I was … where I was placed.*

VV recalled that her daily routine involved early morning mass before heading out to school. She 'became very institutionalised very quickly, and I believed in the whole heap. I even used to go into the oratory and see could see a statue moving as a sign God was listening to me, I mean I was absolutely brainwashed.' However, she feels that 'because of a chaotic home life I probably took to this life, and I had no complaints about it at the time.' She felt that 'it's a measure of how horrible [her] own family life was' that she accepted the rules and regulations and institutionalisation of the convent and that this made her feel safe. She said 'from what we know now of course it was … a bad thing, of course it's a bad thing. But then I think the rational would have been, like protective.'

VV observed that 'I should say that whatever the rules were, we subverted them all the time, and you know, you never, you never were in any big trouble, you might be told off about this and that, but there was nothing, no cruelty or anything like that.' She remembered the food as 'probably very stodgy, and I remember I put on a lot of weight. But there was plenty of it, you definitely weren't hungry.' Whilst generally positive about life in the convent, VV did suspect that the diet also contributed to some health issues she had with boils and a serious abscess. She wondered if hygiene was perhaps also an issue.

Speaking about the laundry women, who she referred to as the 'girls in the class', VV speculated that 'there might have been sixty of them? There were quite a lot of women, young girls, women, elderly women who were in what we called the class, the class was the laundry'.

VV remembered the very close monitoring of the women and girls at certain points: ' When the bread man was delivering, the nuns watched you like a hawk. I think they thought you were going to run off with a bread man.' She felt 'hermetically sealed' in the convent in some respects, but noted that you were allowed if you had 'a reason to want to go out… to buy something from the chemist or, I don't know, whatever.' There was a process of institutionalisation that she went through and VV recalled that when she returned to her family home 'I can remember the thrill of making a cup of tea. You know, it was quite some time before I got used to freedom.'

Describing life in her part of the Good Shepherd convent, VV explained that 'we were all expected to do chores. And that is why when I hear people talking about the cruelty of the nuns, in making them do work, my story, I am sure that is how it was for them in certain convents, but… I didn't resent it at all, because I actually liked doing this bit of physical work.' VV explained that the girls she was with slept in dormitories until the age of fourteen at which point 'you got your own room, a nice little room. They were nicely decorated, when I was there they were being done up, they were … they were the very best of order'.

She explained that a lot of her terminology was picked up from the nuns: terms like 'the big recreation room' was one as was 'the big silence, which was at night, and you had the refectory, which was where you ate meals.'

Having come from 'a chaotic violent home' to a place 'where half your worry about is getting this room clean' was, VV felt 'a joy, I really liked doing it.' Her main chore was 'the big recreation room, cleaning the floor, cleaning the windows, giving it a big clean out, or just doing the daily tidying up. That was my thing, other people had different, maybe the corridors. I mean, it had to be done somehow.'

VV explained the level and type of interaction the girls in the children's home had with the various other residents of the Good Shepherd convent:

> *I said earlier that we weren't allowed to talk to what we called 'the girls in the class.' The girls in the class might have been sixty or seventy or eighty years old, a lot of them were teenagers, a lot of them were other ages in between. Although you weren't allowed to talk to them, of course we found ways of talking to them because there was a little door… We had our own quarters, they had theirs. But I think it's important to understand how we did interact. There was a little door, like a little common door, in between where they walked to mass, and we walked to mass, and it was great fun to wait at that door and if you one you would have a wee chat. So somehow, subversively, you would get to know them. Also, the connection was, for example, there was one time we all together had a new frock say for May Day or something. We all got new frocks. I still remember the thrill . They were made by the people in the laundry, so they were good sewers, good knitters, there were more of them, and they came up to measure us for these. It must have been something special. And … when else, yes, we would meet with them, when there was a picture showing, we would meet in one, in the laundry's big hall, because, well they showed the picture and they showed to all of us, and of course, most of the times it was How Green is My Valley or Boystown or something the nuns thought was brilliant. I am sure we saw, we saw others. You rarely watched television, it was just the beginning of television, and it was black and white. And it was really for odd treats, it wasn't on commonly as it is today. We put on our own shows, for when it was Mother's feast day or special times of year. We, the fourteen children, somehow put on a show, we would make up words to popular tunes of the day and sing them. Like, I remember there was one … to the tune of Oklahoma, we would sing Mother's Feast Day. Something about [sings] To Mother's Feast Day, [laughs] you know we would … we would … we would pick a tune like that and just put our own words and just tailor them to things we knew about people who that were living in the home, you know it was just fun.*

VV recalls that the 'best singers in the whole complex' were the Magdalenes who 'had fantastic voices they would sing in Latin'. The girls in the class also you know would sing … sing the mass. So, we interacted for movies, for some recreation things, and for, for, when we all went into' mass. However, within the chapel we would go in our section, the girls in the Class would go in another section, and nuns and other people in another section. We could all see the mass, but there was something in between that we couldn't see each other. You know we weren't altogether.' Another group, with whom VV had no interaction were the women in the mother and baby home that was also on the convent site and she reflected on this:

> *There was a sense of shame around us all, I should say that. I have a sense that there was a sense of shame around everything, but with the mother and baby home there was more of a sense of shame and once, just once, I did hear … I might have heard one of our nuns say something, like they had heard a thirteen-year-old was in, which seemed to horrify them, which says to me, it wasn't the norm. So I don't, I really don't know what went on there, I don't. I have the impression there weren't very many there, but it, it did exist, we knew nothing about it. It was, because it was actually physically isolated, you know, just a square building in a field, over the wall from us, there was no opportunity as there was with the laundry, for you to maybe have a wee word with somebody through the door, when you were all, you could see each other, you might see each other, with the laundry, you could see them walking in a line, you'd walk in a line to the Mass.*

During one of the encounters with the 'girls from the class', VV heard what she thought was 'a brilliant, brilliant story', which she narrated:

> *and it sounds as if it's true, that whenever the nuns weren't in the laundry room where the laundry stuff was going on, where, you know there they were doing the work of the laundry … If a nun went out of the room, sometimes they would take their bras, which they'd washed, and put them on these two spheres which were meant for bishop, for priests' birettas, or other head gear of maybe … of maybe cardinals or something. They, these spheres had steam coming out of them. You put this headgear on them and that all freshened them up, right? So these women would put their bras, for a laugh, it was done consciously for a laugh, but it was obviously subversion, on top of these to get their bras done. I just think that's a brilliant story, but it is a second-hand story, but I like to think it happened. So it shows you, you know, well, it shows you a bit of the humour, you know, I think, but it's very sad too.*

As was the case with other testimonies, VV recalled what she called 'trustees', by which she meant the Auxiliaries that Sister 1 described in her interview. It appears that in VV's convent, their role extended to taking out the primary school age girls to a 'dental appointment, hospital appointment or something like that. Somebody from the laundry might be delegated to go with them. So you know we did get to know some of them, like trustees'. In explaining their role, VV said 'I'm just talking about the culture, where we in our culture had a sense that there were some people in the laundry that were like … more status. Had more status than others'. VV noted that the term implied 'like in a jail you're a trustee, but that 'some of these people, who were lovely, and who would go out, had more freedom to go out and in than others … I'm just thinking some of them wore a kind of a uniform. Now they weren't nuns and I think that was connected to the Children of Mary.' The uniform was 'like of blue, of course it was blue'.

VV was aware that the women in the laundry 'had different names.' Her understanding of this re-naming of the laundry women was that it 'was connected with you'd … something awful had happened in your life. Like you were raped, you know or even just you were regarded as a teenager, a wayward teenager. Which they, I'm sure that was their thinking at the time.' She also felt that some of the laundry women were ill-equipped for life.

> *I don't like to use this word because it sounds like I'm making a bad judgement, a judgement which is judging them and I don't mean that. But I think a lot of them would have been people who were inadequates. I don't … what other word can I use. People who found the world difficult, or who were in difficult circumstances.*

She felt that the laundry meant 'you had your world, your world structured.' These were individuals with 'a lack of autonomy' and VV is relieved that 'I threw that off myself and it is interesting that there was never a suggestion that I should go into the laundry.'

VV pointed out 'there was never, ever the slightest talk of me going into the laundry.' This option was never discussed with her, she felt, because 'I was good girl and dedicated to being good. Me, I'm laughing, I'm saying that because I'm laughing at myself, it's ridiculous. But I was determined to be good. And keep the rules, you see that was the other thing.' However, entering the laundry was not entirely unlikely for her, because, VV did recall that:

occasionally, now it wasn't a big threat or a shouty threat, but it was somehow there, that were other kinds of homes that you could be sent to. Now, I'm trying to think where were some of these places … there was one in Limerick, one in Newry …I have a feeling it might have been a wee bit but not much. I can't, I can't say. If I'm honest with you … There were other places and you'd be better off- Armagh! That's right we were threatened with Armagh, where would we have been in Armagh?

This was probably a reference to Middletown Training School.

Moreover, as VV explained a few minutes later in her testimony, her sister, who was also in a Good Shepherd's children's home 'ended up in the laundry' when she was fifteen. VV claimed that 'she wasn't badly treated but how she arrived in the laundry is another matter. And, it's really all I can say.' She chose not to speak about this any further other than to say 'we've had similar experience but she had additional experiences outside that meant that, you know, it hasn't been a good outcome at all. But she and I both blame our parents, not the nuns. You know I can say that, say that definitely.' She returned to this point later in her testimony to add a little more detail:

I don't think she thinks of it as a terrible trial? Because … well I can't really say the circumstances you know … but she was only there a year or two, she wasn't there long term. But I think it was that they were kindly, they were kindly to her. She was one of the younger ones in terms of … I mean a lot of them were really older. A lot of the people in the laundry were, really were older, older women. Definitely.

When reaching adulthood, VV had to consider her options and the prospect of the laundry must have figured somewhere among them 'because I was just staying on, and on' in the convent. This was due to strong reservations about leaving and going back to the family home and her father and his violent outbursts. When she did go home one memory is of 'going home and thinking … this is brilliant. Thinking the food was brilliant, thinking it was great to make yourself a cup of tea. Thinking … and going to dances were an absolute joy, an absolute joy, I can remember.' She also recalled the strict barriers she imposed on her teenage leisure, especially around sex and linked this to her time with the Good Shepherd Sisters:

Now I was obsessed, again, had to be like Mary. I must be a virgin when I get married, so instead of looking for somebody to marry, that, you know, would I get on with them, I was, I was … I did marry for love as it happened, but our whole courtship was conducted with me absolutely being directed by: I must not get … I was absolutely clear I must not get pregnant. I must not have sex. I must be a virgin getting married, and I think that was all connected with the cult of the Virgin Mary, being with the nuns … I mean I can remember, reading pamphlets and really trying to, you know, internalise them. You Too Can Be a Saint. A CTS pamphlet, a Catholic Truth Society pamphlet … and I now, with hindsight from other things I have read, I now think those particular nuns, that particular order of nuns were associated with what they call penitents, and in fact some of the, the girls in the Class are sometimes referred to as penitents, I didn't know what it meant then. But I think there always was that whiff of, and especially with teenage girls, you could get into trouble, they are saving you from yourself. There was something in that about it, even though I was totally innocent and had done nothing.

In the longer term, VV explained that 'I went on in life and had another identity, so my identity to do with the children's home would be a great surprise to most people who know me, because I just was getting on with dealing with life.'

VV was concerned that the nuns who she felt looked after her so well are 'all labelled with the same brush, you know?' She was referring at this point to the evidence that emerged in the hearings of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry. In her experience VV only encountered 'one kind of, bad behaviour nun. But it was so unusual, it wasn't the norm. And she disappeared.' VV believes this nun left the convent due to ill health. In this case, there was no physical abuse; it was more a case of poor care with the nun making the girls eat the same cheaply prepared meal every night for quite some time. She observed that 'there were practices that were probably, would be known to social workers to be bad practices in an institution now. Like for example, not being able to go out and in just because you wanted to, you know, having to get special permission'. Again she linked this to Vatican II, possibly because before that point the Good Shepherd Sisters were a closed Order and leaving the convent was restricted, even for young girls under their care who came and went during weekdays to attend school. VV also noted that after this point, girls who reached school leaving age 'instead of going outside to be a housekeeper to a priest, were actually being employed by the nuns, being paid, having your own money, being allowed to go out'.

VV recalls restrictions on what she could read: 'you definitely were not allowed to read romantic comics. That was a complete, complete no-no. But of course, we smuggled them in. I'm not talking about pornography, I'm talking about Jackie, or any of those kind … you know'. The nuns tried to direct recreation in other ways with a 'a great emphasis on knitting and sewing, and using the sewing machine, all those sorts of things, you all did in the recreation room together.' The girls were not allowed to wear make-up, which VV related to 'that thing about keeping you infantile'. And that was probably assisted by the fact that for information on the facts of life 'there was some priest that you were allowed to ask him the facts of life. If there was any specific things. Yes. In confession, you were allowed to ask him. I think.'

Reflecting on the nuns in general, VV considered that they:

> *saw themselves as doing work with teenage girls who got into trouble. I don't even mean having babies, I mean just what we would regard as wayward. Maybe they had a big bust! I don't know, anything at all, they were always afraid, they were always afraid of … that you were good looking and you were going to get into trouble. And they were doing you a favour keeping you out of trouble.*

Reflecting back on her time in the convent now, VV acknowledges that the term penitents – used to indicate the laundry women – was 'used unthinkingly. Like … now that I'm reading books about this I know the significance of penitents'. They were called 'the girls' and VV thought this was 'to do with, again like a, autonomy, infantilisation, you know, the girls. No, you see some of them [in the laundry] would have been old. They would have looked after them till they died. They could have spent practically all their lives there.'

VV had attended meetings of one of the victims and survivors groups and 'listened to other people's stories that weren't like my stories.' She explained that:

I was gravitating towards where I can talk about experience in a children's home with others, but their experiences weren't, didn't seem to be like mine. And, and I now know from listening to them a common feature of children that go into homes is, you're not bonded with your family, you don't have the bonding experience. Do you know? Even the early years with my sister didn't seem to do it.

VV feels that some in these groups are uncomfortable with her because 'they don't want to know somebody who didn't have a bad experience, even though I'm not denying their experience but … and I think, I remember saying to them, I would be very surprised if there were many legal cases or even to the Hart report of complaints about the place I was in, and I was right.' However, she added her view that 'I also think probably a lack of regulation around how you came to be in the laundry'; a perspective that may be based on her sister's experience.

TESTIMONY ON MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES

JP

We first encountered JP in the section on the Good Shepherd mother and baby homes which included her account of the short time she spent in one of those homes. This was within one of the Good Shepherd convents, one in which JP had previously worked as a paid employee in the laundry as a seventeen year old who was hoping to earn some money in order to set up marry her finance. Initially JP was put to work in the washroom. Later still, she was moved to the presser and also worked on priest's vestments. JP also recalled the hotel laundry that was cleaned.

She explained that there was a 'head lady', who was also a paid employee who came into to work in the convent each day, who was in charge of the laundry work. Most of the workers were 'girls there who were in it who were not married and having children [we assume she meant they had already had their children] and little girls that were kind of, what you say, slow with learning disabilities and older, older people.' One woman who 'was a bit slow, so she was to teach me how to use the machine, you know the hand-held machine?' JP was then moved to the calendar machine, which involved working in a pair to 'feed the sheets into the big machine. She worked alongside a young woman from the Republic of Ireland who:

*had had a baby … a few … a week or two before…. she only was there with me for a short while because she had her baby. Then she would, she come over and she showed me a photo of her, of her boyfriend, who she had the child with, he didn't know….then the next few days when I'm back again, *name redacted* was gone.*

JP also recalled working with another young woman who had been moved to this laundry from a children's home in a different part of Northern Ireland. She also remembered one of the older women who was given the nickname Annie Oakley because she 'was a wee bit disabled, she used to run round with a gun shooting you'. Another woman, JP recalled is who is 'a bit disabled, you know, she's out in the community now, not far from where I live.'

JP described the separate entrances into the laundry for the workers who came from outside and the women who were residents within the complex. The latter were 'like a herd of cows and when they were coming in they were coming in like that herded together, and you could see their faces you know.' She explained that 'when you worked in it you only knew their first name'. The nuns 'did not want you to interact with or to bother with the girls.... you weren't really allowed to talk really but see with *name redacted*, learning me how to use the machine, you could talk.' From these interactions, JP learned that the nuns 'gave them wages, something very little. It wasn't very much, £2 *name redacted* said.... She said they weren't bad to her but you know.' JP felt that this viewpoint should be tempered by the fact that the woman concerned had a learning disability. She described other laundry women, as more nervous and fearful.

Overall JP's experience of the laundry was that:

> *in my experience of being in there, a very cold, very, you know what I mean, it, they didn't, there was no, just do the work and out, they were very cold, it was a very cold environment you know .... I was not used to treating people with coldness and it was like a, an army, you know, military.*

This negative verdict is shared by one of the laundry residents who JP occasionally encounters. This woman, who now lives independently in a rural area, was brought to the laundry at a very young age. When she meets JP this women says of the laundry "that was a bad place'".

JP revisited the site of the convent in recent years and described the 'eeriness' she felt and the prayer that she said in the chapel. She believes that the state should have taken a greater concern in how these institutions operated: 'maybe, you know, they were providing a service because we were pregnant, or any victim or older people, but the end of the day they should have looked up into what was going on in them places.' JP does not recall seeing inspectors visit the laundry during the time she was a paid employee there.

HT

HT [and his wife DT] approached the researchers to offer testimony on the placement of his mother in a Good Shepherd laundry and its subsequent impact on himself and his siblings who were raised in children's homes, unaware of each other's existence. Initially, HT was sent to a baby home in the Republic of Ireland before being brought back over the border.

Two decades later, when HT was arranging to get married he applied for his birth certificate and began to ask more questions about his mother. He approached one of the nuns in his former children's home, who he recalls telling him "oh you don't need to know anything". HT's view is that the nun was very non-committal about the personal details of his mother. Asked how he felt about this, HT replied 'Very insulted, when I think back ... Well they were a figure of authority you see so like we didn't know to question. Nowadays like ... hindsight's different. We were institutionalised at the time ... when we were in *name of children's home redacted* we didn't have a conversation with the nuns, we were just told what to do by the nuns.' HT reflected that he 'just wanted to find out about my mother' and that the reply - 'you don't need to know' - left him feeling 'put you down and just affected ... your confidence then in asking' again in the future.

During his time in the children's home HT recalled receiving negative comments from the nuns supervising him who made clear their view that his mother 'was a mortal sinner'. HT felt that 'anything bad you done, you were like your mother, or your father, like you know.' His wife (KT) feels that her husband was treated less well than other children in the home 'because his mammy was in the laundry … he was given … really dirty jobs for a wean [child].' One of his jobs was to 'clean out the toilets, for maybe 50 or 60 boys, and they were disgusting. And I was only young … about eight, nine, ten, going up you know.' This role even extended to when the children were taken on camping holidays and HT was tasked to 'empty the septic, the chemical toilets.'

HT learned more about his mother following her death. He received a phone call to inform him of her passing and to provide details of the requiem mass that was to be held at the Good Shepherd convent where his mother had lived for around twenty-five years. At the funeral he reconnected with one of his brothers and also met an aunt and uncle for the first time in his life. Sometime later, her decided to visit his mother's grave and managed to identify 'the communal grave for the Good Shepherds' but could not find his mother's grave. Eventually, he found a grave of a woman who died on the same date and then realised that the memorial had an incorrect surname. He contacted the Good Shepherd Sisters who explained 'we made a mistake, with her name.' HT was directed to address his concerns to the parish priest who was responsible for the graveyard. The Diocese subsequently informed him that the mistake was 'too expensive to change'. HT eventually ensured some alteration was made by involving a solicitor.

Reflecting on his exchange of letters with the Good Shepherd Sisters, HT said 'the letters you see here. I find them very defensive, they didn't want to know really'. As a result of the inadequate levels of communication about his mother, HT has been left to speculate about the details of her life and how she ended up in the laundry: 'the nuns did not want us to get in contact with our mother. I am just assuming now that …. we were not allowed to be adopted, because she would not sign, and that is why she was kept in there, you know - I am not saying that is a fact - and that is why she was kept in there.' He feels certain that his mother did not want to be resident in the laundry and suspects that 'with the passage of time, she had no confidence to go out anywhere. That is why I wrote the letter asking what did they do to help her, establish her, and help her family?' This is a reference to a letter that HT wrote to the Good Shepherd Sisters, which he read out during his interview. Part of it said:

> *What did you do to help her apart from working in your laundry? Did you enable her to find a home and help her to care for her children? Or maybe help her stand alone and help herself. You had her 25 years, and I had none. I was told her existence was none of my business so I did not know …. So you had her in your laundry, for 25 years. When she died, you buried her in a pauper grave, after 25 years of working in your laundry, you could not even put her real name on the head stone.*

The correspondence that he received from the Good Shepherds outlined that their records indicate that his mother 'chose to go in, there was not any order, you know there was no court order, no social services order, she chose to be there and had a happy life.' HT found that difficult to grasp as it 'made me feel she didn't want me, and she was happy to be in there.' However, he is distrustful of this information and unwilling to accept it at face value. Moreover, HT believes it is possible that his mother 'was in the laundry, to pay for their [her children's] keep in *name of children's home redacted*.' To find out more, HT has visited the rural area where his mother lived with her children

before she went into the laundry but finds that people 'clam up' when he begins to ask probing questions: 'she was there with three wains, and she was away, with three wains, and nobody asked questions, it does not make sense.'

HT and his wife reflected on the impact his mother's journey had upon him. KT has point his experience into context by asking him to consider his three grandchildren and their mother (his daughter) suddenly disappearing. HT said 'that put it in context for me … the children disappearing, and the mother disappearing … brought it close to home'. KT added that her husband 'is very quiet you know, and I think it is just his nature. He doesn't want to remember, you know. And I sometimes think he has got a bad memory. You develop a bad memory just so you don't have to remember horrible things.' And on his mother HT sadly concluded 'I can't really give you anything about my mother, other than these certificates here.'

Towards the conclusion of his testimony HT explained what he hoped to learn from the research:

> *The big question is why she was in there so long … what did they do to help her? Was it for the benefit of the nuns to get free work? Because their working in the laundry obviously was a business … I think there's a money making exercise, it was a business they were running, really, I don't think it was a charity…. the only people who seem to be benefitting is the nuns through the labour of the women, rather than helping them to get on their feet, and I don't know how you explain it whether its social services could establish them in the community and get them more confidence and run their own lives.*

HT reflects sadly that his mother was in the laundry from 'the day I was born to the day she died … that's what annoys me, she was a strong independent, you know, she could have been helped, she needed help and they didn't help did they?'

PT

PT is another individual who came forward to offer testimony about a relative who spent many years in a St Mary's home/laundry operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters. In this case it was her aunt, whose existence she only became aware of a few years before her death. Her aunt was born in the years just before Partition in a location close to what became the border. When she became pregnant outside marriage, in PT's words she was like a lot of girls then, kind of thrown to the wolves because she got pregnant … family members have … obviously have rejected her. I mean she … she was out of my life'.

PT learned about her aunt when going through her deceased mother's papers and made contact with when she 'found the address… among my mother's things.' PT has since pieced her aunt's history together and discovered that she was removed from her family home just on the Northern Ireland side of the Irish border to a baby home in the Republic of Ireland. However, PT has not been able to discover what happened to the baby. The grimmest element of rumour and speculation on this matter that PT encountered was that 'the baby was drowned', but when she met her aunt 'she said it wasn't.' When PT looked up the records she found 'the birth of the baby but no death', leading her to speculate that 'it could have been one of those babies that was taken away and sent to America.'

On leaving the mother and baby home in the Republic, PT's aunt was sent to one of the Good Shepherd laundries north of the border and was there for 'probably forty years .... [although] It might not have been that long but it was a long time, because when I met her she was completely and absolutely institutionalised.' PT came to this view during the visits she made to her aunt during the final fifteen years of her life. PT's view that her aunt had been institutionalised was also drawn from the fact that 'she talked to me about working in the laundry, you know, she regarded it as a legitimate employment in spite of the fact that she didn't get any wages, as far as I know ... I don't think any of them were paid.'

During their meetings PT recalls her aunt being on edge: 'If I asked her a question, she would look around like every corner of the room and listen, like ... who's listening? Who's watching? And she never gave me any, like, straightforward [answers].' Her institutionalisation was evidenced by 'lots of tiny little things like, we used to take her out for lunch and so on, and she would be scared to ... to order. She just went "that'll do me, that'll do me." You know? Like, I'm not entitled to a choice, just give me anything, she's developed over the years, believing that she's not deserving of making a choice.' In describing the snippets of information that she gathered in their conversations, it appears that her aunt was an Auxiliary in the convent (see testimony of S1 for detail on this): '"When I was working in the laundry", she'd say ... she said she used to like run messages, going to collect prescriptions and things like that, for other members. So ... she must have been trusted to not runaway.'

PT gained further insight into her aunt's life when she attended her funeral. It was a 'Catholic mass and ... there was a good few people there who would remember her. Now a few people said to me "we remember her delivering the laundry." PT recalled that those making these comments had links to 'hotels and schools probably, there would have been boarding schools'.

Visits to her aunt took place in a residential home in the grounds of the convent where her aunt formerly worked in the laundry. Reflecting on how the switch from the laundry to the residential home impacted her aunt, PT said 'I got the impression that that was an upheaval for her.' PT explained that most of the nuns:

> *had died off, but there was one old nun called Sister A ... supposedly a friend of my aunt but my impression was that she was keeping an eye on her because when I visited her, you know, she was hanging around and even when my aunt was dying, I was in the room with her while she was dying and she was there as well. She never left.*

In PT's view this was because 'she was afraid of what she would say, maybe even in her last dying moments.' This nun lived in the convent, not the residential home and PT said 'I've two conclusions: either she hung around there all the time or [only]... when I'm visiting'.

As well as visiting herself, PT introduced her aunt to other family members and invited her to a family wedding: 'she absolutely loved that. She's so ... according to other people there she referred to us then as her family.' Her aunt's reaction to PT finding her was to be 'absolutely delighted that she'd found family again and almost straight away she made me ... she put me down as her next of kin.' This meant that from that point PT took 'decisions about like any medical had been done they phoned me and, like get flu injections and all of that, I would give permission.' However, PT was concerned that 'when she died I wasn't allowed to see her will,' by the nuns. PT explained that

this is when she came to see 'how much under their control she had been. She was controlled in life and they tried to control her in her death again.' PT believes that her aunt had named the Good Shepherds in the will. She did ask Sister A if she could have access to it but was told "you need to go through a solicitor for that."

Following her aunt's death Sister A gave PT 'the name of an undertaker' as 'I didn't know any undertakers in *location redacted*. So I organised her funeral.' When speaking to the undertaker she was told "the nuns usually do this for the women, organise the burials." PT concluded from this that 'most of them died without having family contact' in the final years of their lives. In discussing the burial location PT explained to Sister A that her aunt's expressed desire was 'to be buried with her mother'. However, she recalls that Sister A replied "No. She's being buried with the rest of the women." This involved her interment in a section of a local cemetery involving 'a graveyard with little crosses but no names.'

There are number of other issues that leave PT upset. She 'was annoyed' that when she reconnected with her aunt she was being called by a different name. PT suggested that 'I mean they may as well have given her a number.' She is frustrated that she can't find out more information about her aunt's baby. The holders of the records for the mother and baby home in the Republic have not provided her with the information she desires and the Good Shepherd Sisters have told her 'that's confidential information.' On this matter she feels 'I can respect that in a way but, I mean, she's dead now'. Her unease about this was exacerbated by another issue: 'she had in her room, she had lots of photos, some of which I didn't recognise, and I would say "who's that?" And she said "ach, that's just something somebody gave me." So I never got to identify the photographs, all of them … So when she died and I went to collect her bits and pieces, the photographs had all disappeared.' When PT asked where they were, she was told 'they were probably just thrown out.'

In explaining her decision to offer her testimony, PT told us that 'I was reluctant to approach you because … there's so many gaps in the story.' She was also:

> *kind of ambivalent at the moment because, most of those nuns are dead or dying. I would've liked to have seen them confronted and … and on the other hand, I remind myself where would those women have gone? You know, if they didn't have there to go? But once they were in there, you know they were in their … in their … within their power and they obviously made them feel like that….Even in their death.*

PT felt that the extent of her aunt's institutionalisation meant that if she 'was alive now, and I brought her here to meet you, you would get no further information than you got from me. Probably, you'd get far less. Because she would just say "oh I worked in the laundry and that was ok…it wasn't too bad.' In PT's view she would be 'afraid that she might criticise somebody'.

In considering the fate of her aunt, PT reasoned:

> *I suppose the easy thing is to say society [was responsible]. But, families did disown these women, there's no doubt about it and I think that … that's a common theme. It was an absolute disgrace to be pregnant outside of marriage and the … the fact that … I think the one thing I'd love to know is … men being held somehow responsible. They … they were never named, they were never … you know, very often they were brothers or uncles or neighbours, grandfathers*

of these children....That's why it's so hard to ... to analyse because I have to remind myself, where would she have gone if she didn't have the nuns? And then I say to myself, well because she'd nowhere to go is no excuse for them to treat her like a slave....And then again I blame my mother's family, but I can't blame them in isolation from the society in which they lived at that time.

WB

WB came forward to offer testimony about contact in the past with a number of women who formerly worked in one of the Good Shepherd laundries. WB encountered them in the residential home in which they lived after the closure of the laundry. These women had 'been sent to the nuns when they were pregnant back in the fifties, sixties, seventies' and had then 'gone to work in the laundry' and also in 'the gardens' of the convent. They were 'institutionalised' during their very lengthy stays in the laundry and WB felt this was continued via continuing contact with the nuns who lived close to the residential home. Spending time with the women, WB found that 'they would come forward with their own stories. You didn't ask them, it's not your place.' One or two of the women 'had come from outside of the jurisdiction, they'd come from across the border. They still had, actually, quite strong southern accents as well, despite all their time.'

The organisation responsible for the care home had 'tried to reclaim some aspects of these women's dignity and rights.' The women 'had their names taken off them as well, when they entered the laundry ... So, their identities were stripped.' However, social workers did the research 'to try and recover their original names'. For the women this created 'absolute mayhem; all of a sudden you're allowed to be called by your original first name, which nobody's called you for forty years. So you've got used to the new one. So, there's a sort of pandemonium'. Another intervention by the social workers was in arranging for one of the women to go to classes to learn 'how to read and write. She couldn't read and write. She couldn't count. Not because she, didn't have the ability, she'd never been taught. She was still illiterate in her seventies.' Once she had learned how to read and write, she 'was very proud of herself.'

WB explained that the women were 'all regarded as vulnerable because they have been institutionalised all their lives. Some of them would've had mild learning disabilities' while one other 'actually had pretty severe learning disabilities'. Some were much more capable than others at living with a degree of independence. There were around fifteen in total during the time WB encountered them, which was several years ago. At that point, they aged in range from their late sixties to their early nineties.

WB was raised as a Catholic and understood some of the cultural contexts of the women's lives, observing that:

a lot of them would still be very religious, they'd still see themselves as children of God and, you know, the rules of the church were right and you have to abide by the rules. Now most of them would have been very, there would have been very little rebellion in them, you know?'

Despite this, WB understood that 'they had all tried to escape at one point or other in their early days there, and they'd been either dragged back or come back voluntarily because they'd no money, or their families didn't want them, and they'd nowhere to go, nothing. Nowhere to eat, nowhere to

sleep.' WB believed that most of these escapes occurred 'shortly after they'd had their children.' One woman related how she had run off and 'sat in the telephone box', but 'they sent the priest out, and a couple of nuns, and got her, found her and brought her back.' WB pointed out that it was hard for them because they had 'no money and [did not] know what legal situation they were in.' Moreover, none of them were from the local area and this created further difficulties for them if they did decide to abscond from the convent.

Asked why these particular women remained in the care of the nuns once they had their babies whereas others did not, WB offered her view that 'the nuns would've dictated what happened to them more so than the families. It would've been some families wouldn't have taken them back, but don't forget the nuns needed workers in their laundry and their garden.'

As well as discussing attempts to leave the laundry, the women spoke proudly to WB about their work within it 'especially if they were doing any needlework or anything fancy … they'd be very proud.' They went into detail:

> *to describe to you what they did. If they were on ironing and folding, or if they were on stitching, or if they were on boiling, possibly, whatever, and the machinery coming in, the different roles that they had. Or if they were on embroidery or something fancy, or collar work, you know.*

WB framed this within the context of what she believed was high degree of control that the Good Shepherd Sisters had over the women during their time in the laundry and also the afterlife of that paternalistic relationship; with sets of women continuing to live in the same complex and attending the same mass each day. WB even recalled of the women that 'their whole dress code and all would've been very similar to the nuns.' For these reasons, the relationship between these women and the surviving nuns was 'very close'. In WB's opinion:

> *the nuns were obviously in charge. Even later in life … when the nuns came [through the] French doors in the main day room, living room, in the residential unit, you know?'[the women] 'would all sit up and tighten their legs, they would all sit up really straight … almost like you would do when you're a child and a strict teacher walks into the class.*

Asked if there was any affection in the relationship, WB replied; 'In a kind of weird way, like that, what do you call that syndrome people have?' By which WB confirmed that Stockholm syndrome was meant.

In some cases, the women's children traced them and made visits to the residential home. WB recalled one woman saying of her son: "he's the reason why I'm here, that's my sin". WB understand that these views 'didn't start when they went to the nuns. That was already ingrained very deeply … they already would have been very faithful members of the Catholic Church.' WB noted 'the circumstances under which they would have got pregnant, quite often they would have had absolutely no control over'; a reference to cases of rape and incest that made accusations of sinfulness even more inappropriate.

Not surprisingly perhaps, the women were happier to talk about their laundry work than about their children. In fact, 'a lot of them actually dreaded their children coming to see them.' This was due to the 'sinfulness' that the child represented and 'also because they hadn't raised them.' WB explained 'can you imagine having, I don't know if you've got any children, I've got a child, I can't imagine what

it'd be like to … not get to raise your own child through no choice of your own …. And then meet them later in life, it'd be a total stranger.'

WB had a conversation with one of the women who kept herself informed by reading the *Irish News* every day and wondered aloud about how welfare state money had been spent in her case. She noted that her daily newspaper was 'the only thing' purchased especially on her behalf. This elderly lady wondered about the money: 'where did it all go? Did it all go into the roof over their head and the food they ate?' In this context, WB understood that one of the Sisters visited the local post office each week to 'sort out all their monies'. WB is, however, aware that the Good Shepherd Sisters have bought 'them all graves. They've all got somewhere to be buried.'

This was a factor that tied them further to the Good Shepherd Sisters when the St Mary's home closed, although the women had few, if any other options, but to move into the residential home on the convent site. WB explained the dynamics of this:

> *By that stage, when you think about it, say you're twenty years of age, you're pregnant, big shame on the family, massive. You're sent to the nuns, you're there, you're under their control. You're already a practising Catholic, you believe in the wrath of God and all the rules of the Church, and then you're sent to work in the laundry for your sins, and you're let know that, and then you do that all your life, and then the laundry is closed. The machines come in – they would talk about that, the change when the machines came in – and then they're old and they're more or less retired. And they're in this unit that they've lived in all their lives, what, where on earth, where do you go from there?*

By the time their care was handed on to the organisation managing the residential unit, 'there was nowhere for them to go. Their families are dead, there's nobody left. It's too long ago, it's too late. You can't, you can't fix that.'

WB observed that 'if you live all your life in an institution, you've no access to a kettle, never made, cooking a meal or any of that, then you would not have those skills to cope with life on the outside.' There were 'no independent living skills under the nuns.' From her conversations with the women, WB concluded that the extent of control over them during their years in the St Mary's home was such that they 'weren't allowed out. They weren't allowed to look at men. If a man came in to fix the machines they had to turn their, turn their backs and not look, to stare at the wall. They would have had an occasional day out in the summer, maybe.' WB's conversations with the women led to the conclusion that there was a lot of 'humiliation' within the laundry regime: 'it's just control isn't it? Control of people, it's just oppressiveness.' The women were 'robbed of their independence, they've been robbed of their identity, they've been robbed of their children, they've been robbed of their livelihood, their careers, their life choices, everything.'

Asked about the motivation for offering testimony to the research team, WB explained that it was due to an interest raised by observing the various scandals over recent years around issues such as alleged forced adoptions. However, WB also considered 'financial abuse' to be important. In WB's view the women suffered 'complete deprivation of freedom. Not only were they not paid for their work in the laundry, but they weren't paid their benefits due to them, anywhere near the amount.'

WB wants to see the Church admit 'trafficking children' and that 'the women were in slavery and imprisoned. The financial abuse, emotional abuse, every kind of abuse you can imagine that went on,

went on. And the church could have a statement that it was culpable'. Moreover, WB feels that 'the Church needs to be open and honest and, and release all the records before more people are dead, and before those nuns go to their graves.' The children of the Magdalene women are:

> *entitled to know who their parents were, what happened, you know, even to know who one of their parents was, you know, they're entitled to that. And there has to be some kind of compensation or, I don't know, people should go to jail. But, I mean, they're all old, it's all, it's all so late in the day.*

Finally, WB wants to ensure that lessons are learned from the past:

> *to make sure it doesn't happen again. And I can be quite sure it's happening in India and other countries where the Church is on the rise, in the Philippines. You can be quite sure. So this needs to, it needs to not happen again, we need to get to a point where civilisation does not tolerate slavery and that kind of abuse, do you know?*

DL

DL's testimony can be very clearly juxtaposed with that of VV. It offers a different perspective on the themes that VV discussed. Her father's employment brought him into regular contact with one of the Good Shepherd convents during the 1950s and 1960s. The family also lived close to the convent and DL recalls her father telling his children 'not to speak to "the wee girls", as we called them'. These were 'the girls who were put into the convent'. Her father explained 'that the nuns had said that we weren't to talk to the girls because they were "bad girls", as he put it'. It is likely that the 'wee girls' that DL encountered were the younger girls, such as VV, who were housed in the part of the St. Mary's home that housed schoolgirls.

However DL's family also believed that 'a lot of young girls were, were put in the convent to work in the Magdalene laundries because the local priest in their parish had told their mother, or their parents, that the girls were too pretty and they would end up getting pregnant, so it was best to put them into the convent to work in the laundries'. DL explained that, years later, she discussed this with a priest and that 'he concurred with that … it wasn't a surprise to him when I told him, when I, when we discussed this'. Whether or not there was any truth in this belief, the fact that this sort of perspective circulated in the wider community reflects the powerful and influential role of the Catholic priest in these matters.

From DL's family home it was possible to observe who entered and left the Good Shepherd convent. She recalls that the gates were locked at 10 pm. She witnessed police officers 'bring girls in who were found on the streets or wherever, I don't really know'. The police would shine their torchlight at the gatekeeper's bedroom window and he had to get up to let them in.

DL still lives in the area and occasionally encounters women who formerly worked in the laundry and lived in the St. Mary's home. They are now in their seventies or older. One woman is sometimes to be found in a local laundromat helping to fold the dry clothing and DL feels that 'these people were just put out to society and they didn't know anything different, and I don't know the ins and outs of how that all happened. But I certainly know that people who were living in the convent suddenly found themselves out living in society'.

TESTIMONY ON THORNDALE HOUSE, SALVATION ARMY

Thorndale House was located on the Antrim Road, and the archival evidence suggests that the house went through several incarnations over the twentieth century. It seems to have been a mother and baby home, a home for victims of domestic abuse ('The Mayflower' seemed to serve this purpose and was adjacent –was not that also for women who might formerly have had their children taken into care: i.e. it 'trained' them to be 'good' mums?) and a family advice centre amongst others. There are five testimonies from women who spent periods of time in Thorndale House at different times. As discussed in the section on Sources, no former members of Salvation Army staff who worked at Thorndale came forward to participate in the research. Because we have only five testimonies from this institution we have examined them in turn, rather than grouping them.

AB

AB was interviewed in her home in Northern Ireland. She had several photographs of Thorndale in the 1970s and discussed these prior to interview. This provided some insight into the fact that the Mayflower, a home for victims of domestic violence, was adjacent to Thorndale; the women residing in both houses mixed together. AB has a remarkable memory and named all the women in the photographs and gave details of their circumstances. AB's story reflected the truly upsetting side of the testimonies that have been gathered, and followed a similar pattern of familial abuse, neglect, abandonment and lack of support from relatives and friends. She was abused from the age of eight by her stepfather, and decided later that the only way to escape this abuse was to become pregnant.

She described the logic of her decision, at fourteen, to get pregnant to escape abuse that was being denied by both her stepfather and her mother. This element of AB's testimony exhibited one strand of a common factors in these testimonies; the family desire to hide abuse, pregnancy or sex and to refuse to talk about it. Often this is brought up early and appears to reflect a bitterness from the women, who had no outlet, and no support during and after the pregnancy, and in some cases, the highly traumatic process of adoption. In AB's case, she claims that no-one has ever asked her how she felt about her childhood. Instead, she was encouraged never to talk about it. It was concerning to hear about the decision AB made as a young teenager to avoid abuse, and seemed to point to larger failings of social services/family/school to intervene or to recognise what was happening, although as AB herself pointed out, this was reflective of the time. It was also clear that AB had never been given an effective outlet to express herself or talk about what had happened to her.

AB entered Thorndale as a pregnant fifteen-year-old in 197*. Her abuser had been targeting her since the age of eight, and finally on a date in 197*, at the age fourteen, AB called the welfare service at her school and threatened suicide if she wasn't removed from the situation. After a few weeks in a children's home, she was transferred to Thorndale for the duration of her pregnancy. AB's case differs from a number of other cases where the women who came forward to offer testimony spoke about sexual abuse. In this case, two individuals were sentenced for rape and sexual abuse. It split her family, with AB's mother continuing to deny what had happened her daughter.

Despite the circumstances of her pregnancy, AB went into Thorndale determined to keep and love the baby, which she claims was a result of not receiving love from her family. As with so many of the interviewees, she felt that the mother and baby home left her feeling a sense of sinfulness, shame and stigma around being an unmarried mother, both inside and outside of Thorndale:

> *You felt as if you were the lowest of the low and a sinner, the biggest sinner there ever was, because you had this baby out of wedlock.*

What became clear was that AB was dealing with a multitude of issues. She was very young, had come from an abusive family and was unsupported in any of her decisions. Being isolated in Thorndale ensured she wasn't given any time to talk about the assault or the years of abuse, or even given any advice on how to tackle a pregnancy at such a young age. This issue was ongoing:

> *Nobody ever asked me exactly what had happened, how it happened, when it happened, how I felt – or anything like that. No one asked me. And to this day, people that knew what's happened to me has never once said: "How are you feeling? How have you come to terms with it?" Or anything like that. Because, I don't know, because I produce a strong character or whatever, right? They think 'Oh, she's coping' and that's it, they won't bring it up or whatever. So no one has ever asked me. No one has ever cared enough to know exactly how I felt about it or whatever, you know?*

AB discussed the authoritarian and isolated nature of Thorndale. She was expected to stick to a rota of duties with the other residents, including cleaning, cooking, laundry and prayers three times a day. She also remembers being walked to the Citadel on the York Road. During the height of the Troubles this entailed an intimidating walk from the nationalist Antrim Road to a largely loyalist district. AB also describes a culture of shaming that was difficult to define:

> *It was just the, you know, they would bring the religion into and 'Thy shalt not this' and 'Thy shalt not that' – you know? There was all that to it, right? And there was always comments – 'Well, you know, if you'd kept your legs closed you wouldn't have got pregnant'. There's that sort of thing, like, you know, right? …Thorndale was a very regimental place; that I remember. And it all based around prayer and all this, and being, you know, joining the church and all this sort of thing, right?*

As with most women we have spoken during this project, AB had little to no understanding of the nature of pregnancy, labour or birth, and was offered no support or acknowledgement of the reasons why she was there or the circumstances of her pregnancy. As she was significantly underage it was perhaps particularly worrying that she recalls little attention was paid to making sure she was able to give birth without complications or undue stress/anxiety. For instance, by explaining the process of labour or any of the associated complications (such as morning sickness). AB discussed some of these matters with the other pregnant women but recalls little professional medical advice.

As with other testimonies from Thorndale, AB explained that she continued to carry out her chores in Thorndale up until she went into labour, including whilst suffering with labour pains. Thorndale had its own labour ward, located close to the dormitories. This differs from the testimonies of women from the majority of other homes, who were taken to hospital as a matter of course when labour began. When AB went into labour proper she was given Ativan for anxiety and an enema and delivered a baby boy without an epidural, which were more commonplace by the 1980s. She was asked about her experience of labour:

> *Very, very lonely. There was no, there was no support there or nobody to say: "Oh, this is how you do it" or there's nobody to say "I'm sorry"– or "How do you feel?" Nobody asked the question:*

"How do you feel?" You were just ... That didn't matter. Your feelings didn't matter – "You just get on with it" and that's it.

AB also discussed stillborn children, claiming that there was an element of secrecy around it:

*And the thing that got me, too, was, like *A - another pregnant woman in Thorndale *, for instance, her baby, that...And there was another girl called *B - and another pregnant woman *, right? And she gave birth to a stillborn baby and so did A. A's died very, you know, within a week or something? But I don't remember any counselling for them girls – and I don't remember a funeral or anything of where the baby was taken to or anything like that. So, you know, it was just as if: 'Well, it's over and done with now. Get on with your life' and, you know, 'do this, do that'. 'This is it'.*

Asked about baptisms or Christenings or other any other ceremony, AB recalled:

There was no ceremony. There was nothing....I don't remember anything at all.

After the birth of her son, AB was determined to keep the baby and set herself up in a way that would allow her to do that. At sixteen and with no family support this was difficult. Her son was taken from her and placed into temporary care. Thorndale found her a job in a factory. Here she met a man and became fell pregnant again, but unknown to her the man was married and already father to several children. On this occasion AB was sent to a different home, Clogrennane, in Glenarm. AB explained that this home offered a warmer atmosphere and felt well taken care of. Her second child was a girl and because of AB's experience with her stepfather, she didn't want to raise a girl, fearing the same abuse would happen to her daughter. She placed this baby for adoption and has never reunited with her. AB explained her thinking on this:

I knew that the horrors that I went through, right? And the rape and the abuse and, you know? That was it. I couldn't have that for my daughter.'

AB was able to get her son back and was partially reconciled with her siblings and her family. Her mother had separated from the stepfather and AB was allowed to return home. AB's childhood abuse continued to cause problems in her relationship with her mother until the latter's death but, ultimately she is pleased that she did not have her son adopted:

He has got, you know, a terrific life now? He's got...that's it. But there was always that, you know, that I'd ruined her life – not my life was ruined. I'd ruined my mother's life by being pregnant at such a young age and whatever...

When asked to reflect on her experience at Thorndale, AB explained that there was so little support or chance for discussion that the repercussions have stayed with her.

It was a very, very difficult time, and I tend to put all the things that's, like, from my childhood – it's in a wee box and that's away at the back of the brain somewhere. Thorndale is another place that's away at the back of the brain. So is Glenarm. That's away at another little place, you know, of the pain and the hurt and that? Yeah. And slowly I'm peeling back the layers and trying

to get to be a whole person, like, because I know if I don't it will totally destroy me, right? And I know from the emotional point of view I have it…But also, from the physical point of view I have suffered, because I have been, you know, I wasn't properly developed or anything like that. So as a result of that I have had a lot of health issues because of it…

The physical repercussion include prolapse and a hysterectomy at thirty-five, and AB was also adamant that she had not received adequate counselling or help with the trauma of such drastic reproductive surgery at a young age. The procedure was not elective, rather it was a misdiagnosis of a grumbling appendix.

AB gave a concluding statement about her experience at the end of the interview, in response to the question 'what would further investigation and more publicity [for the mother and baby homes and the women in them] mean to you?':

I think it'd probably help ease some of the hurt and the pain and the…the taboo-ness of what happened. And, like, there's a lot of people has gone through a lot worse than me, probably, you know – and you've probably come across a lot of it already? You know, the history of, you know, the different homes and whatever, right? And a lot of people – some of them – probably didn't come out as strong or as emotionally together, perhaps, as me? Now they would have had, maybe, a harder time coping? I made the conscious decision that I was not going to let hatred rule my life – at a very, very young age – and I would fight against hatred, right? Now I may not have, you know, become a really…famous person for whatever reason, right, but I feel, for myself, I have overcome a lot of battles, right? And I know who I am – if nobody else knows who I am, like, you know? And, like, around here I will go and I will help anybody or whatever if I think they're having problems – because you never know what that person has gone through in their young days.

JM

JM, who was interviewed in her home in England, was brought up in an abusive household. She experienced physical abuse by her father and stepmother and sexual harassment by her grandmother's partner. JM was not sent to school consistently, which she claims was both because she was needed in the family business, and because her parents did not want people to see the unkempt condition she was in. When she was six she suffered an injury to the face which required her to have metal plates put into her head, and the injury remained a mystery for years, but she eventually pieced together that it was a result of a violent blow by her father. When she was twelve she was raped by an eighteen-year-old and went through a 'humiliating' police examination. By the age of thirteen, JM claims that 'I was gone from there … I decided that I would make a life for myself.' She went to stay with her grandmother, who was supportive.

JM found herself pregnant at fifteen, by a man who was later arrested for credit card fraud. She was taken to the RUC, who realised how young she was and took care of her for the evening. JM claims that she was placed in what she described as a borstal rather than a children's home because there were no spaces available (possibly Whiteabbey Training School]. Her father would not support her.

While I was in that borstal I had to clean floors with wire wool, on my hands and knees, while I was pregnant. We did attend classes. The teachers were quite nasty pieces of work and so were the people that ran these places. And the teacher would constantly say "you're going to end up pushing a pram with no future and no nothing". Nobody ever, really, sort of tried to help me with being illiterate or anything like that.

It appears that eventually a move to Thorndale was arranged due to her pregnancy:

You know, I'm a good citizen. And the, one of the women said to me, "Oi you, sit up", and I said "I can't, my back's killing me", and she said to me "you'd think you were carrying a dog instead of a child". And I was really annoyed so I gave her a mouthful. They locked me in a room with a potty and a mattress for two days, okay? So I was confined. Anyway, eventually social services came along and they said they could move me to Thorndale. And they put me in Thorndale and it was, it was really quite traumatic, because I was very young. The other girls were actually older than me, and I was very, very young, very nervous, and I'd sort of end up in a dorm. I mean, I'm just telling you what I can remember, I can't remember everything.

At Thorndale JM experienced a difficult and traumatic labour and birth. JM describes Thorndale in a similar way to AB, claiming that the pregnant women were left alone, and that the Salvation Army 'didn't really have a lot to do with us.' She remembers dormitories and that she was younger than the other women there. JM also recalls the conversations the women had with British Army soldiers, through the windows of the home, as the latter engaged in foot patrols in the Antrim Road area. She claims she was visited multiple times by social services who asked if she wanted her baby adopted, but JM refused. As with AB, she wanted the chance to love and care for the baby:

I refused, I wasn't going to have him adopted. Because I was a child that had never been nurtured, and no love in my life, obviously I wanted, I understand that now, I wanted that little baby so I could have something to love, yeah?

The birth was identified as breeched by a doctor, who recommended she was taken to hospital, but the hospital sent her 'home', telling her that the baby would turn and that 'everything is fine.' She returned to Thorndale and subsequently went into labour:

So, what happened was, I went into labour and I didn't know I was in labour, and I went to the matron and said, "I'm, I'm in pain"… "Don't be so stupid, the baby's head's not even engaged, go away". So a few hours later I come back and said "I'm going to throw myself off the roof I'm in so much pain". She looked at me and she said "get in the car, we need to get the hospital now, that baby's coming breech now". So we got in the car…

Due to a roadblock, JM went into the early stages of delivery in taxi, and the birth was traumatic for her. She was eventually given an episiotomy for the breeched birth, which had not resolved itself. She claims that after the delivery the baby was taken away, and she wasn't allowed to hold him, despite asking to do so. JM was told the baby was not well, and she was sent back to Thorndale. In the interview, JM became visibly upset at this and described not being able to connect with her son following his birth. JM was told that her baby had brain damage and that he needed to be christened as a matter of urgency. She christened him *name redacted*, but she wasn't allowed to attend the ceremony. After five days her baby died, without JM having the opportunity to see him.

> *Anyway, so what happened was, after five days they told me that he was dead and he had to be buried. And I went to the funeral, and it was a little white box, and I tried to open it to hold him, and two social workers physically restrained me from going near the box. They held me back by my arms.*

JM remembers that a vicar was sent to talk to her about the situation, but this was also intimidating, because he took advantage of the situation to pursue an interest in the sexual nature of her experience, rather than offering counselling at such a traumatic time.

> *After that a vicar came to see me, and I sat in a room, I remember it had a big bay window, at Thorndale, and the vicar sat one side of the room and I sat at the other. And he said to me "did you enjoy having sex? What position did you have sex in?" That's all he asked me, just about … he never said to me, you know, anything religious or nothing. He just wanted to know whether, whether I enjoyed the sex and what position I'd had it in.*

JM's sadness and unhappiness related to this dreadful experience was, she recalled, compounded by the fact that her repeated requests for her baby son's grave number were only answered finally three decades later. According to JM:

> *Thorndale said there was no record of me ever being there, and the social worker went back and said "well, clearly that's not true because you buried her child, it's on the death certificate". You know?*

After the birth and death of her child, JM found work and a home with a local family. However social services objected because the family were not approved foster parents. JM left for England and was married for the first time shortly after and had the first of three further children.

JM spent a lot of the interview discussing her life after this experience, and as with so many other women we interviewed, emphasised her achievements and how well she had overcome the trauma of her childhood and her first birth. She emphasised her frustration with social services and that they had not tackled her illiteracy when they took her into care. JM has since addressed this herself and had a successful career. However, she also discussed her failed relationships and her enduring nightmares about a dying baby:

> *So, and I have nightmares to this day, and it's the same recurring dream. And I dream that – and you have to remember that I'm sixty now – that I dream that I wake up and there's, I open a drawer and there's a baby in the drawer. And it's, it's emaciated or it's starving, I've forgotten to look after it. So when people say that you can just get pregnant, lose the baby, and it doesn't affect you, it affects you for the whole of your life. So I don't know what else you want me to tell you really.*

As with the majority of the interviews, JM gave a concluding statement when asked what a further inquiry would mean to her. These remarks underlined the lack of information she feels she received about her son and his death, leaving gaps that have led her to speculate about what happened and doubt what she was told at that time:

Because if it turns out that they took my son, or anything comes of this, I'd like the grave exhumed and I'd like a DNA test to prove that he's my child. That that baby's in there. Because there's always that question mark....I want, yeah, I want to know that that was my baby that I buried, that he is in there, and I want to hold him. So I know it'll be bones in a box, but I want a DNA to prove that's my child, and I want to hold him.

RG

RG was interviewed outside of in a Northern Ireland location. This was a shorter interview than many, lasting about half an hour. RG had her first child in Thorndale and was always intended to keep the baby. She was older, at twenty-one, than most of the women we interviewed about experiences of Thorndale. RG explained that she could have stayed in her parental home during the pregnancy, but that it was common to feel embarrassed about a pregnancy outside of marriage, and for this reason she decided against it and did not have an open conversation with her mother and father:

As I say, I hadn't discussed it with them, so there you go. But I'm sure at the end of the day they would have actually said, you know, you can stay at home, you know, but as I say, I didn't have that conversation.

RG's experience of Thorndale was much more relaxed than those narrated in the other testimonies. She had more family support, more support from her partner, and was older than many of the other residents. All factors that could explain why her testimony was significantly different.

However, as with so many of the other interviews, RG was not encouraged to talk about her personal situation and was unable to talk in detail about the pregnancy with her family or friends. She claims she was not pressured into entering Thorndale and went there voluntarily in 197*. She had no intentions of placing the baby for adoption, and was supported in this decision. When asked about her experience, she was positive:

Good, I have to say good. You know, nothing horrendous, nothing... obviously it's your first time. You don't know what to expect. You don't know what's normal, what's not normal, what... everything was fine as far I was concerned I was treated well. You done your duties, you done, everybody done the same, everyone else done the same and you just got on with it. And there was nothing, no rudeness, no... you weren't made to like... yes, you had your floors and stuff to clean, but that was it. Nothing horrendous, nothing at all, no.

RG agreed that the cleaning work she was expected to perform in Thorndale continued for the entire pregnancy, but felt that it wasn't anything too strenuous.

As with other women, she had little knowledge of pregnancy; what was going to happen, or what the process of labour would be like. She remembered check-ups but nothing like ante-natal classes or similar. When asked about the culture of shame that other women had mentioned, RG felt that this was not the case. Nor was she expected to go to church.

RG kept her baby and eventually married the father and is still with him, which is one notable way in which RG's testimony differs from the others. When she went to stay with her sister after Thorndale and explained to her family that she was getting married, her father told her that she did not have to do this.

She did not have the same experience of birth as some of the other women, but did discuss that she didn't find pregnancy enjoyable in general. RG said that she didn't remember a large amount about Thorndale, but she did summarise her experience as follows:

> *It was all good and straightforward and no pressure and everybody was, you know, pleasant, no rudeness. No nothing, they looked after you well, they obviously the midwife more during the delivery and all, and it was fine and no problems at all. You got … you got all the help like that you needed.*

MN

MN came to the QUB offices for the interview, and was very nervous about speaking with the project team, but was reassured in a pre-interview conversation that ensured that MN was comfortable speaking with us.

MN became pregnant in 196* when she was sixteen years and went to Thorndale where she had a baby in 196*. She claims that her family wanted to hide her away because it was shameful to be pregnant outside of marriage. She was taken to a backstreet abortionist, in a house which she remembers as being dirty, who explained the procedure and gave her advice on aftercare. However MN decided she could not go through with it and was told by her boyfriend's father that she would go to Thorndale. She remembers not knowing how her baby was conceived or even understanding how to get pregnant in general. She only discovered her pregnancy when her mother became concerned because MN began experiencing bouts of fainting.

MN described telephoning her mother from Thorndale and asking if she could keep her baby. However, her mother would not allow it, a decision which MN believes was also influenced by her boyfriend's domineering father. Her memories of Thorndale were very negative, echoing elements of the testimony provided by some of the other women we have spoken to.

> *When we were in there, the regime was fairly horrible now when I think about it. At the time I just accepted whatever because I was a bad girl. I had been very, very bad and I needed to be punished. So I just accepted it. It was punishment and I deserved it and that was that. I had… when we were there and we were pregnant, life was easier for the pregnant mothers than it was for the mothers who had already had their babies. And we were segregated from them. We were kept separate. We were all marched to the Citadel, somewhere about the Antrim Road [note: it was York Road], I'm not sure where, by the staff on a Sunday to church. And we were taken there and marched in. We didn't have a choice whether we went or not, we were just taken. And I think it was to demonstrate how bad we were and how, you know, we needed to look for forgiveness and atone for our sins. I think that was really why we were taken. And it also showed everybody else in the Citadel, you know, as an example. So an example was very much made of us, both before and after our babies were born. And in the most part, we were all very young girls. As I say, before the baby was born the treatment was physically, physically I suppose, all through the… well, no physically before the baby was born the treatment was reasonable. We were very much looked down upon, very much frowned upon and we had, there was, and I'm going to say her name, *name of Salvation Army officer redacted*, she was one of the people who was there.*

And I actually, we had cleaning duties to do, and I had to clean her room. That was part of my job. We had to clean corridors, we had to do that on your hands and knees....Right up to nine months pregnant, right up till our babies were born. That was done. We had, and then there was antenatal, there was nothing to tell you what was going to happen. I hadn't a clue. I got up one night and went to the bathroom because I felt I needed to go to the toilet and my waters burst, broke. And I then called somebody. And there was one nice girl, and I can't remember her name, who was in the Salvation Army and she came and took me to the maternity unit. Because everything was in Thorndale House.

Little was done to help the women understand their pregnancies or labour. MN speculated that the women who had given birth were separated from the others after birth to prevent too much discussion of the experience. She remembers a social worker who was kind to her, and was 'the only person who told me that I wasn't bad.'

MN was given a job in the Thorndale House laundry [note: used for the residents/not a commercial laundry] after giving birth. She described it as 'Victorian.' A week after birth she was washing sheets by hand amongst steam and heat. Eventually she began to bleed heavily and she haemorrhaged and when back to the maternity unity. MN was made to breastfeed her baby with the knowledge that she was not going to be able to keep it, which gave some of the women difficulties with sore breasts. She also remembers tough night-time feeding routines which she claimed were enforced by those who worked there, which exhausted her. Reflecting on herself and the other young mothers, MN explained 'They weren't bad girls, they weren't. You know, they were all lovely girls and we were all treated so nasty by the staff.'

MN described her baby's adoption in detail and was clearly emotional during the recollection:

And then after six weeks my baby was up for adoption. So when my six weeks were up, she, I had to take her, I had to dress her the day that she was going, this was the same day as I was going home then. I had to feed her that morning. I had to dress her. I had to wrap her. We were instructed what clothes to bring for them. I had to wrap her in a shawl. I had to carry her down the front stairs, which we weren't normally allowed to use, into the Colonel's office and I wasn't allowed to see the prospective parents. I had to then hand her over to the Colonel...and then I had to leave the room. And then she took her and give her to her new family. That was the last I saw her. It was extremely difficult to do that. If, if at least they'd had the humility to dress the baby that morning and take her from the nursery it would have been a little bit easier. And this wasn't just me, this was every girl. It was the same, it was the same for everybody. That's what it was.

MN discussed several contextual details that tied in to the trauma of her experience. She revealed that her boyfriend's father 'was not averse to interfering' with her when he could, despite being outwardly a religious man. MN claimed that he would abuse her under the pretence of demonstrating what abuse looked like and had done so to other girls as well. It took her a while to realise that she was groomed.

She also discussed how other women in the home had also been raped/abused, and explained that she saw no difference in the way they were treated. RM did not witness anything that suggested that they were given special support or advice on the crimes committed against them. She recalled the case of one particularly young girl who was pregnant as the result of rape:

We were all treated as if we'd done something wrong and she was, even they seemed to be even…harder on her even though she was so young. And she was, it wasn't through any fault of her own.

MN emphasised how hard it had been to live a 'normal life' in the years that followed, and how hard it had been to tell anyone about her experience. She claimed that she would have been devastated if her brother ever found out, suggesting she still attaches some shame or stigma to her first pregnancy. Asked what she wanted to see as an outcome of this research project and why she decided to contribute, MN replied:

I felt I wanted to let people know that the Salvation Army is not the organisation that it purports to be. That it was, its members then, and I don't know anything about them now, that its members then were not, they were not Christian, they were not caring, they were in no way sympathetic, they were too, with the exception of possibly one girl, they were sadistic and horrible. There were rules and regulations that didn't need to be. And they were just made as a punishment for us. And to be forced to carry your baby and just hand her over and just walk away was a terribly, terribly hard thing. And I tried to, I made her wee clothes and I had embroidered her initials inside her clothes in the hope that, if her name was changed she might at least have her initials. And I still have her other clothes today. That's fifty years ago and I kept them.

CC

CC came forward to offer her testimony after her daughter read one of our appeals for informants. CC's mother spent a period of time in Thorndale House, as a teenager, in the late 1940s after becoming pregnant following a relationship with a married man. His married status was not the only obstacle resolving the situation through a wedding; CC'S mother was Protestant and her baby's father was Catholic. Her baby daughter was adopted and CC's mother left Northern Ireland for a number of years, during which time she married and gave birth to two further children including CC. Tragically, her mother died at an early age in the mid-1950s and CC's information about the pregnancy has been pieced together only after three decades had passed: my grandmother never told me the story, never ever told me the story, I heard it from other relatives… my, my half-sister was never mentioned until right up until just after my grandmother's death.' She discovered that knowledge of this piece of family history was perhaps gender specific:

even my uncle, who would've been younger than my mother, about three years younger than my mother, so me might've been, say about fourteen at the time that my mother went into the home. He never knew anything about it. He never knew about her going into the home. It was all just, obviously, hush hush.

CC has learned that her mother remained within Thorndale until around month six or seven of her pregnancy and thinks that her 'grandmother washed her hands, a bit, of it all'. At this point, a female relative visited and was upset by 'how distressed she was.' Apparently she had been 'up to her elbows in caustic soda' and 'her arms were really red with doing this laundry, in a sweat, her hair was clinging to her face, and she just saw how distressed she was.' CC understand that 'within a matter of days she [the relative] removed my mother and arranged that she go up to *location redacted* and stay with a relative, a relevant of my great aunt'. It was in this relative's house that CC's mother

had her first child. Moreover, the same family adopted the baby, a girl, who was the adopted 'within the family circle': a strategy that was discussed by informants encountered earlier in this report, including Priest 1. The adoptive parents later emigrated to the other side of the globe with their adopted daughter/CC's half-sister. It may be significant, that this wing of CC's family was Catholic because the father of the adopted baby was himself a Catholic.

As she never had the opportunity to discuss these events with her mother CC has been left to speculate about what it was that made her mother distressed and motivated her relative to arrange her departure from Thorndale. The reference to laundry work – her mother's red arms – led her to draw upon images from media coverage in the Republic of work in Magdalene laundries. However, this has left CC with some uncertainty about whether or not the home was Thorndale because it had no commercial laundry. She is reliant on second-hand accounts from a relative who 'knows it was in Belfast, and she knew it was the Salvation Army, and she knew it was the laundry, and that was all I know.' CC's lack of knowledge led her to ask the researcher 'would it have been a specific Salvation Army laundry that she, do you know? That wasn't even in Thorndale, if you know what I mean.' A question that reveals the unease and uncertainty that has been experienced by many others who, in recent years, have learned that their mothers went through the mother and baby homes of the mid-twentieth century. Media revelations about how some of them operated have unsettled individuals like CC, as she is left to wonder how well her mother was supported at a time of great personal difficulty and trauma.

HOPEDENE

IH

IH was placed in Hopedene 197* after her family consulted their Presbyterian minister and family GP about her pregnancy. She recalled how terrifying it was to be confronted by these pillars of authority. She had managed to conceal the pregnancy for six months. Her boyfriend was Catholic, so there was no question of marrying him. IH began her interview with the details of these events:

> *Well when I was seventeen I got pregnant in 197* and didn't tell anybody, and my parents weren't aware I was pregnant until *date redacted*I had kept going to school and hidden it from everybody. So once they found this out of course the first person that they phoned was the Minister, second person they phoned was the GP. That was on a Friday. The following weekend then I was shipped up to Hopedene, in East Belfast in Dundela Avenue. Had to hide in the house for the week that they knew, I wasn't allowed out the door. And then I was smuggled out because it was dark mornings, I was smuggled out before it got light in the morning to be taken to Belfast.*

On arrival the met the 'sort of elderly sort of ladies looking after everybody' and the 'three or four other girls' who were resident at that time. IH was shown to a dormitory and her parents left for home. She recalled that 'once they went... in those days we didn't have mobile phones, so you weren't allowed to phone home. Once you were dropped - your parents could phone the office and get a message to you, but you weren't allowed to actually speak to them on the phone.' An afternoon walk outside Hopedene was permitted 'along with the other girls and things, but I don't know why, but nobody ever thought of going and phoning anybody.' Another thing IH recalled about Hopedene is that women were not allowed to wear trousers.

All her friends at home thought she had left school. She was close to school leaving age and had considered applying for a job in Belfast and leaving home as 'I thought if I had got to Belfast at least I could have hidden away a bit.' In this respect, her decision making process matched a pattern described by some of the social workers who spoke to us about young pregnant women using the city to seek anonymity and distance from family and friends. IH got as far as taking a medical for a job but was turned away when she revealed her condition.

In Hopedene, the young women 'were all told really not to tell anything about ourselves'. IH recalls that the home's staff 'looked after you in the sense that they fed you, you did all their washing, although it wasn't a Magdalene laundry place'. A comment which reflected today's widening awareness of this type of institution. IH explained that 'there was babies there as well who were waiting for adoption, and you did, you looked after the babies, washed all the dirty nappies by hand, this was to give you a sight of what this was all going to be like, and during the night you got up and fed the babies. Even though they weren't your own babies, they were somebody else's babies.'

Two older ladies were in the home all the time and at night time other staff kept an eye on the women. IH does not remember watching TV and has stronger memories of 'knitting wee matinee jackets and things, you were allowed to do that.' She also recalls that 'you had to pray and things, yes they prayed. You know like, somebody there reading the bible with you in the evenings and things, and saying prayers.' There was 'no antenatal care, nobody ever told you anything about giving birth, you just were sent in to do it. There was no explanation of what they were going to do or anything. You know like, it was ... So they really didn't prepare you in any way for it, you know, it was just, quite... really basic.' IH's parents visited Hopedene on 'odd Sunday' during her stay but would not discuss anything related to the baby's future.

On examination, it was discovered that she was to have a breech birth and she was then sent off for a hospital appointment and 'the next day I had to get on the bus and go to the *hospital redacted* on my own. Just sent on your own, seventeen, not even a native of the place'. She made a second visit to the hospital at which point staff 'tried to turn the baby around.' IH became emotional remembering the fact that 'once again, I went to the hospital on my own, nobody there, to say, "Oh, you will be okay", anything.'

This procedure was unsuccessful and IH returned to Hopedene:

> *and continued on with my cleaning, cleaning the stairs, and if the stairs weren't clean enough, you had to go back and clean them again, and vacuuming this and vacuuming that, and they had a big gong that they rang, whenever your meal was ready, and we had to eat in one room and the other people in the home, the people who were allegedly looking after you, ate somewhere else, they didn't eat with us.*

IH felt that she was not too badly treated in Hopedene but explained that there was 'no care, as such. No sort of, head care, you know, no mental care.' There was little sympathy from anyone associated with Hopedene. A religious minister visited to speak to the women but felt IH believed that his view was:

> *we all had obviously done something terribly wrong. We were like, we were bad. You know, there was no "ach well we'll see what we can do to help you, is there anything?" It was this was your punishment for being such a tramp' basically, you know like, I guess. It was the way they looked*

> *at you. And there was one young woman, she was the only one who was a bit more sympathetic, the rest just didn't want to give you any sympathy at all.*

IH explained that she had been prepared for this treatment by her mother who 'had already made it clear that I was really a huge disappointment and filthy and awful. That I was, that I … this was … I wasn't getting anything more than I deserved.'

Getting what she deserved seemed to entail a heavy workload of cleaning duties. Significantly, this was something that one doctor intervened about. This was a doctor at the maternity hospital who IH explained 'wrote me a letter to … so I wouldn't have to do as much housework when I went back to the home.' This was during an antenatal check-up when her blood pressure was high. IH recalled that 'he asked "What do you have to do?"' When she told him about her Hopedene chores, he said '"I'm going to have to write a letter, because you shouldn't be doing all that, even normally." He says "You shouldn't be doing it." He was quite sympathetic.'

IH was another interviewee who demonstrated trauma in the form of memory loss around key moments in her story. In her case, she had forgotten her daughter's exact birthdate until she was reunited with her many years later: 'I knew her birthday was sometime in *month redacted* but I didn't know when. The whole thing had just been wiped. Because just it had been so horrendous at the time.' She had reflected on this phenomenon and concluded that 'it's funny how your memory saves you at times'.

IH had an induced labour and when the girl was born, IH phoned her mother to break the news and to say "I think she looks like my father." However, her mother resisted IH's attempt to test the water (about potentially keeping her baby) and replied "well, it doesn't matter who she looks like". IH recalled 'and that was it. You know, just … that was the end of the story about the baby.' Her mother did see the baby, 'by chance'. She visited IH in the hospital 'but that was the only time she ever saw it. And never asked to see it again'. IH recalled that:

> *people in the hospital, even, in those days were terrible as well, because when I went in to the hospital, they said, "Now we are going to call you Mrs, because it's not right for Miss, anybody Miss to be having a baby. We have wedding rings, we can give you if you want to wear a wedding ring". And that sort of riled me, I said "no, I don't want to wear a wedding ring", because I am not going to sit here and make a liar out of myself, as well, but if anybody had visitors, they pulled the curtains around me.*

This coldness extended to other areas of her treatment, she felt. As she would not be breastfeeding after the birth, IH was given a given a tablet:

> *So that I wouldn't produce any milk. So it just wouldn't happen. Just there just wouldn't be any … Nobody even mentioned that people would be doing that, you know, like it's … But … just take this tablet now, this will make sure you don't …you dry up quickly you know, like and that was it. And … nowadays you would think, oh I might get, get mastitis, I might get all these different things, but nobody even, there was no, nobody ever checked, were you alright, was everything, your bits alright, you know, like, just … They were very … just very cold.*

She soon returned to Hopedene with her daughter and was responsible for her care. The little girl had some health issues related to the breech birth and again IH travelled alone to the hospital for a consultation. IH explained that 'you weren't allowed to get attached, because even during the day, she went down into the nursery and you only got her when it was time to get fed. But you could have had to feed another baby as well. You weren't just feeding your own baby. You had somebody else's.' This was presumably a reference to babies of women who had left the home.

IH encountered the same coldness in how her departure form Hopedene was arranged. She was simply told she was to leave: 'they didn't even say to you, "Go and say cheerio to your baby, now". You were just told you were going to go now.' She remembers 'they gave me my case, I packed my case, and I went out on the bus to York Street Station. I got a train. And the bus man said to me, "what are you looking so glum for?" He says" it will never happen". Some months later she took the return journey to Belfast, with her mother, to 'sign forms in a solicitor's office.' She recalled that 'nobody ever said to me, once, are you sure you want to do this? Is there any other option for you? You know? Could we even foster this child? So no, there was nothing like that.' Her mother told her "well, once you get this signed I will buy you some clothes." LH reflected emotionally: 'as if that ... was the answer... And then it was never mentioned after that. Came home. My father never mentioned it, never said a thing.'

IH remembers that 'when I came home, my mother made me write a letter to them, thanking them for all their help in my situation. That I had to thank them for helping me, because I really obviously had been such a terrible person...I remember having to sit down and write this letter ... and say thank you for all your help ... how, what a ... how supportive it had been and things, which wasn't true at all. Oh, well, they fed me.' In what must have been a turbulent emotional period, IH was aware that he baby 'had reflux and was in and out of hospital, after that, so somebody must have been in touch with my mother to tell her she was in hospital.' She remembers going down to the local phone box, 'to phone the hospital, to see if she was okay.' After that IH 'didn't know if maybe she had died after that. I didn't know, There was no, sort of follow up on it, you know?'

She went back to school with 'my mother making me swear on a bible that I would tell never tell anybody about it.' IH pursued her A-Levels but, still struggling with the emotional turmoil of the pregnancy and adoption, she did badly. Despite this she established herself in a career that she liked. IH's memories are particularly poignant because her sister also got pregnant before marriage, but kept her baby. In this case, her boyfriend was Protestant and the parents arranged a marriage. IH was never able to bring herself to tell her ex-boyfriend about their child. IH explained that her mother was very motivated by 'respectability. And go to Church twice on a Sunday'. This led to continuing secrecy about her pregnancy in the years that followed it. Most of her family did not know and she also did not tell her husband after they met, married and had children together. She became emotional at several points while discussing the many ways in which secrets had impacted upon her relationships.

After the introduction of the Adoption Order (Northern Ireland) 1987, IH's adopted daughter traced her and as IH put it 'I do meet this girl from time to time, and she is lovely. And she is so like me. Oh, it's awful that you can't say to somebody, isn't she lovely? You know? And be proud of her! And she is so nice.' Her daughter did not have the happiest experience with her adoptive parents, causing IH renewed pangs of guilt and mixed feeling and thoughts. However, she observed that 'I don't know how I ever would have coped if I hadn't got her adopted, but as I say I wasn't given the choice, really, it was "You do this, or you don't come home." Nor did anyone ever say to her "You know we could

set you up somewhere." IH mused about what might have happened if 'somebody had said "But we can really help you through this"'. Her pain was obvious at this point, as IH again turned to reflect on the realities that she faced as a fifteen year old girl; 'but I don't know, maybe I wouldn't have been strong enough to go against my parents anyway.' IH felt that she never had the chance to discuss her options 'just in private':

> *Because you never got to be in private. Because you always, like my mother was always sitting by my side. In the hospital there was a social worker, and they put the curtains around, but I remember being too upset nearly to talk to her. Because I did a lot of crying. She just says "are you sure you want to do this?" And I says "Oh yes, I have to do this, I have to do this."*

IH believes that the social worker in the hospital 'probably tried more' to help than others had. IH regrets that no one asked if she wanted to leave a letter for her daughter as a form of 'explanation'. This is particularly in the context of what she knows her daughter has since read in her files and has described as 'horrendous'.

Most of all IH wishes that the pregnancy could have been put out in the open at the time. That way she would not have had to live a lie. For that reason, reflecting on the engaging with the research, IH explained that 'the thought of doing this even, was quite therapeutic to me.'

IH also produced a revealing anecdote that explains the dilemma faced by many young women at the time. After she had given birth and had started her own career she asked her local GP to put her on the contraceptive pill. However, it was a very Catholic practice and she was told "no if you're not getting married within the next month, within the next six weeks, I am not giving you any form of contraception." This was in the late 1970s.

GN

GN came forward to talk about Hopedene, which she referred to as Dundela Avenue. She was nineteen and in a good job when she became pregnant in 197*. Like a lot of other women who offered their testimony, GN explained that she was in denial about her pregnancy for quite some time before she told her mother but 'within three days of me telling her, I came out of my place of employment and she was waiting outside. And she had arranged for me to go to Dundela, to go to Hopedene in Dundela Avenue.' She reflected on the difficulties she faced if she decided to keep her child:

> *I wouldn't have known anything about benefits, the benefits system, social housing or anything like that. So that was it. I was stuck. And there was no maternity leave then, it was just a year or so before maternity leave had been introduced. So I had no job, nowhere to live – I would have had no job, nothing, you know? So, again, a few days after that I was shipped off to Dundela.*

GN's mother took her to Hopedene, having investigated the options. Meanwhile, GN's GP strongly urged her not to use a particular maternity unit in Belfast and she took his advice on this. She did not tell her boyfriend about the baby, because her parents 'did not approve of him.

Hopedene was not very busy when GN resided there: 'the maximum, I think, we had ever at one time was three in the period that I was there. There were very few. But they would come in for very short

periods – days, maybe a week, two weeks. I was there for several, you know, a few months. Months. But a lot of the time I was there by myself.' Her assessment of the staff working there was mixed. One woman, a nurse, 'was a lovely person' and a 'good, kind, genuine Christian. Non-judgemental.' The others were also Christians, 'but they were gossipy, nasty, bitchy. Always reminding me that you were a whore, I'm a slut and you'd overstepped the line.' She explained that their disapproval was communicated via innuendo, such as when one of the pregnant women spoked about a trip she had taken to Portrush, to which the comment was '"Well you girls know all about Portrush, because people like you – there's lots comes down in Portrush isn't there?" So it was always these innuendos.'

Among the other residents that GN recalls being there during her time was a woman in her forties, who she thinks had come via a Magdalene laundry in the Republic of Ireland, and a much younger woman from just outside Belfast.

GN described the visits she had from her mother and grandmother, reasoning that Hopedene was 'sort of like an open prison set up. You weren't allowed out. You were only allowed to leave the premises within – was it about two to four, I think it was? Preferably accompanied. They didn't like you going out by yourself.' Moreover, 'no men were allowed on the premises.' GN felt that 'they were controlling you. That, basically, was it.' At various 'hours of the day you had duties to perform' and, explained GN, 'this is where I can get a bit cross.' She liked to be active, but does not fondly remember being delegated the task of cleaning what was a very large house; which she had to carry out on her own. GN detailed the scale of the task:

> *You had a front room...When you came in through the door there would've been a staircase up. There would've been a room to the left, which would have been about – it was the smallest room – it would have been the size of this, the hall, and my bedroom all in. That would have been the smallest room. You'd have went down the corridor, turned left, and there was a huge, that was a huge room. Massive big sitting room. And that's where we sat and you would've had the TV in there. Then there was another flight of stairs at the back of the house off the kitchen – that would have been people, you know, the...and there would have been accommodation, you know, rooms where would've been, you know, help? There was the back staircase... There were big, big, four big massive bedrooms. I mean, they were huge. One of the bedrooms would be almost – it would be an apartment and a half of a two-bedroom apartment, you know? They were massive. And they were used, there was a couple of those used as dormitories, they were all...And, you know, the beds all lined up? It was so funny, these massive big rooms and all these beds....When I say it's a four-bedroom house, you think four-bedroom house – but this is big, you know? Two staircases and a huge nursery at the back.*

As well as this major cleaning task there was other work: 'with the nursery being so big and so many children there – I had to do their washing as well, you see?' What was frustrating about this element of GN's work was that:

> *this is the bit really gets me – at that time most people had them twin-tub washing machines? They had come into being then. So we had them, obviously, at home. And when I went there, there were two twin-tubs – but they were for use of the staff. We weren't allowed to use those. My facilities for washing were out the back, you know? And there were two, big Belfast sinks, you know, two of those?*

GN was forced to use a scrubbing board in the mid-1970s and she offered a one-word answer on why this was the case: ‘punishment’. Expanding on this, she added ‘it was punishment, in my opinion, to make you think of your sins, you know? Hard labour to atone for your wrongdoing’.

GN believes that the Hopedene staff resented her decision to take her GP’s advice on a maternity unit because it was not the usual one used by Hopedene. They bullied her about this, she feels. On her first visit to the maternity unit a nurse advised her to get a wedding ring to protect herself from the ‘negative attitudes of other women’, so she bought one from a jeweller near Hopedene. On one her health checks she was advised to rest, but when she relayed this to Hopedene staff, GN claims that they ‘pooh-poohed it and I was “such a fusspot” and I was this and “being difficult” blah, blah, blah.’ Soon after her hands and legs became very swollen. Her ‘wedding ring’ became embedded in her finger and GN asks ‘you tell me how a qualified midwife and a nurse and other staff…cannot see that there’s something very wrong here? I knew I was ill. I knew I was ill’. She was around seven months pregnant at this point. On her next visit to the hospital, the midwife saw her and ‘she went straight and got a wheelchair and put me in it. Now they – as soon as I walked in through the door? And they weren’t seeing me all the time? You know? She put me on a wheelchair and then they got me on a trolley, and then I was put in a bed and I didn’t set foot on the floor until after the birth. I was in bed. It was pre-eclampsia, obviously.’

GN had an induced birth, which added to the traumatic nature of her experience. She is very angry about an incident, which she recounted, that occurred in a unit she was moved to to recover after the birth:

> *And this is where I’m really, really, really, really angry – and I’m determined I’m going to find out who this person is, who she is. I suppose you’d have to go through the Health Boards? The matron of *maternity unit redacted*– I want to find out who she is. When I went in…Now, again, I am so, I was so naïve, that you never would have dreamt that people would be, you know, would have behaved like this. But now I know. Now, I had just been there for a few hours and the matron had come up to see me. And I was lying in the bed and she said: “Well, a girl like you, I’m sure, will want to get her figure back as soon possible” you know? Get her figure back as soon as possible. And: “I’ll tell you what to do”. Nowadays if any doctor or nurse told me to do anything that I knew…I’m not doing that if I thought it would…But I was naïve…. …never thought that anybody would – medical person – would go out of their way to do, basically, any harm? So I did. She took the pillow, pillows from the bed, so I was lying flat on my back. She told me to touch my toes [this was just days after giving birth]. So I did that. And she told me to keep going. Now, well, naturally the inevitable happened. All my stitches burst.*

When the doctor next examined GN, he said “You do realise now, Miss *name redacted*, don’t you, you’re never going to enjoy sex again in your life”. And she’s standing behind him like this [indicated a smirking matron]. GN said that ‘the penny dropped’ that for some reason the matron did this deliberately and explained that ‘I see that as assault. That was a huge assault’ and ‘a deliberate punishment’. GN has tried to work out if there is any other logical explanation for what this medical professional advised her to do, but without success. ‘I knew it happened, but I was even doubting myself, as I say, searching for reasons – and I couldn’t find any reason for this at all? Why she would have done this? But the only reason, you know, I have to accept that it was a malevolent, malicious act – that’s all it was. And, you know, whenever they told me I would never enjoy sex again? That was a source of great joy to her by the expression on her face.’

After these traumatic few weeks, GN returned to Hopedene for a week and then went to her grandmother's house to, as she put it 'hide out'. In the meantime her mother was telling neighbours that her daughter had applied to join the RUC and was on a training course. In an example of the lengths family's in these circumstances went to in order to have a convincing cover story, GN was even sent to Enniskillen for a week so that she had knowledge of the town when neighbours asked her about it. The RUC training school was located there. All of this was necessary because her mother had a route mapped out for the baby, as right from the outset she said "I've this arranged and they will take charge of the adoption". This was 'the plan. That was the masterplan and that's why all this, you know, all the subterfuge and the cover stories. I was to have him adopted, because this would have been a disgrace to her, you know?' In fairness to her mother, GN suspects that she feared being left to become the baby's primary carer. She had raised her own large family and had only just returned to paid employment.

On her return home, GN recalls her mother being very cruel. This was demoralising given that she had just given up her baby, who was in foster care at this point. Then she made a big decision:

> *Then this went on for a few weeks and I just was in turmoil. So I went and found out about social housing, benefits, you know, how to get on the housing list etcetera, etcetera. And then I just went and told my mother, I says: "Right, I'm on the housing list. These are my benefits that I can get, and I'm going to get my son back". So she wasn't very pleased. But I did that. He did, they did allow, I brought him back – once he came home into the family, you know, they were all over him? It was all different then? But I did move – that's how I ended up, you know, in social housing. But my mother didn't think the area was too bad because her family, for donkey's years and years, were from that area, you know, when it was a country area?*

In answering our final question about what she hoped might emerge from our research project, GN returned to the matter of most concern for her:

> *Why I would like an enquiry is because that I pointed out all those, those health issues, whereby professionals were supposed to have been caring for me and I was let down badly. I could have died – myself and my son could have died, but by the grace of my faith that I had in my GP, I think I would've been dead. And my son would have been dead. That was Hopedene let me down... again, who was that woman who was matron? In that hospital who did that? And who took great delight whenever the doctor said I would never enjoy sex again? That was a malicious, malevolent, horrendous assault on my person. Physically and psychologically. And I want questions to be asked about that. Also, why I want questions to be asked is I want women in future to be protected from this type of psychological and physical abuse from health – so called – healthcare professionals. They can hold whatever personal beliefs they want, but when they are working with people, they can't judge them or put them into physical or psychological harm's way in the course of their duty. They should not be working in the profession if they cannot do that. It may be hard in some instances. People are human beings. But if they cannot deal with individuals as human beings, and treat them with respect, they should not be there. They are not there to judge anyone. It's none of their goddamn business. Their business is to look after the person to the best of their professional knowledge and ability.*

On Hopedene, her concluding thought was that it was 'the type of place where they thought - the hierarchy within the Church of Ireland - would've thought they were goody-goodies, you know, compared to what the nuns were doing? But psychologically and...

...there was a lot of abuse. Yeah. A lot of abuse.' GN followed this up with a disturbing account of being groped by a visiting clergyman, something which GN maintained the staff witnessed and found amusing. GN explained that he passed this off as a funny incident and a jokey encounter.

YN

YN was resident in Hopedene in 196* at the age of sixteen. She discovered her pregnancy and initially panicked and had what she described as a 'stupid hare-brained notion of just taking off and when I've had the baby I'll just leave it somewhere and, you know, just blind panic I suppose.' However, her mother discovered her news and:

> *Of course...you know, she took over...she took steps to try and get something sorted out. And we went to, and I don't know how she found this information out, how she... I just don't know. From then on she did the thinking, she took over really, I suppose. But I do remember going to a place in, at the side of the City Hall and, I don't [know] whether it was a Church of Ireland church house or what the heck it was. I know it was a Church of Ireland place anyway. And it was a building like this and you went up the stairs and into the interview room and that's where all the arrangements were made.*

YN explained that this interview was with a woman who worked 'with the adoption side of things, so she did, within the Church of Ireland.' YN felt like she was 'handed over, posted along.' This feeling was exacerbated by what happened next. As you had to be in the third trimester of pregnancy to go to Hopedene, YN was provided with temporary accommodation away from her family home:

> *I was sent over to live with a lady who lived in south Belfast. A lady, and she had never been married, she had a lovely big house over there and I mean I remember the address and everything... and I was sent over there to stay with her until such times that I was able to go into Hopedene.*

YN lived with this woman, who was a civil servant, for three months before entering Hopedene. She is not sure if this arrangement involved any financial exchange. Her time in this woman's house was quite pleasant. She passed the time helping type up the newsletter for the local Presbyterian Church, which was a useful activity because YN had just left school at this point.

YN described her arrival at Hopedene in a fashion that mixes flashes of vivid memory that feature alongside the numbed vagueness of a terrified young girl being taken to an unknown space to go through a biological process that she barely understood:

> *I think my dad and my mum brought me over. Somehow the two of them brought me over. And I remember going into the place and it was a great, big, big house, you know, big double-fronted house. And you went up the path and gardens and it was set back off the road. And again, it was in another part of Belfast that I had absolutely no idea where it was. But I remember going and I think my mum must have been with me. But I don't remember the journey over if you know what I mean. But I do remember, you know, they say that I was up in room such-and-such and you had to go up these big stairs and along and then down this other wing and it was a smaller room, there was only one other girl in it and myself. But whenever I had unpacked my stuff, then*

my mummy had to go. And that was it. It was like a washing machine. There was all stuff all going on. It wasn't like 'oh, this is an adventure', like Disney if you know what I mean. It was just… Maybe it was a bit like blind terror or something, I don't know.

Once she had moved to Hopedene, YN had a greater sense of the financial transactions involved as she can recall making trips to the Post Office 'because you got a wee book' for welfare payments. YN does not recall being told an awful lot about labour either by her GP or the Hopedene staff. Asked if she felt upset to be isolated from her friends, as a sixteen year-old girl, she said 'I don't know that I gave an awful lot of thought to it. I just did what I was told because you did what you were told.' YN does not recall her mother visiting her in Hopedene, or her siblings, but her father did visit a couple of time and took her out:

Because I remember it was this time of the year and we went out to where I was actually born, out that direction. And I remember him taking me out there and we went looking for conkers. Holy God! A big lump and you're looking for conkers, you know what I mean.

During YN's stay Hopedene housed 'seven of us at that time. And there was the two members of staff and a lady who come in to do the cooking.' The first element of the daily routine was to get 'washed and ready and down for breakfast'. Thereafter, YN thinks 'that there was a rota system for people to go and help for the breakfast' and then someone had 'help clear up and do dishes and then there was, your washing had to be done, the kitchen had to be cleaned, the dining room had to be cleaned, it had to be polished. Everywhere had to be cleaned every day.' This continued even when she was heavily pregnant. Reflecting on the continual cleaning that went on, YN said 'looking back on it, it was probably a bit like a boot camp….you're a fallen woman.' Although she added that she never heard staff use that type of term. There was a 'hierarchy' in Hopedene that meant 'those who were mothers, they got more comfortable seats and they didn't have the work to do because, you know, they were mothers now. They were kind of elevated.'

Until reaching that 'elevated' position, YN recalled that 'there was no sort of "oh, we'll sit down and watch TV and have a bag of crisps" or anything like that. There wasn't much TV. You were more industrious and you had to do things.' She expounded on the nature of the work duties:

You did, you know. And it was, it wasn't necessarily always cleaning and, you know, polishing the floors. The floors had to be polished every day. And they had these big, big blocks. I had never seen them before, I have never seen them since, but it's a big, heavy, long, oblong-shaped block with a big pole on it. So what you had to do was you had scoop that up and then move it up to that side and it… and it was damn hard. It was hard and because, you know, it did the full length of the, you know, the thing and you had to put the wax polish and all on.

YN was asked if this strenuous labour caused her any complications and replied: 'Well, no. No complications or anything like that. But just you were darn tired, so you were, by the end of the day. But then maybe that was part and parcel of it, you know, this is, maybe they did look on it as being "you need to be punished". I don't know.' The women were not allowed to return to their bedrooms until it was bedtime, even though their pregnancy might have dictated more time to take naps. She did recall some evenings when the pregnant women would play music or have a sing song: 'I mean, some of the nights were quite good, so it was. It was innocent stuff. Or you could knit.'

YN described the Hopedene staff:

> *Miss X 'was kind of, she was the boss. Now she wasn't nasty or anything, but she was aloof, so she was. Miss X was all bouncy, all smiley...And Mrs Z was the lady who used to come in to do the cooking. She was nice, she was nice, so she was. I suppose Miss X could only be described as being cold. And I think Miss Y tried to kind of make up for that.*

Both Miss X and Y were members of a local evangelical church. It is possible that this influenced their thinking about whether Hopedene residents should go to church: 'the ones who were pregnant didn't go to church. But once you'd had your baby you had to go. You had to go to church then. And that I think is to do with the churching of women or something, isn't it? The purification or something after a birth.'

Of her Hopedene experience, YN assessed it as 'not unpleasant, but not, certainly not somewhere you would want to go. But I mean, not cruel or anything like that in the way that you hear about, you know, some people being beaten and all this sort of thing. No, nothing like that. But it sure as hell wasn't homely'. She felt that the staff encouraged the pregnant women to think in terms of they had 'a job to do' and that involved limiting the formation of relationships 'because their babies are going to be adopted, these girls are going to go and that's it, that's the last you'll see of them. So it's a job for those couple of months.'

As was the case in some of the other mother and baby homes, YN recalled that the majority of residents were from outside Belfast. These women learned a little information about childbirth 'I suppose in the antenatal visits, you kind of were told a wee bit about this would happen or that would happen', but she concluded that 'it was bloody terrifying.' Moreover, mothers returning from the maternity ward 'would have talked about how many stitches and all that they had and of course you're going "My God!".

After giving birth, the mothers returned to Hopedene for six weeks, the period required by Northern Ireland law before an adoption consent form could be signed. YN observed that this period was 'to look after the baby and just to make sure everything was alright and for the whole process to go through.' YN gave birth in Malone Place where she was given a side ward 'because we weren't married.' She felt that 'you know, you were really singled out...it is hard to understand why they would segregate you like that, but that's just what they did.' YN felt compelled to speculate that perhaps 'this was part of, you know, the grand plan to humiliate people. I've no idea.' Despite this, she recalled that the hospital staff 'were grand'.

YN also felt isolated when giving birth and remembered that there was no discussion of whether her mother could be with her during labour. Her twelve-hour labour ended with the birth of a son at which point, her emotions were running amok: 'I don't know, I don't know how I felt at that time. Because I think everything was just, you know, as I say, everything was just going round and round. But I suppose I felt, well this is it, it's nearly the end.' YN became tearful at this point of the interview as she then revealed that her mother arrived to say "I've a cot and all ready at home. You can bring him home". At that point, YN could only think I'm going home, I'm going home, I'm keeping him, I'm going home, I'm going home. And now he's a big, getting up six foot. He has my head turned!'

Despite this development, YN did return to Hopedene with her son for a short period. In this context, she revealed that the mothers could only go to their baby in the nursery at feeding time: 'the babies

were fed and that was it. Washed, fed, put down again.' She also recalled another young mother who had to remain for several months because her son required an operation on his feet and was not ready for adoption. YN's return to Hopedene also provided a second opportunity to learn about the hand over process when a baby was adopted:

> *And I think what happened was, you know, whenever the babies ... I never actually saw anybody handing a baby over, because that ... those were the sort of things that well ... there will be such and such will be happening, you will be in the sitting room. It was all ... it would've been all, you know, sort of ... orchestrated in that way. And the baby would've gone in one door and .... That was it. Once your baby was given away that was you ... you kind of nearly left the same time.*

Later in the testimony, it was revealed that YN actually returned home to become the head of household (at only 17) because both her parents had left home. It was a difficult period for YN as she had to take on work and become the family breadwinner while raising her son. Her younger sister also found work and an experienced local child minder was more than useful. In the later parts of her testimony, YN discussed her romantic relationships, how her family life evolved and her success in establishing herself in a professional position. As part of this she reflected on the father of her first son, explaining that he did know about his child:

> *Oh yes he knew, I mean his parents ... his mother and his older brother were all ... all came up to the house as part and parcel of this whole debacle: "What are we going to do here?" Sort of thing, but I mean he stood there like a stuffed dummy, he never ... you know he was about two years ... well he was about two years older than me because he was driving, so he was, but... he did come up. But didn't ... by this stage he was out flying his kite and married somebody ... getting married.*

YN was asked about who or what she held responsible for the secrecy around pregnancy and the shaming of unmarried women that had damaged so many people in the past. She thought it was the produce of the 'culture of the time' and in her own case she speculated about the malign role of her mother's new partner who was 'very religious.' Her mother left the family home to live with this man, in a move that facilitated YN's ability to keep her son and bring him home. However, before that point, YN felt he lay behind her mother's initial actions to dispatch her to Hopedene.

FD

FD was a Hopedene resident in 198*. She was placed there, she explained because 'my family didn't want me back, because I was sixteen years of age. I was a disgrace'. A social worker bought her to Hopedene. Like many of the women who provided testimony, FD explained her shock about her pregnancy and her naivety around sex, observing that 'I think it was a bit of a shock. I'd only had, you know, intercourse once. I didn't understand that I was pregnant and I think I must've been something like six months pregnant before I understood that I was pregnant.' Another feature of her experience that was quite common was the role of the baby's father once the pregnancy was announced to him: 'I did tell him but, you know, we were both children I suppose. Very young. He wasn't interested and that was it, so.'

Telling her family was difficult 'because it was the religious factor came into it as well. I was a Protestant (she became emotional here) and he was a Catholic, so there was a whole big issue

around that. FD's sister 'took pity on me, and she brought me [to her] home much to my father's anger'. He was very religious and conservative and was aghast at his daughter's pregnancy. Her sister also took FD to the local GP. Their mother was ill and incapacitated and not in a position to help. Due to this, FD had been doing a lot of the work in the family home and noted that her first sense of Hopedene was that it 'actually wasn't that traumatic. For the first time I had a lot of independence and I had my own space and I didn't have to make other people's meals or, you know?'

FD gave birth alone in a hospital close to her family home. She was alone and it was 'stressful and painful and yeah…just glad to get it over and done with.' Discussing whether or not she was treated differently because she was not married, she observed that:

> *I just felt different all around in there to be honest. I was young, I was unmarried. I don't think people particularly went out of their way to make me feel like that, but…There was no doubt I felt like that. No there wasn't, you know, people weren't nasty or didn't make any nasty or judgemental comments – not that, you know, it is thirty-odd years ago? It's difficult to have an exact memory, even though I'd say that my memory's pretty good and stuff. But no, I can't remember anyone being particularly judgemental.*

It was after giving birth that she went to Hopedene on the advice of her social worker. FD offered a positive assessment of her social worker who was 'very supportive. She was feisty, she was bubbly and confident and, you know, all those things in terms of making you feel – making a bad situation feel positive.' By that point, her family had made it clear, FD explained, that they 'wanted me to give him up for adoption, and I just said no'. However, she resisted them and described herself: 'I actually was a tough sixteen year old, yeah.

She remembered Hopedene as 'a big, old house. A number of storeys to it, big rooms.' She had her own room and recalled that 'I was about the only person there that was a mother and baby. Other people were pregnant and about to give birth and had been brought up to Belfast to stay out of the way of family home'. She could:

> *vaguely remember that there was two people who ran the place, two older women who were in charge of it. I even remember that they would've had their Board meetings in there as well. So it must've been a voluntary-type organisation. They had a Board of Trustees or something and they would've met in the home. So it was summertime, it was warm, it was a whole new experience for me coming from the countryside up to Belfast. From a small farmhouse to this what I remember as being a big place. I did have my own space; you know I did have other people about as well.*

Overall she found it 'a friendly place' although she thought it unfair that women were going to give up their baby for adoption had to share accommodation with a young woman who was keeping her child: 'I think it was tough on them. And there's me arriving in who had decided to keep my baby come whatever and be made homeless over the head of it? But they didn't resent me in any way, they were very kind and very supportive, and that is the memory that I have. But it wasn't an easy situation, actually, to negotiate for them or for me.'

FD fitted in well to the chore-based regime of Hopedene because she had been running her own family home:

> *Well that, to be honest. I was, you know, I was an exemplar up there because I was, you know, because I had done so much housework at home. I was, you know, things that they needed done were a second nature to me so, you know, I was held up, "Name redacted* can wash her clothes without putting jeans beside whatever and staining clothes" and all the rest of it. You know? "She can do that". So I was held up as a bit of an example of how to be a sort of good, good with housework and good with housekeeping stuff.*

As she had her son to take care of, she was not expected to clean or to cook. She recalls that 'we would've went out maybe a couple of times down to Belfast city centre. And I'd never been to Belfast city centre before and that was, you know, an eye-opener because at that time there was so much security about the place'. She remembers she had around £13 benefits to live on and then there was also child benefit of £20 a week. FD does not recall there being any particularly religious element to life at Hopedene, she was not expected to go to church services but she does remember having to say grace before meals.

FD moved in with her sister again on leaving Hopedene, but the relationship with her father was badly damaged. The pair did not speak for many years. She was then fortunate to secure a three-bedroomed house Housing Executive tenancy. FD eventually went back to education, took A levels and a degree and secured a good occupation. She noted that it was not all plain sailing as 'people were judgemental, of course they were. A bit jealous that I'd got a three-bedroomed house – they wondered how I'd managed that one, but that wasn't me...sometimes it probably annoyed me, most of the times it probably went over the top of my head.' She also recollect that 'I was pretty isolated for the first couple of years, I would think.'

FD decided to offer her testimony because she heard one of the appeals made on Radio Ulster: one that was particularly targeting the experience of Protestant unmarried mothers. Hearing it, she thought 'well, that's me actually. I'm one of those people. And I've had an experience – albeit quite a short one. I don't know what the average experience of these homes are?' Her overall view was that 'I don't think that I have been wronged in any way, so it's not about that. It's just that I thought it would be interesting for the project to hear from something from the background that they were seeking.' FD does not feel that anything needs to change after this research project has reported because 'things have already changed and, you know...I don't know what if you...what is it you might be fit to do? I, you know, it's not about religion because that's...I can't see any difference there. Families are families. It's maybe the role of social services?

She does not, however, downplay the impact of events on her at the time 'Oh of course it was very traumatic at the time. I think it was more traumatic afterwards because the reality set in, as reality does. And you...there was that degree of isolation. You were isolated. Completely and utterly isolated.' Her time in the home represented 'an intervention. I don't know if you could call it positive or negative, or one thing or another? It was a service. It was an intervention...but I wasn't mistreated I must say, or anything like that – or abused like some of the stories coming out, are so horrendous, and I...it didn't happen to me. Or I didn't see it happen to anyone else either while I was there, for that point.'

FX

FX came forward to discuss her mother's experience at Hopedene at the age of twenty-one. The latter went there before giving birth to FX who was then adopted via the Church of Ireland Adoption Society. FX still has the paperwork for this, including a solicitor's bill of £40. This experience can be compared interestingly with many others. It features issues of shame and stigma imposed on unmarried mothers and a desire to conceal a pregnancy. However, it also provides an example of a woman who seemed in a position to act independently of her family. This might have been because of her professional occupation which afforded her that element of independence.

FX explained that her birth mother was from a Protestant family in the Republic of Ireland. She came to Northern Ireland to work in 197* and met FX's birth father and began dating him. She became pregnant after they had been together for several months. FX's birth mother was from 'a God fearing farming family' and she reasoned that as there was 'a lot of stigma at that time...she really didn't feel that it was practical, or best for me or her, for her to keep me. She just couldn't see a way that, that that could happen, and the relationship with my father was unstable.' He told FX's birth mother that that it would affect his job, it would affect his life in a major way too': by which he meant his employers would take a dim view of the situation, although FX is not sure if she believes this or not.

With this situation as the backdrop, FX explains that her birth mother 'wasn't in any way forced to give me up for adoption.' Moreover, 'given the option, she wouldn't have told her parents that she was pregnant, but she was left with no choice because her sister was getting married and she was to be a bridesmaid. So, she had to kind of avoid dress fittings and things like that, and was just left with no choice, that she had to tell her family.' As she was a member of the Church, FX's birth mother 'went to the Church of Ireland Adoption Society, which is in Talbot Street in Belfast' and arranged to stay in Hopedene for several weeks before FX was born. After the birth she went back to Hopedene for three weeks but then had to leave because there was a training course to attend that was related to her professional occupation; although she visited FX twice more before she was adopted.

FX has photographs taken during one of these visits and her birth mother has told her that the 'that the ladies who worked in the home, who I presume looked after me, she always said that they were really lovely and very kind ladies.' On one occasion the visit by her mum took place at the house of one these women and FX believes that 'the lady's intention was that she would just see how nice it was being with me, and we'd have a lovely time, and she would change her mind and decide to keep me at that point.' FX understands that her adoption was delayed because there was a false alarm related to her health. FX was adopted at six months old. Her adoptive parents were unable to conceive a child. In fact, FX's adoptive mother had health issues which her GP underplayed when writing the report for the adoption process. If this hadn't been done her adoptive mother 'wouldn't have been able to adopt me', FX explained. This couple were themselves 'Church of Ireland, so it was suggested to them through the church that they went to the Church of Ireland Adoption Agency. And then they were linked up with Miss *name of social worker redacted*'. It was a closed adoption: 'it was a completely closed adoption, so they knew very little about her [birth mother], and she knew nothing about them [adoptive parents].

Asked whether her grandmother considered taking FX home, she replied that 'I think my birth mother didn't really give anybody a choice. I think I'm a bit like her in that I'll make the decision and then tell people afterwards. You know, I think she didn't want them involved in the decision making process. She had made that decision already. From what I have heard about her mother and father,

I think they would have brought me home. But it would have been difficult because they were old'. There were other family members in the farmhouse also and 'it wouldn't have been an ideal situation.' Moreover they lived in 'a very, very small town, and there would've been a lot of scandal around it.'

FX traced her birth mother when she was nineteen. Her parents did not keep the adoption concealed from her:

> *actually remember being sat down and told I was adopted, but it was always just, it was always just a thing, and my dad in particular would've always made it, you know, that we chose you... He tried to make it all, yeah, he tried to make it all magic. He told me that they went to the mother and baby home, which they never were, and that he chose me out of all the babies because I smiled at him.*

She acknowledged that this was a magical story even though untrue, but has some regrets about being unable to recover parts of her story. For example, the name she is known by apparently was given to her by one of the Hopedene workers. She also wonders about her 'first Christmas, I must have spent my first Christmas there'.

FX asked her mother about her time in Hopedene and was told 'it was obviously a difficult time for her, but that the place was fine.' She also revealed that 'there were other girls there who were in a similar position. So obviously it wasn't a, a great place to be, just because, I don't know whether those other girls were keeping their babies, or whether they were just there for a period of time.' FX does not know how her birth mother passed the time in Hopedene and issues around the daily routine. However, she is clearer on the issue of consent:

> *She said there were people who, who talked to her. I don't know if they were social workers. But there were people that would have talked to her and talked through her options. And at no point, you know, she's very clear, at no point was she forced or did she feel under pressure.*

Her mother also recalled 'a minister who came in from a local church. A young minister who used to come in and play with the babies, and just that he was really nice and, you know, that he would've thrown me up in the air and I'd have laughed, and things like that. So there, there must have been some kind of connection there. Maybe it was the local Church of Ireland, or whatever, that they, minister would have come in.'

FX's knowledge of these events was constrained by her birth mother's limited willingness to discuss them. She explained that:

> *any time I've had a conversation with her it's me that's made the conversation happen. And even the conversation where I, I would, I put her on the spot and asked her about my father. She made it very clear at the end of that conversation that "I'm going to tell you this stuff, and then I don't want to discuss it again". So there's things I can't even go back, you know, that I might want clarified.*

They have established a good relationship with one another and FX's birth mother was a guest at her wedding.

FX explained that her motivation to contact the researchers came from her curiosity to find out more about the home in which she spent her first six months She explained that 'for a few years now, just trying to, you know, my interested had increased, in trying to find out more. And just the realisation of where I, you know, that I spend the first six months of my life in a place that I knew nothing about. But I had googled Hopedene, and just, I just kept hitting a brick wall.' When FX applied for her birth certificate 'They wouldn't just give you the stuff, you had to go to, sort of, a counselling thing to make sure you were okay. And I asked at that point about Hopedene and I was told that the records of when I was there had been destroyed in a fire. I don't know whether they were just telling a naïve nineteen year old that just to get rid…and so, when I was Googling, then I came across your inquiry, and that's where I saw there was, like, a newspaper article saying that you were collecting information.' She felt that 'it's really helpful whenever we get someone who wants to tell us even just a tiny bit about Hopedene, it becomes really useful.'

In terms of having any hopes about what this research can achieve, FX said:

> *I don't know. I guess with these inquiries, you know, I've seen the inquiries into the Magdalene Laundry and all of that kind of thing, and it doesn't seem, from what I can see, that – the year when I was there at least – that, I can't see that there was anything bad or negative, it seemed to be supportive place for people. For me, you know, maybe other people have different experiences, or maybe earlier on in time it might have been like that, so I guess for me it's just my own curiosity, that I would like, you know, I would love to know more about it.*

She agreed that a more open access to records would be an outcome to welcome.

MALONE PLACE

CD

CD gave birth to a daughter, at the age of sixteen, in Malone Place in 194*. She spoke to us at her home in the company of her daughter. CD confided in a school friend that she might be pregnant and together they went to see the doctor. When she came home 'from school, the next day at lunchtime the doctor was there, in the house, in the kitchen, my mother and father. And, anyway, all this questioning went on.' CD recalled that she 'couldn't believe it' that she was pregnant, 'you know, God. I think I must've cried a bucketful'. Her boyfriend's parents suggested the young couple get married; something CD wished had happened. However, CD's father told her "if you do, you'll never see your family again". Her baby's father was only nineteen himself and CD revealed that 'as a matter of fact, the boy worked in Belfast then for a while, and my father got to know where he worked, and he used to stalk him.' Ultimately, he was despatched by his family to North America. CD remembered no one talking to her about the options and assumes that it was her parents who discussed plans for adoption. There was, at one point, the possibility of the baby being adopted within the wider family, but that was not to be: 'my father's sister wanted to take her, and my father wouldn't allow it.'

As in a number of other testimonies, CD's family doctor was a central character in the narrative. She remembers her mother asking him '"what are we going do with her?" His reply was "well it's too late to do anything about it now", which CD believes demonstrates 'maybe he was thinking of having an

abortion.' However, he had another plan. The doctor had a sister, the mother of two children, who was about to have a hysterectomy and CD was sent to her home to work as an unpaid maid in the months before her baby arrived. CD explained that 'I had to cook, wash, and do all the work. In the mornings I had to take a bucket upstairs and empty the pots, the pos, wash them all out. And she was a very particular person, this, if I didn't wash them right I had to do them again.'

At one point during her stay with the doctor's sister, CD was sent to Belfast to see a consultant, which was arranged privately. She thinks this was paid for 'by the boy's parents [her baby's father]'. Her family doctor also 'would've come out of the house periodically into the farm, checked me over, and that was okay. But any visitors come, I always had, I always had to go up to this wee room they had, and it was up a wee narrow staircase, a bit like up into our attic. And I stayed there while the visitors were there.' CD considered that 'I suppose you could say I was an outcast...they probably didn't want me in their company.

CD's work was not over once she left this hideaway and entered Malone Place, once she had been taken there, on the train, by her mother. She recalled a number of the other pregnant women there, one of whom had travelled from England presumably to have her baby in secrecy. As was the case in other mother and baby homes, privacy and secrecy were guarded. Everyone was known only by their Christian name. During her time at Malone Place, CD recalled, 'you had to vacuum all their rooms out and clean, just a general, you did all the cleaning. You never were out.' She recalls only one outing, for ice cream, during the several months she was there. There was no payment for this work and CD remembers 'an auld matron, Miss *name redacted*, she was a bit of a boss'. In the kitchen's CD 'always had a job of peeling potatoes, and it was big bags of potatoes. And I can still see the wee knife you had'. The work was physically tough, especially for a pregnant woman because there were lots of stairs: 'it was a very tall building Malone Place.'

There were religious meetings for the pregnant 'girls', which CD does not think were compulsory but 'you never would've said no. Like, I wouldn't have, you know? But they used to play this hymn, I know, I used to, and it was this, like Come to the garden alone. I remember this as well. And, honest to goodness, it made you cry. You know, these. I don't know why they had meetings, because they depressed you.' One of the nurses preached at these gatherings. CD remembers that 'it was just like a wee hall, you know when you would go to a hall meeting, like a gospel hall? That type of meeting, you know. It wasn't like the church that I was in, you know?'

Reflecting further on Malone Place CD said 'I can honestly say that I never, I never felt lonely, or I never felt anything. I didn't even miss my parents. Isn't that awful?' She recalls that the nurses were 'very good', but on the Matron she commented:

> *no, didn't fancy her much. Because, I tell you what...Now I'm going to tell you this now, the best sisters were the Catholics. The second best were the ones that were, just went now and again. The worst were the ones the ones that would run to the halls and preached. The nastiest...There was one old sister, and she made my life a misery.*

CD explained that this sister was a member of a certain Presbyterian Church.

CD went to a hospital to have her baby and said 'and I can tell you one thing, like, you didn't get anything for having this baby,' meaning she received no pain relief. CD continued:

> *And I was in the bed and under the bed and up the bed and everywhere. Now that's the God's honest truth. And that went on and on and on, and then eventually it must've been ready to come, they took you by the feet and the head and they threw you on this table in this other room. And then you have the baby, and then, at that time you had to go to, you were in bed for about a week or so.*

During the labour process, she was only her own for long periods, seeing 'only the nurses now and again'. Sadly, she concluded that 'it was, I'd probably say the worst experience I ever had in my life.'

After the delivery, CD remembers that her parents then visited. Her mother saw the baby girl but her father did not even enter the room. She was breastfeeding the baby at this point and returned to Malone Place after a week. This involved more work duties, including servicing the private patients that were also there. This went on for the two further months she spent there. Recalling this period, CD said:

> *You'd all the nappies to do, and you had a rota, you had a whole rota. And you had to go down and, you see, with the private patients, I mean, you had to do all theirs as well. So you went down to this big laundry in, on, the basement. And there was big sinks....And you had, of course, all the soiled nappies first of all. And then, that was, you did that for, probably a week or so. And then the next thing, I was on the rota for dying the nappies for the home. Well... the lines were on the roof of the building. You had to climb up and up and up, and then went up a wee ladder out onto the roof, and the clothes lines were all there.*

Asked if this work regime was exhausting, CD reasoned that 'I was young I suppose.' However, she did recall feeling unwell in the days and weeks after delivery and required medical examination by a doctor. CD's days were filled with work tasks and she was not sure how the babies were looked after at this time: 'God only knows who was looking after her, because she must've been really good. Nobody ever seemed to be looking after babies, they seemed to just lie in their cot. Honest to goodness.'

CD was uncertain how long she would remain in Malone Place because this depended on her baby daughter being adopted or not. She was 'was glad I had a wee girl, because*name of other resident redacted* had been in for so long, and her wee boy was a right size then, you know.' Girls were adopted more speedily than baby boys. CD explained what she remembered about the reality of the first stage of her daughter's adoption, which took place in Malone Place. At this stage, there was also no discussion with her or any offer of what would have counted for counselling in the 1940s. the first sign of the imminent event was when CD was told to stop breastfeeding and to bottle feed her baby: 'you used to come in and just set all the bottles on this big table, and you just lifted your bottle, your name was on it, and you fed her, you know.'

CD met the adoptive mother: 'I was in the laundry and somebody said "oh, somebody's coming to look at your baby". Well, the, the funny thing was – strange to say – the girl, I met the girl then, eventually. And she told me a few things. She told me, her father was in the army, she told me that she was in *name of maternity hospital redacted* ... and Mr *name redacted* was the man there,

he was this consultant there. And he told her there was going to be a baby up for adoption in Malone Place.' This was the same consultant that CD was sent to during her pregnancy. CD reasoned that 'he must've been in touch with Malone Place as well, there must've been something between them all.' At this point CD's daughter suggested that 'maybe he was working both ends of the thing.'

CD's suspicions about this element of her baby's adoption deepened several years later when she met a school friend who became pregnant in her early twenties and had arranged an adoption through CD's family doctor. However, she and her mother changed their mind 'when they saw the baby, they said "oh no, we're going to keep her", you see.' At this point 'her Mummy went round to the doctor's house to tell him this, and he near went berserk, into a real temper.' Reflecting on this doctor, CD said 'it seemed funny me going to him and him being in touch with Malone Place. How did I ever get into Malone Place? You know what I mean? That's what I wonder.' CD's family home was some distance from Belfast, although a number of interviews (particularly those with social workers) indicated the anonymity that the big city offered country 'girls'.

Another thing that CD narrated about the adoption was that her daughter was dressed by 'this auld matron' in 'beautiful clothes' that CD had not seen before: 'and I can remember standing, and they dressed her in all these things, and all I was thinking of was, where did those come from? All that grandeur. And then, then her parents, I can't even remember, do you know this? She must've handed them to her, handed her to them, and away they went.' This lapse in memory was very telling, because CD's retention of detail (such as names) was impressive. This failure to recall reflects the impact of trauma in this crucial moment: the taking away of her baby daughter. CD had no opportunity speak to the adoptive parents. She knows that the adoptive mother had asked what CD was like and was told "well she was a wee good girl dressed in her gym dress". This was a reference to the school dress that CD wore throughout her time in Malone Place.

When she left Malone Place, CD explained how she could not go home: 'my mother and father didn't want me back there again.' She returned to the doctor's sister and worked for her again. Once more, without pay. After a short period there, CD found work in Belfast and began an independent life away from her family hometown. Her parents never spoke to her again about the baby and, furthermore, they even changed her Christian name. They even burned her identity card, this was just after the Second World War, and had a new one with her new Christian name on it. This was a turn of events that caused great confusion to her younger brother.

CD then went on to explain her subsequent career and marriage before offering some detail of how her adopted daughter made contact, almost sixty years after. CD 'nearly died'. Her concern was about having to tell those family members about her secret daughter who did not know about it already. Eventually, however, they met up and spent some time together. In the long term, the relationship appears to have faltered and CD (and the other daughter who sat in on the interview) discussed the emotional issues involved in trying to reignite familial bonds after a closed adoption.

Asked what they hoped would emerge from the research, CD and her daughter offered their thoughts. They wondered who operated Malone Place and did they know the young pregnant girls were working their 'for nothing.' The also wanted to know more about who arranged the adoptions. CD explained:

> *this is what, sometimes now I would think about, you know, like. You know, what, I mean, my life really – I mean I just did what everybody said. My life didn't seem to matter at all. Or anything about it. And the whole time that I, when I came home, it was never mentioned, never mentioned...until she came back there [meaning the visit of her adopted daughter at age 60].*

They wondered aloud about the connection between the family doctor and the consultant in Belfast and his private practice.

MOUNT ORIEL

JQ

JQ was the only birth mother who came forward to offer testimony about Mount Oriel.
She was there for approximately ten weeks in 197* when she was fifteen years-old. She explained that what happened to her:

> *was just a big, big no, no, a big scandal, you know, if you were unmarried and pregnant. And, you know, if they couldn't get you married off quickly then it was an absolute disaster. So my mother kind of decided that this would be a good idea to go there. Have the baby, have it adopted and nobody would know.*

Like a lot of those women who spoke to us, she was very naïve about sex and pregnancy: 'I really hadn't a clue because it was only the first time I'd ever done it so it was just a complete...and the guy gave me these tablets afterwards, which I now know were contraceptive tablets...told me to take two afterwards and it would be fine.' The man was a foreign national and JQ speculates that 'he may be genuinely believed this. I don't know. So I took the two tablets and thought it was fine, you know, everything would be okay, you know.'

She was in denial for some time and eventually, terrified of the reaction, left her mother and note and went into her local town centre. Her sister then 'came to meet me and brought me home. And then it was all kind of disaster mode from then on, you know.' She was 'hidden away in the house', until a social worker told her mother about Mount Oriel. JQ 'just was so glad she was kind of helping me if you like, you know what I mean. I thought I would be thrown out and you know, all this sort of thing, so I went along with it. And at fifteen, in those days, you kind of did do what, you know, what you were told almost.' JQ's mum was 'horrified, but she, you know, she was more angry with him.' The man involved was in his mid- to late-twenties and shortly after returned to his home country. He had been on a short-term work assignment in Northern Ireland. JQ's mother, who she described as 'feisty', intended to find him and arrange a marriage.

JQ's preparation for labour including being given 'a couple of books at the hospital. And so I read though them and I had a bit of an idea, I suppose by then, you know, what was going to happen, roughly.' She was 'terrified. I mean I was really, really frightened how, you know, how painful it was going to be and, you know, what was going to happen. But I did know enough to be probably as scared as I should have been. Do you know what I mean?'

The family was not religious and JQ felt that 'my mummy just felt that I would be talked about and, you know, I think she genuinely thought she was protecting me' through the placement in the mother and baby home.

When she arrived at Mount Oriel, there was only JQ 'and two other girls at the time in it.' She recalls being 'just a bit bewildered. I just thought what am I supposed to do here? What's this?' You know. And they were much older girls than me, much older. I think one was 21 and one was like 19.' The daily routine was not particularly intense:

> *It wasn't anything, I mean we didn't have to do big, hard tasks or anything like that. It was just you got up and you kept your own particular bedroom, or part of your bedroom as it became then, clean and you made your bed and you went down and helped with breakfast and you cleared up and washed everything up. And then you'd, you had sort of time to yourself to do whatever before your lunch. And we didn't do a lot because we weren't really allowed out.*

One of the older women was a nurse and JQ remembers thinking 'God, she's ancient and she's a nurse. How did she ever get pregnant?' You know, my 15 year-old self thought that.' She speculated on why this older woman, with a good job, did not plan to keep her baby. The woman was very quiet and JQ 'could never kind of understand what it was about. Yeah, even at 24, you know, that that was quite a stigma.'

JQ believes that she was not allowed to leave Mount Oriel because 'nobody was supposed to see me. You know, and then I was just supposed to arrive home when all this was over and nobody would know any better. So, occasionally we walked up the road a little bit to the garage at night when it was dark or whatever and just hope nobody had seen you.' She did not suggest she was physically prevented from leaving just that 'it was very much just understood really, that's why you were there so, you know, why would you go out if you're going to hide yourself.' JQ described her teenage self as 'quite rebellious but where this was concerned I just felt, you know, I had to do exactly what I was told.'

Time was filled watching TV doing jigsaw puzzles. She cannot remember who was in charge of the home. She stated that 'I don't think it was a church-run thing. I think it was more like a health service-y sort of a thing. I'm pretty sure of that but I'm not 100%'.

There was very little lengthy discussion on the pros and cons of adoption. JQs recalls conversations that simply stated 'this is what will happen. You know, you'll have the baby. You'll leave hospital without a baby. The baby will go to a better home than you could ever have for it…. You know, it would be middle class or, you know, somebody with plenty of money and that was kind of always said.' She reflected that 'in those days you didn't get benefits if you were under, was it seventeen or something?' I can't remember if it was that particular age, but as I say, at fifteen I didn't think well, that's only a couple of years. You know what I mean?' JQ believed that she would have nowhere to live and no money. She notes that no one came 'forward to say "well we could do this" or "we could help you with that"'. Her mum was not offering the option of a home for the baby.

JQ was also in an emotional haze and still only fifteen: 'I just didn't know where I was, I didn't want to believe it.' Pregnant women coming and going from the home, around eight in total, added to this air of bewildering circumstances. This was abetted by the fact that women 'just disappeared in the

night': a reference to the fact that once they went to the maternity ward they did not return with their baby…you went to have the baby and then the baby was adopted more or less, well it was fostered from the hospital.'

There was no opportunity to meet the adoptive parents: 'you wouldn't have been allowed to hear any of that. That was very, very secret. Where the baby went was completely… and actually in the long run, the baby was only about twenty, fifteen minutes' walk away from where I went to live a couple of months later.' JQ has now met her daughter and they have a relationship and meet up occasionally.

Like a number of birth mothers JQ reported some unpleasant treatment in the hospital that she put down to being an unmarried mother. This is what she narrated:

> *Most of the doctors at the *hospital name redacted* actually weren't very pleasant. They weren't very nice, they weren't very understanding…. And you had internals in those days. Every time you went to the hospital you got internally examined and, as I say, I'd only done it once and I was completely, you know… How it ever happened. I honestly, even now, I don't know. I honestly don't know because I actually didn't and I don't know. I honestly, I really don't know.*

She was asked how often she had internal examinations:

> *Oh my goodness! I think, well by the time I was seven months I think I was going maybe every two weeks and then every week. So, yeah, a lot. And I remember it being very painful, you know, and…But then, that was the normal. That was quite normal. They did that all the time. I remember one particular one, you know, I was saying "oh please", you know, "stop, that's so sore". And he just said something like "oh, it wasn't too sore nine months ago". Something really horrible and really, I just felt so small and so, I could really have hit him if I've had any fight left in me, you know….It was awful, I mean that was probably the worst, coming up to the labour, that was the worst thing ever. I used to dread going to the hospital.*

JQ felt that this treatment and the hurtful put down of the doctor were 'your punishment for doing this dreadful thing.'

Her labour was induced and she remembers it as a rushed process in comparison to a modern day birthing procedure. Her mum was there, but was not allowed in for the final stages of labour. After her daughter's birth JQ did not get to spend any time with her and recalls 'it was just like this baby's going to be adopted. Yes, yes it is. And then, okay then, you'll not see the baby when it's born, whatever. So when she was born I said "let me have a look at her". And they said "no, it's best if you don't". And they just wrapped her up and took her away.' JQ felt that 'obviously you'd been through all this and you wanted at least to see what the product of it all was, at least, you know? But, again, it was just something you were told: "It's better if you don't, because then you don't form any bond". But as JQ observed 'Of course, the bond's already, you know what I mean, already there.'

She remained in the hospital for seven days during which time 'somebody told me she had jaundice.. so I sneaked down to see her, you know. And I can't remember what the name they put on her was, I can't remember. So I kind of knew which one was her, but I wasn't really supposed to be there, so you know.'

JQ's actions concurred with the testimony of social workers, the midwife and others who all observed birth mothers trying to take an elicit peek at their forbidden baby.

JQ was not offered any psychological support to help her deal with this traumatic turn in her young life. Instead, she explains that 'you were just expected to forget it all and just that was the end of that'. Like other birth mothers who gave up their baby for adoption she was given Epsom salts which 'somehow that scatters your milk or something. I don't know what it done, but I just took it, whatever it was.'

JQ left a letter with the authorities in case her daughter decided to try and make contact, which she did when she reached eighteen. First by letter and then, after a ten year gap, in face-to-face meetings. They now have 'quite a nice wee friendship'. In the course of these developments, JQ learned a lot of things that her 15 year-old self was not in the right place to consider: 'I didn't think oh, she might feel rejected. I didn't, that didn't really until I was much, much older, didn't enter my head.'

Asked what outcomes she would like to see after this research was completed JQ answered:

> *I don't know. I suppose if I had a more traumatic time, you know, you hear about these girls in the laundries and that that were worked so hard and treated so badly. I think they need to have at least apologies and that. I think an awful lot of it was of its time, do you know what I mean? I think a lot of what I was told was, I don't think people were being particularly cruel, I think they just genuinely thought that that was best. The social worker saying "no, don't take your baby home because you're not…"; not that you're not good enough for it, but you know what I mean, sort of you're not good enough for it. They maybe, I think, at the time thought they were doing the right things. So maybe just acknowledgement that really it wasn't right and what happened to them wasn't good.*

She decided to offer her testimony 'Just because I seen the Mount Oriel name. You know, I wasn't going to, as I say I thought it was more for more traumatic things and then I seen the advert. Well we weren't particularly traumatised by, you know, the institution as such. It was more just the general thoughts of the time.'

WORKHOUSES

CO

The long passage of time since the closure of Northern Ireland's workhouses, in 1948, helped ensure a minimal response from individuals with testimony related to them. However CO was interviewed in her home in England, where she offered testimony on her mother's personal story. This narrative emerged when CO learned that her mother was being searched for by an unknown woman because she might 'be her biological mother.' This stimulated CO's curiosity and she began her own searches on her mother's early life. CO discovered that she has a half-sister, who her mother had given birth to five years before her marriage.

This half-sister had been adopted and both her adoptive parents are dead. When CO contacted her half-sister, the latter 'got a shock. And then she got another one when I told her, her mother was still alive – and then she got another one when I told her she had five more children.' The newly connected sisters then took some time, explained CO, 'you know, step-by-step, to get through the process. She didn't have any counselling, I didn't have any counselling – actually didn't need any.' CO wanted to get a DNA test to ensure that they were sisters but this was quite difficult, as it involved taking a sample from her elderly mother who lives in residential care. Eventually, 'the Citizens Advice website helped resolve this matter. CO's half-sister did not know she was adopted until she was in her sixties and meeting her birth mother, in the latter's care home, was a doubly unexpected event.

CO does not know a great deal about how her mum came to give up her first daughter for adoption. She observed that 'if you were pregnant and single that was not a good idea' in the mid-1940s. She does know that her mother gave birth in one of Northern Ireland's workhouses outside Belfast. CO observed that:

> *apart from the fact unmarried mothers were regarded as no better than criminals and prostitutes at the time – and also judged as mentally unstable – there wouldn't have been many places for her to go. She was living in *town redacted* at the time and she did have a sister there, so you'd have hoped that she would have taken her in? But apparently not. But I'm reluctant to judge on that because I don't know what the situation was. And I think that sister had lost a baby herself through an accident, so she may not have been in any fit state of mind.*

CO's mother was nineteen at this point and her father was dead already. A social worker asked CO "Did your mother go back to Ireland to visit her mother?" The answer was yes, leaving the social worker to speculate that the family did not know about the daughter's pregnancy. CO's mother never returned to live in Northern Ireland after migrating at some point after her first baby was born.

CO's mum has dementia and occasionally says "Don't leave me in the poorhouse on my own". She has also made references to 'screaming with the pain' in the workhouse and CO assumes 'that was a reference to childbirth? I'm not sure they gave them painkillers?' She also said "They put me in with the lunatics. I'm not mad". CO speculates that she was put in the 'lunatic ward'. Two other things CO's mother has said are "It nearly destroyed me" and finally, "I didn't want to give it up". A reference, CO assumes, to the baby girl.

Two days after birth, the girl was baptised at the local Catholic chapel. CO travelled to the local court house to view the records related to the adoption and 'could see that my mum had signed away her parental rights the same month that she gave birth, and that a Catholic priest was involved in the process and acted as guardian ad litem for the adoptive parents.' CO notes that they 'were doing it all legally, I suppose. Because often it was done informally I think, wasn't it, the adoption?' It appears to have been the type of third party adoption, usually arranged by GPs, priests, or minister of religion, that are mentioned in a number of other testimonies. There is no record of the underlying reason for the adoption and CO's assessment on this is shrewd: 'I think she probably had no money, or she wouldn't have been in the workhouse if she'd had any money.' She also wonders that, if her mother was in the lunatics ward, agreeing to the adoption helped her leave the workhouse.

Discovering this element of her mother's history made CO 'feel a bit like I didn't know her. And it was very sad, you know, that she'd been through that and been silent about it.' She is unclear whether her father knew these details. CO feels that 'silence plays a big part in all of this…they dumped all

the shame on the women and yet, really, where did it belong?" She asks 'what about the state, the church, the family and the pathetic excuses for men who have taken no responsibility and have never been held to account?'

CO's social worker contact offered the opinion that her mother might have been given financial assistance to head to England. She asked 'are we actually in England because she was judged to be a fallen woman in 1946, you know? It rewrites your own history as well. I often wondered why did my parents not stay in Northern Ireland? They were so Irish, you know, they didn't ever really fit in this culture.' CO referred to a photograph of her parents' wedding and notes 'there's not a single family member…from either side. Her mother wasn't there. She's got three sisters – they weren't there. None of my dad's brothers or sisters were there.' She speculates if this was connected to her mother having left Northern Ireland under a cloud of moral scrutiny.

Explaining why she came forward to offer testimony, CO revealed that she was aware of others who did not have faith in the research project. They had told her that 'the research commissioned by Stormont Department of Health into Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland is a stitch-up. The academics are naïve puppets of an attempted government cover-up. A fair process and fair outcomes for victims have been made impossible by a number of procedural issues'. Those holding this view wanted 'truth, justice, disclosure, redress and apology'. CO remarked that 'I'm just saying that we shouldn't forget that there's a lot of birth mothers outside of this research process that are also seeking justice for the abuse suffered in the Magdalene asylums and other institutions just for being unmarried mothers. So I thought I should just give them a little bit of a voice as well…I mean I didn't want to jeopardise anything for them, but I did point out that my mum is ninety-two – I want her to have a voice before she dies. And they were okay about that.'

CO returned to this point towards the conclusion of her testimony, offering her perspective that 'women have been silenced a lot and I wanted my mum to have a voice…I did actually think long and hard about it because somebody pointed out to me that she did choose not to, not to tell any of us and…but then I just thought choice doesn't really come into it.' She speculated on how her mother might have felt about this hidden aspect of her life. CO's social worker contact in Northern Ireland claimed that 'the women who kept their faith fared much better than those who lost their faith' when dealing with the legacy of mother and baby homes and adoption. CO agreed that it 'provides a certain stability, I suppose, and continuity and if you've still got all the guilt and shame it's a way of, you know, you can carry on going to communion and confession and going through the rituals. It contains everything doesn't it?' However, CO speculates about the loss that her mother experienced if, as she assumes, she left Ireland because of the pregnancy and adoption:

> *What's happened to her will have left deep scars without a doubt, you know? I think she lost her home and the country she loved. She, you know, had to endure years of silence due to shame. And the grief at losing her child must be on-going? I mean I can't imagine what that would be like to lose your baby. Yeah. I think it's very sad that she wasn't able to tell any of her children either. And it must have affected her relationship with the rest of her children. I can't really begin to speculate about what that meant.*

For her mother, and others like her, CO said:

> *I really hope that this will lead to a public inquiry. Because as far as I'm concerned, there is no doubt that there is...this needs to be answered – but Stormont, you know, shame on them as well, you know? How long have they been out now?' Two years. And in those two years how many more women have died? With nothing resolved?*

Her mother is in her early nineties and 'there won't be any compensation for her'. Moreover, 'an apology would mean nothing for her, you know?' CO is uncertain about she, herself, wants from a public inquiry. She explained that 'you know, in my fantasy world I came across this statue of a pregnant woman and it was put outside one of the Magdalene laundries. I can't remember where it was. I remember I put it on my Facebook page, and I thought 'I'd love to do that' and put it in the townland, I think it's called, where she was born. That would be what I'd like to do.'

MISCELLANEOUS

AM

AM approached the research team because she felt her mother's experience was of relevance to the investigation of adoption and Magdalene laundries that were factors in the research. For a decade of her life, AM's mother was under the care of nuns in locations in the Republic of Ireland and in Northern Ireland. AM told the researcher that her mother was forced to give up a son for adoption. She never recovered emotionally, suffering from severe mental health problems, anger and violent behaviour her whole life. The underlying factor behind this behaviour was revealed to AM when her mother was in her eighties. It was a very emotional reveal, as the guilt and fear around her experience had stayed with her for her whole life. AM claims that her mother was completely institutionalised, having lived with the nuns for ten years, moving with one nun from the Republic to Northern Ireland around ten years after the adoption of her son. She was married six months after making this cross-border move, in what AM suggests was a marriage encouraged by the nuns. The nuns did not tell AM about her adopted brother until she was fifty years old, at which point they provided her with details of an American religious organisation through which AM could try and trace him.

As was the case with a number of the birth mothers interviewed for this project, AM discovered that it was difficult to piece together every aspect of her mother's personal history because she was traumatised: 'I have very limited information because Mummy was so emotional when ... when she was trying to tell me her experience, but she didn't have detail because she couldn't talk hardly, she was so ... you know ... she was so distraught. And she was eighty-four years old so I wasn't.... wanting to drag information out of her'. However, AM was able to find more pieces of the jigsaw from the nun with whom her mother travelled to Northern Ireland. She confirmed that they met in the mother and baby home in the Republic.

AM's mother eventually told her that she became pregnant as a young domestic servant working in an Irish city in the 1940s and that the father had died in a workplace accident before she realised

she was expecting. In a panic AM's mother 'wrote to my grandmother and my grandmother being extremely Irish Catholic as they were then and in that day and age, my grandmother said "don't ever come back to this house again, you've brought shame on the family and I don't want you. You're not an example for your sisters."' AM's mother never returned to the family farm. Subsequently, she found herself in what sounds like one of the Irish Free State's mother and baby homes, where young mothers stayed and worked, to pay the costs of their child's upkeep, while adoptive parents were sought. At the age of two her son was adopted by a family in the USA. As far as AM is aware, her mother remained institutionalised for up to 8 years with the same order of nuns. As well as mother and baby homes this order operated Magdalene laundries and AM wonders if she was moved into one. Certainly, AM felt 'she was so totally institutionalised that made it even more difficult for her when she actually had to come out into the world'.

When AM's mother came north with the nun from the Republic of Ireland, she was placed in a hostel that was operated by the same religion order. Not long after this, she was encouraged to get married but at this point she ran away: 'my mummy was thirty-eight by this time, when she was marrying Daddy. She said "I jumped on the train and I went back to the place where I was...And the nuns took me and they brought me back.... And they told me I was lucky to be getting married at my age. And I just had to ... and your Daddy was a good man and I would just have to get married and that was it." AM believes this episode occurred at a time when the hostel was schedule for closure and they 'were kind of getting rid of the girls in the hostel...and they were obviously trying to marry the girls off.' AM explained that her mother and father had met at church and that as a member of a confraternity the nuns saw him as a good Catholic and 'pushed the marriage.' Her mother never told her husband about her adopted son due to 'shame' and AM is clear in her mind that the burial of this secret contributed to her mother's poor mental health. In a memorable turn of phrase, she explained her mother's violent mood swings: 'it's just like she wanted the last shout at the world and [to] hurt everybody because she was hurting so badly. You know?' Equally vivid was AM's depiction of her mother's emotional release when she finally revealed the existence of her adopted son:

> *It was a huge release for her. I saw her actually ... I ... I never forgot it before I ... when I settled her down and everything when she stopped crying, she talked to me and then I was getting ready to go and for the first time I actually looked at her and she smiled and I could see that smile in her ... in her eyes. For the first time, it was like this huge ... even her face looked different. It was like this whole weight was lifted off her wee shoulders, you know? I said to her "Mummy, you know, you could've told me" ... and she said "I couldn't, I couldn't, I couldn't ... I could never come out with it. I could ... I just couldn't ... I had been told for so long that you weren't to discuss it, that it ... I just could never come out with it to anybody".*

AM provided an example of the extent to which the shaming of young Catholic women and the policing of their sexuality was still a factor, in her teenage years, in the 1960s:

> *When I was young there was a girl out of my school, she's a couple of years older than me, who disappeared. She a beautiful girl, she was about sixteen, I was about fourteen at the time and we were all like "anybody seen *name redacted*?" And, there was one time I was talking to my friends, I was going home, we were all going home and we met my friend's brother and his friends on the street and she was talking to him...The next day a nun [from her school] was sent to my house... and she went "sit down. Now listen to me, you were seen... talking to boys...And then I went "Sister it was Mary's brother." And they ... we were standing across from the convent*

*and she said "well listen to me. Do you know what happens to you when you start running with boys? Do you want to be like *the girl named above* She's just gone!" And I thought, oh my goodness, I still didn't think pregnant…And I thought, you disappear if you talk to boys?' In concluding this anecdote, AM explained that the girl 'obviously got pregnant and they must've whipped her off to an unmarried mother's home somewhere. And she was never seen in *location redacted* again and then shortly afterwards her family moved.' AM remembers that this episode left her 'petrified'.*

AM explained that one reason she offered her testimony was in the hope that it might help her achieve the full truth about her mother's experiences; 'I would just love to know the exact story because you see, what worries me sometimes too is that Mummy wouldn't always tell the truth. Because she wasn't well. And sometimes she wouldn't tell you a whole story or she would put her own bent on things…and I would just like to know the complete like, story of it.' AM's uncertainty revolves in a large part around why the nuns chose to bring her mother to Northern Ireland and she is uncertain if they wanted to ensure that, given her sometimes volatile behaviour, she was not left on her own in the Republic to begin asking questions about her son's adoption. However, AM also wonders if the nun who brought her to Northern Ireland was judged the best person qualified to try and cope with her mum's difficult behaviour?

LT

LT came to Queen's one Saturday morning to discuss his family history. He approached the researchers because he hoped to find out more about two relatives. The first was an aunt 'who was in the mother and baby home in the Magdalene, sorry, ah yes the Magdalene mother and baby home in Leeson Street in Dublin. This was Dublin's one Protestant Magdalene laundry, although from 1919 it operated only as a mother and baby home. LT explained that he has 'a desire to find out whatever happened to her and the family'. He also is uncertain about his mother's history. He knows that she was fostered by his 'granny', but 'her birth mother I've no idea who she is and no idea of that sort of background [his mother's birth mother]'.

On the subject of his aunt, LT knows that 'at that time when, when she was put into the mother and baby home she had her son' and he 'stayed in the Magdalene laundry for about six months' and mother and son 'were released on the same day, they got out the same day, and no one that I'm aware of has heard of my Aunt *name redacted* since that day. We've heard rumours, that she went back to work as a maid, wherever that was I'm not sure, but that's as far as we've got with it, and that's really all I can say about the matter, that's really all I know.' This took placed in 193*. LT has been able to find some records, including her aunt's birth certificate as well as those related to the birth of her son. He also knows that his aunt's father (who would be LT's grandfather) was a gamekeeper and he paid for the adoption proceedings for his daughter's son. The family were members of the Church of Ireland.

At the age of six months the baby son was 'eventually adopted. He was taken…to a family who lived on the Shankill Road and then, I think it was three years, either two and half years or three years later, they legally adopted him. My father, my grandfather is on a record as paying for the court proceedings. But as far as knowing anything more really, I really don't know. I know that he lived in the Shankill then he moved to England to live.' LT is also aware, through family members, that when this child became a man he tried to find details on his mother's whereabouts but was

unsuccessful. LT is not certain whether this adoption was arranged in Northern Ireland or in what was then the Irish Free State.

LT was aware of this story when he was growing up and observed that 'it must have had a great effect on my father, you know, must of because he often talked about it, talked about it, often talked about his sister *name redacted* and whatever happened to her.' The missing aunt was a twin who LT knows 'lived a happy enough life' in the Republic of Ireland.

LT discussed family rumours that the missing aunt moved north and lived in Belfast, close to her son. LT's own father moved north after the death of his father in the 1940s. LT explained that his father was an alcoholic and prone to violence when drunk. He considered that the issue of his sister and her son was a factor in creating these problems.

The other part of LT's testimony, concerning his own mother, was then explained:

> *Well that other side would be my mother's side. My mother was born a Roman Catholic and she was fostered to a Protestant family….She was, as far as I know, she was only a young baby when she was fostered but she remembers growing up as a young, as a young child… And I don't know where she was before that and I don't think she would have known. But she remembers being fostered to the family anyway, the *name redacted* family and she remembers the priest. The reason she knew that she was a Catholic was that the conditions, I know the conditions of the fostering, was that she had to see the priest. I think it was maybe once a week or a fortnight or a month, whatever it was but you had to see that priest, you had to be in the house, the priest had to come out to visit her every so often. And that was partly, part of the conditions of the fostering. Now that was strange because, because …the foster parents, they were Protestant.*

LT was confused about how this arrangement was reached and recalled that:

> *my mother was always curious too about who her real birth parents were, and she loved her, loved her foster parents and they were very, very good to her…But my mother was always, my mother was always, what way can I say it? Pining for her natural parents I believe, especially her mother….I have no doubt about it, I have no doubt that it left a mark on my mum, she's always pined, I know she's always … my mother and I were very, very, very, close, I would have been her blue eyed boy to be honest, you know she died there ten years ago and, she confided a lot in me and I know that she pined for her natural parents. Especially her mother. And you always felt that around her … she always … you always felt that about her … you know that she didn't have … you knew that she pines … just the way she felt … she had no real parents … her … she knew she had her foster parents who loved her, but it's different isn't it? You know, she pined, she pined for that and hurt, and I think it did damage her. It definitely did.*

LT described the 'wild goose chase for me' that took place when he tried to trace his mother's family. His major problem was that he was not sure about his mother's family name or birthplace. CT described one of these wild goose chases and it is representative of a lot of blind avenues that countless individuals have taken in trying to trace their family origins'

> *there was rumours of a name, I forget what the name was, got it in the house somewhere, there was a name given, but it was just a rumour, so I went to some place, where did I go to, some place in Belfast I went to, I forget where it was because it was a few years ago. I went and found*

> *out if I can get some sort of help, and they were able to get me a birth certificate off the name that I was given, so that was it really. It was name I was given and place, and it wasn't too far from here, it was just off University Street somewhere, and when I went to knock on the door where she would originally have lived. And the family that was there was very, very nice and they brought me in and had a cup of tea and everything and talked and they couldn't really help me really, you know you know, and I left kind of quite discouraged. Even if they could have helped me that might have been the wrong name anyway, maybe it was just a name from somebody that lived in that street, because the person did live in that street many, many years ago but that could have been completely the wrong name given to me. So, I went home saying, you know something? I can't do anymore about this here because I could spend time and I could spend years focusing on this one name and it could be the wrong person, do you know what I mean Sean? I didn't have any solid information to work on, just rumours.*

At the end of his testimony, LT reflected on a number of issues. He discussed the stigma that led to his aunt's experience:

> *It's been a stigma in them days having a child out of wedlock, and say she worked, I know she worked as a maid. I don't know where it was that she worked but she worked as a maid and obviously she's pregnant by somebody, you know? And it'd be interesting actually to find out who that was really, you know? But obviously it's been a stigma and, and to be honest with you, I suppose … I have to understand when and the time it was it's not like today, you know. And to be honest, I'm quite angry, personally, I'm quite angry at my grandfather. Quite angry that he, that he put her through that. That he, you know, felt that much shame that he put his own daughter into a Magdalene home rather than suffer the shame probably. That's the way it seems to me, yeah I don't know the … obviously don't know the whole situation, but that's what it seems like to me. Like he was ashamed, and that it just wasn't the done thing them days, having children out of wedlock and, and he was very ashamed of her which I know, and I'm quite ashamed of him for that. And, but I suppose we're living in different days now you know and that's really just it. And then my grandmother, where she's concerned, I think she probably just went, sort of went with what my grandfather had said, you know? She was quite a, I remember my grandmother being quite a feeble sort of woman, quite weak, you know emotionally and physically, you know? But I do feel that sort of shame that my grandfather would do that really and that's really all I can say about that, you know?*

LT was happy learn that the research was going on and hoped that it:

> *will help a lot of people feel even closure and find some peace in their lives. Because you know if people like myself, just use myself for an example, I couldn't possibly, me personally, I wouldn't know, I haven't got the education. I wouldn't know how to, how to go down this line, to try and find out what you are doing. I personally, I couldn't do it. And financially I couldn't do it, and I think there's a lot of people in that situation who have been, who have been to be honest with you, Sean, waiting for something like this, or maybe not waiting's the right word, maybe hoping for something like this to come along and to get some sort of help and support to find, right maybe things about, you know, their relatives and find out about these, these homes and what happened maybe just to have closure and to get that help and support and just to know that there's people helping you….So, I think it's great that they have this support mechanism here and the professionals and yourselves obviously, so I'm more than pleased that you are doing this and really appreciative.*

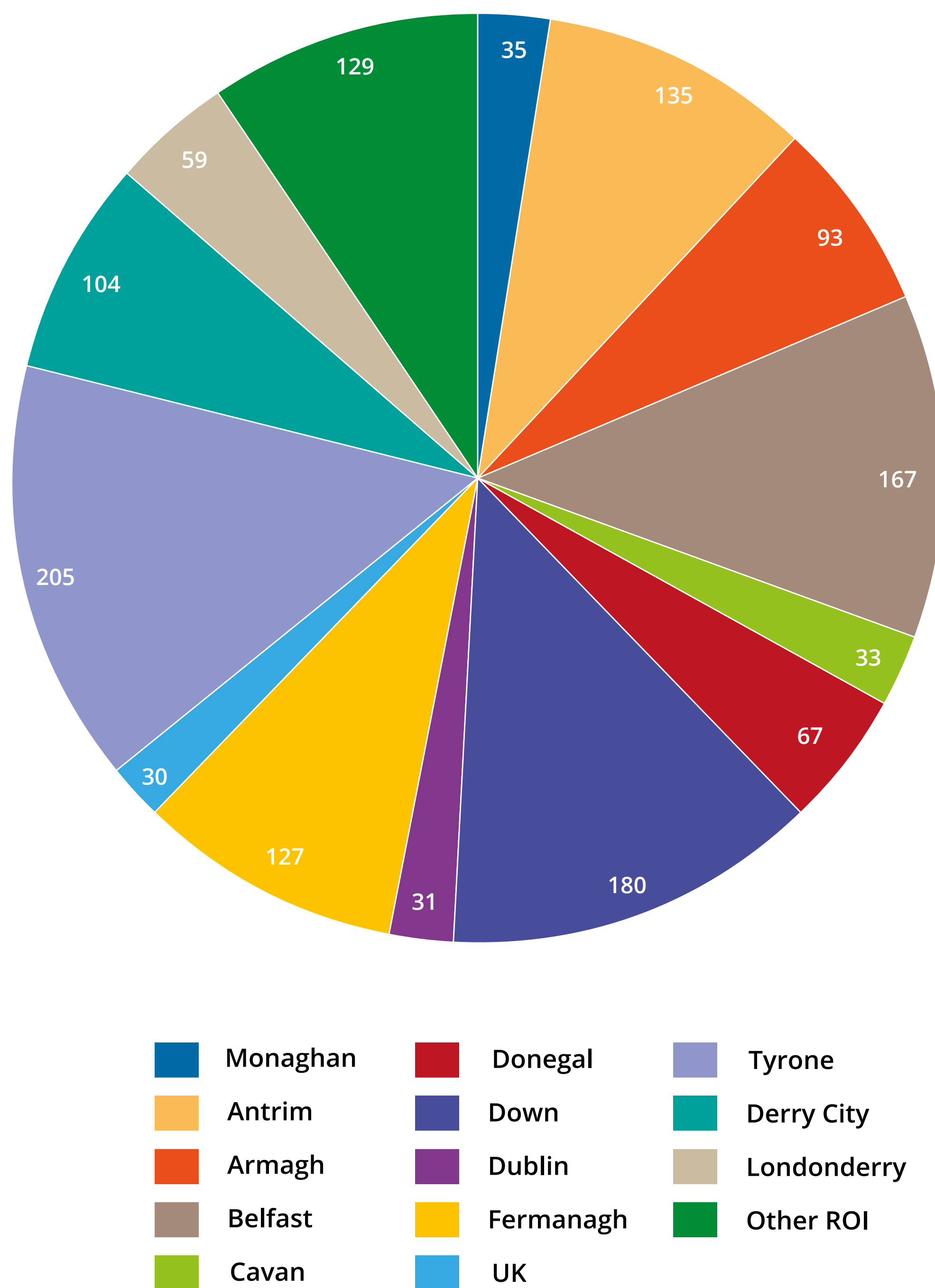
Like many of those who came forward, LT also observed that ‘it’s good, it’s really, really good to speak, just to like you know it’s really good to speak to someone like yourself who’s dealing with this who knows what you’re talking about and it’s good to get this off my chest, to be able to speak about it, especially to somebody who can maybe do something about it.’

QB

QB came to Queen’s to read a pre-prepared statement on her family’s search for their grandmother who they believe spent time in a number of the institutions the research team was investigating. The statement related to the difficulties QB and her family had faced in tracing records of their grandmother’s life in both Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland.

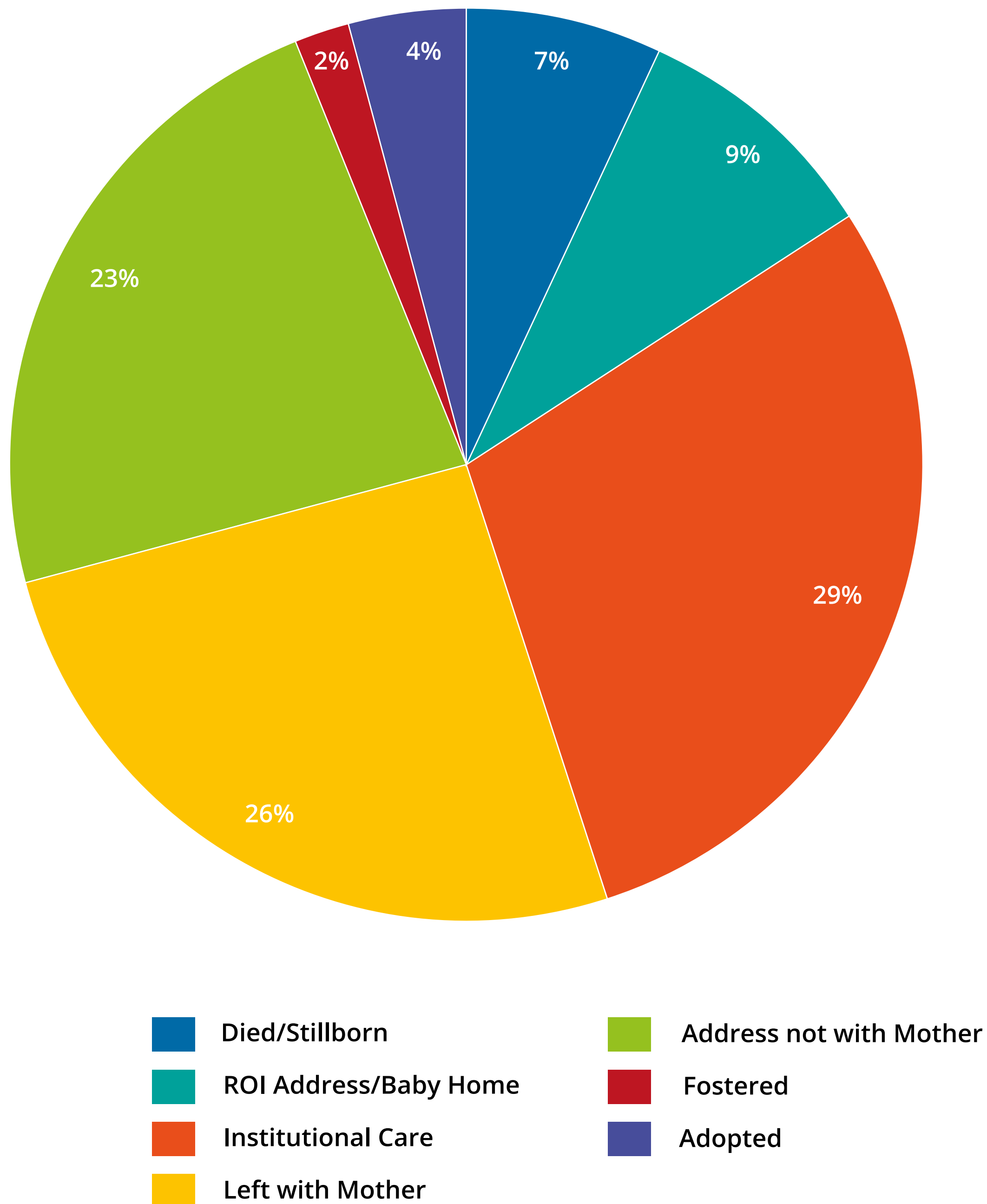
Appendix: A

Figure 1. Mater Dei Residents by County/City (where stated)



Source: Mater Dei Registers

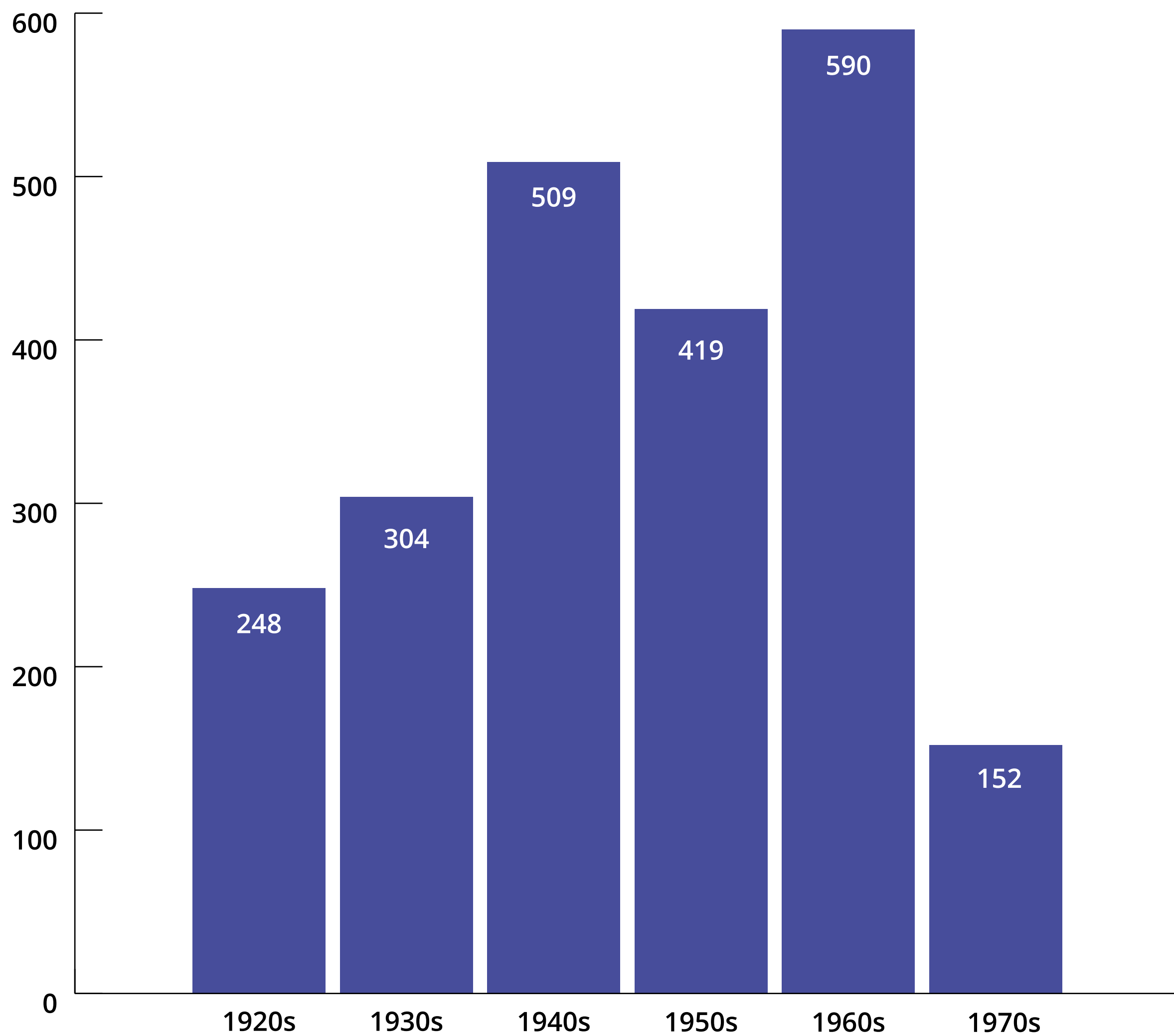
Figure 2. Exit Pathways for Babies from Mater Dei (where stated)



Source: Mater Dei Registers

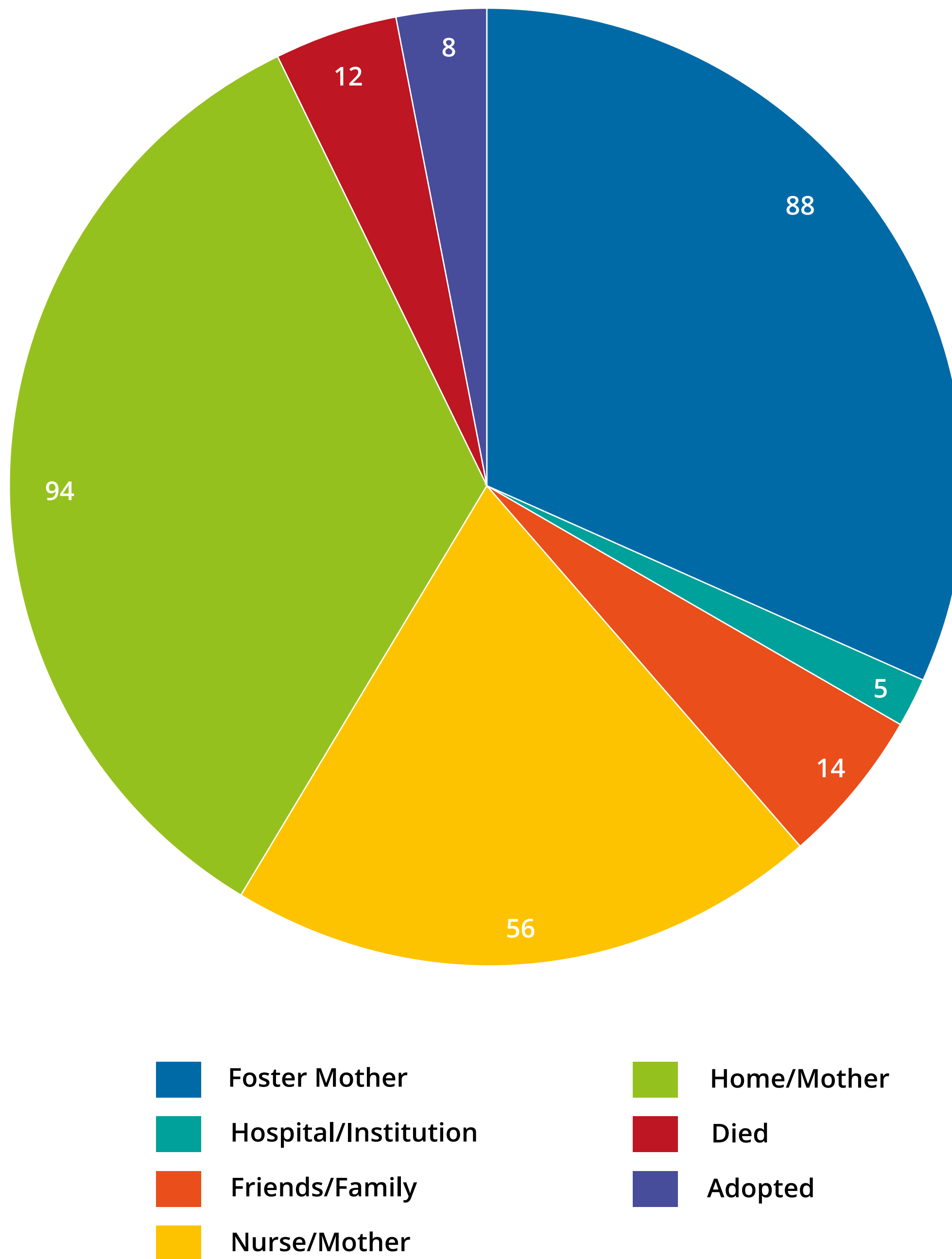
Appendix: B

Figure 1. Thorndale Baby Home Admissions



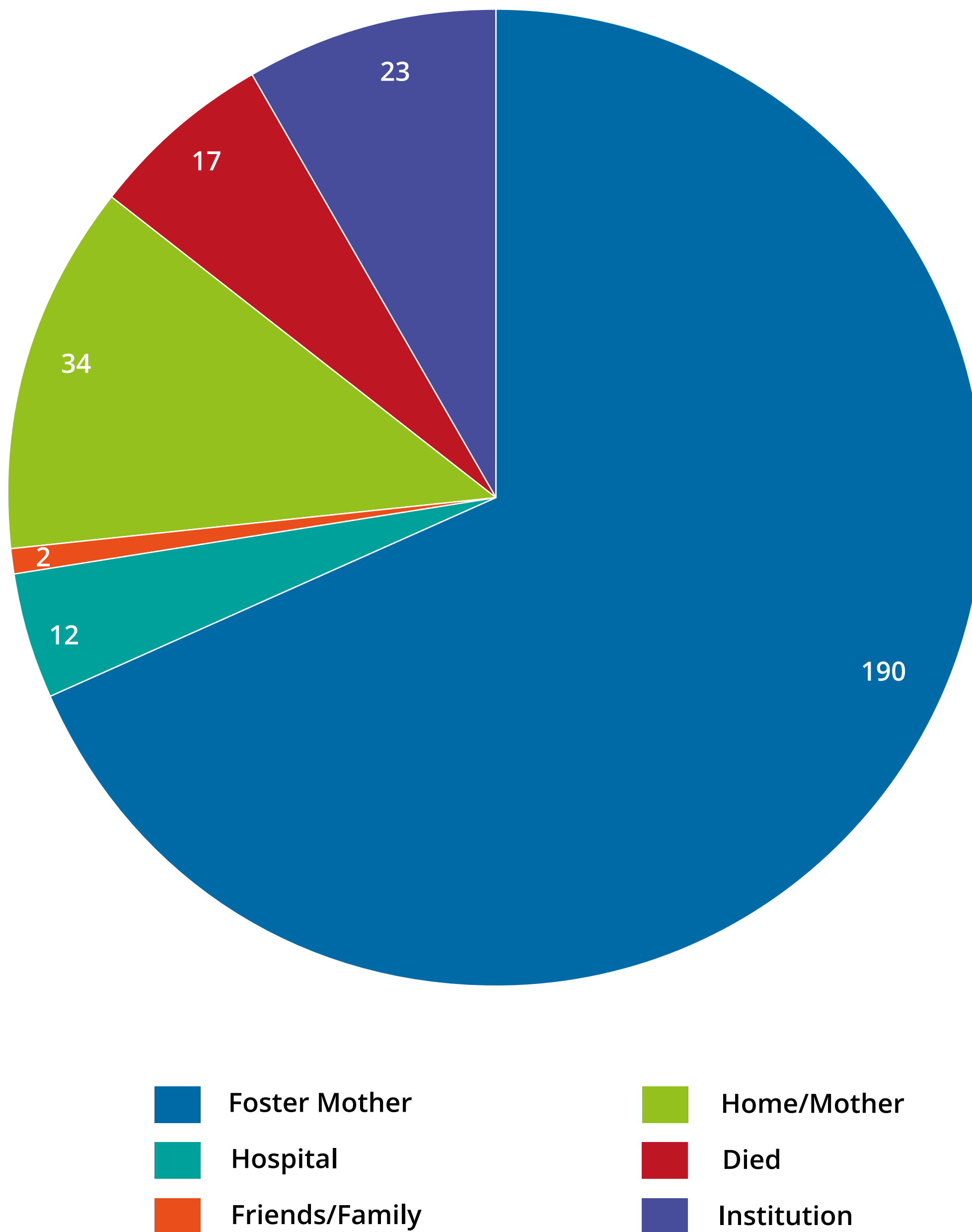
Source: Thorndale registers.

Figure 2. Exit Pathways for Babies Leaving Thorndale, April 1929 - March1937



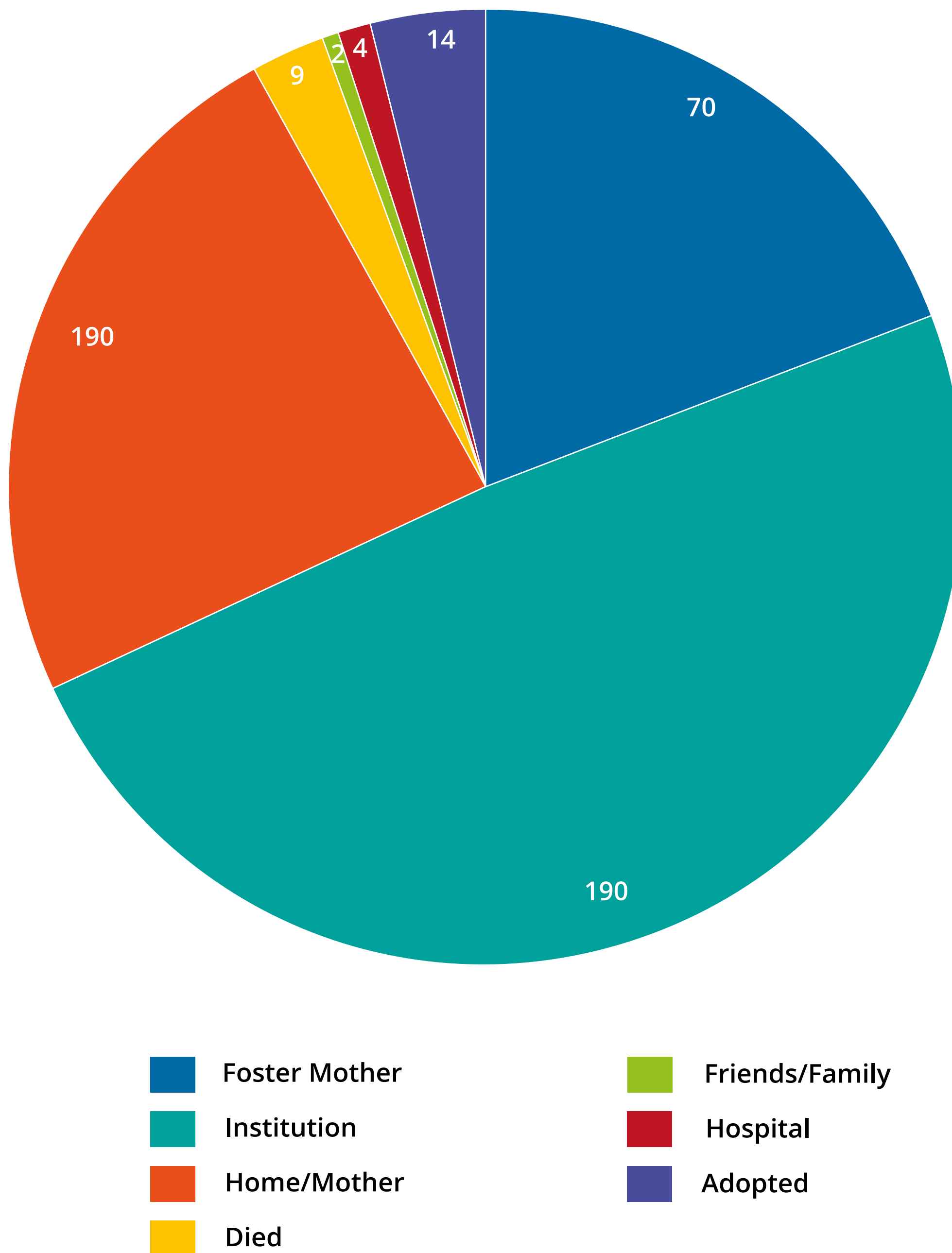
Source: Thorndale Registers

Figure 3. Exit Pathways for Babies Leaving Thorndale, 1941 - 1949



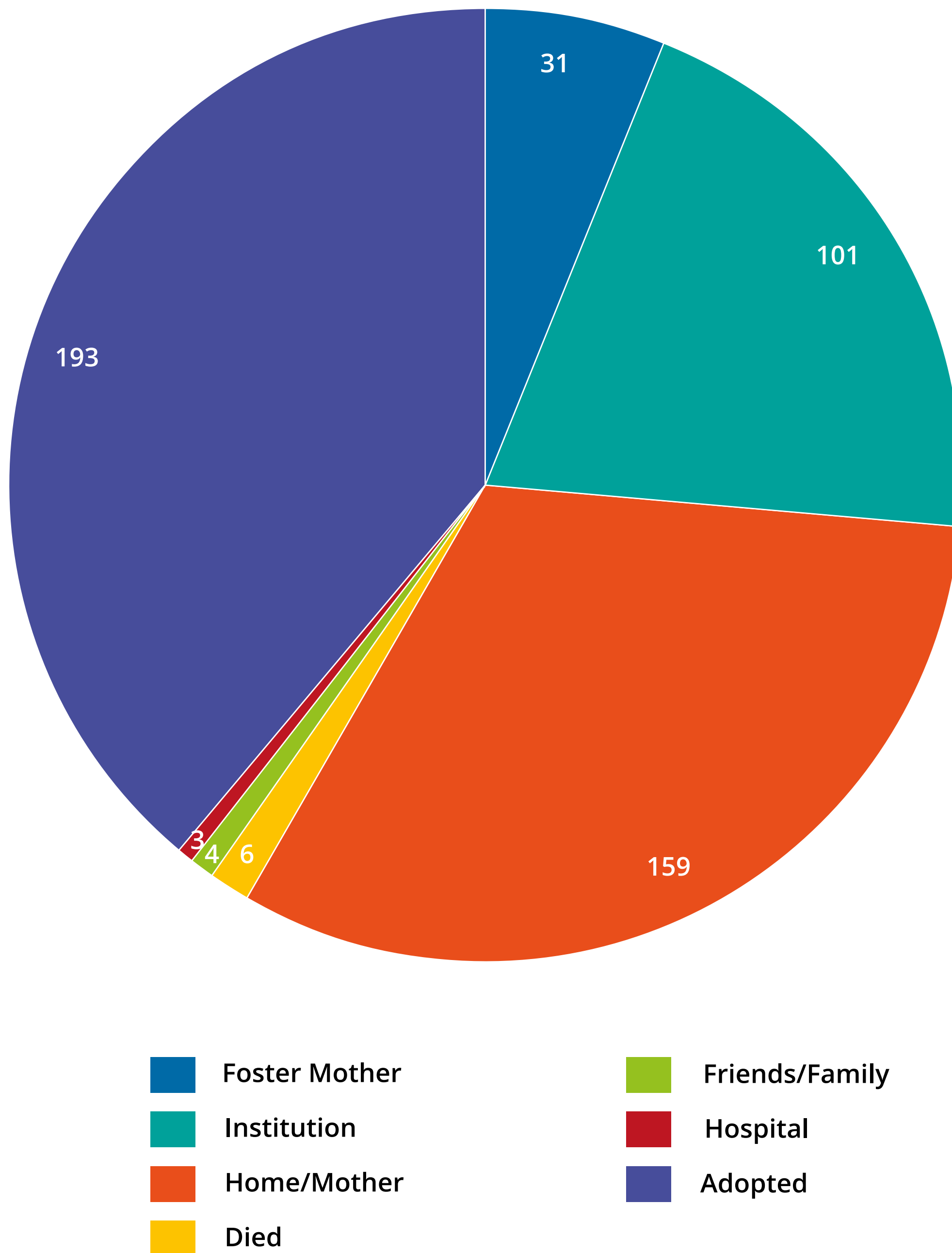
Source: Thorndale Registers

Figure 4. Exit Pathways for Babies Leaving Thorndale, 1950-1959



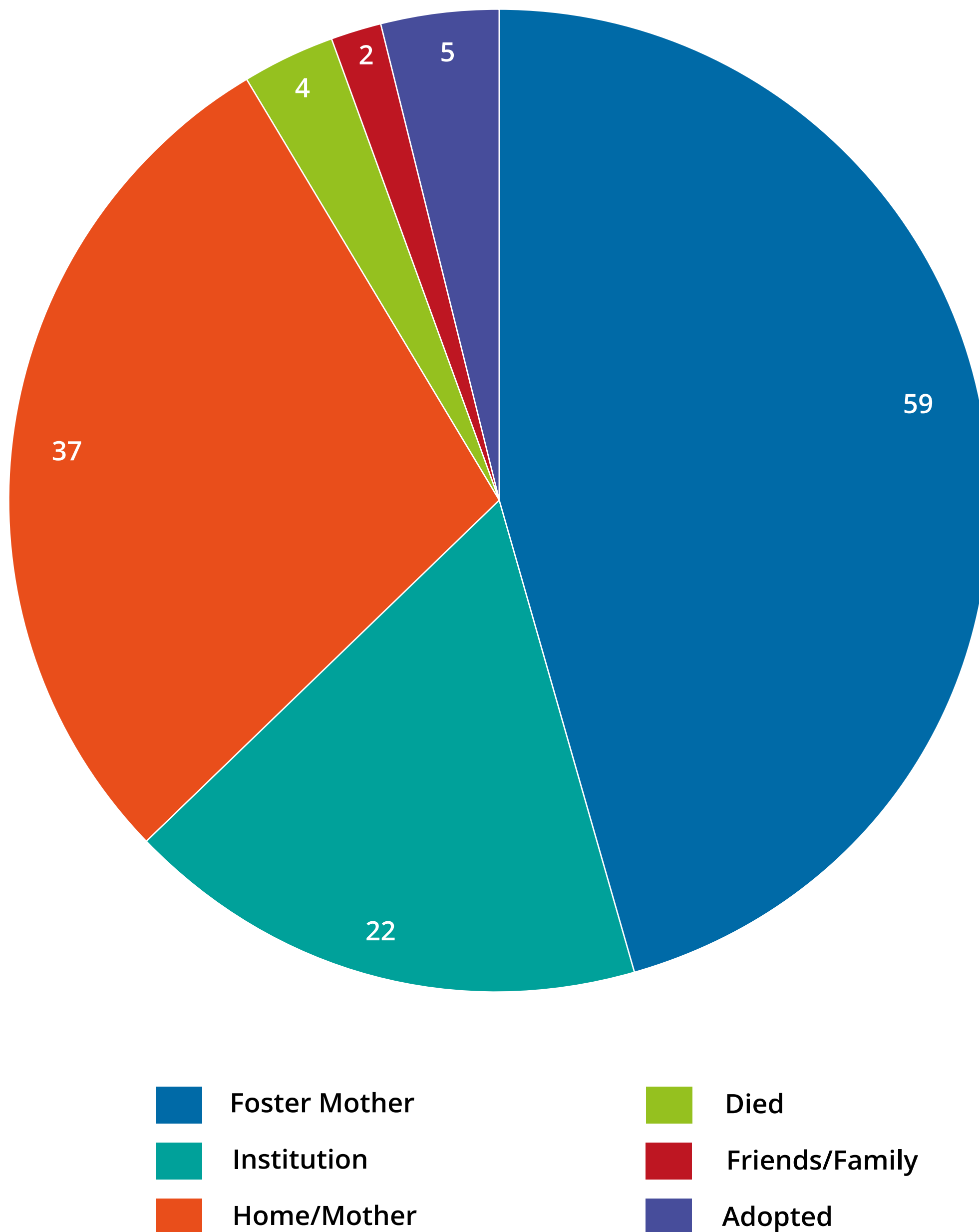
Source: Thorndale Registers

Figure 5. Exit Pathways for Babies Leaving Thorndale, 1960-1969



Source: Thorndale Registers

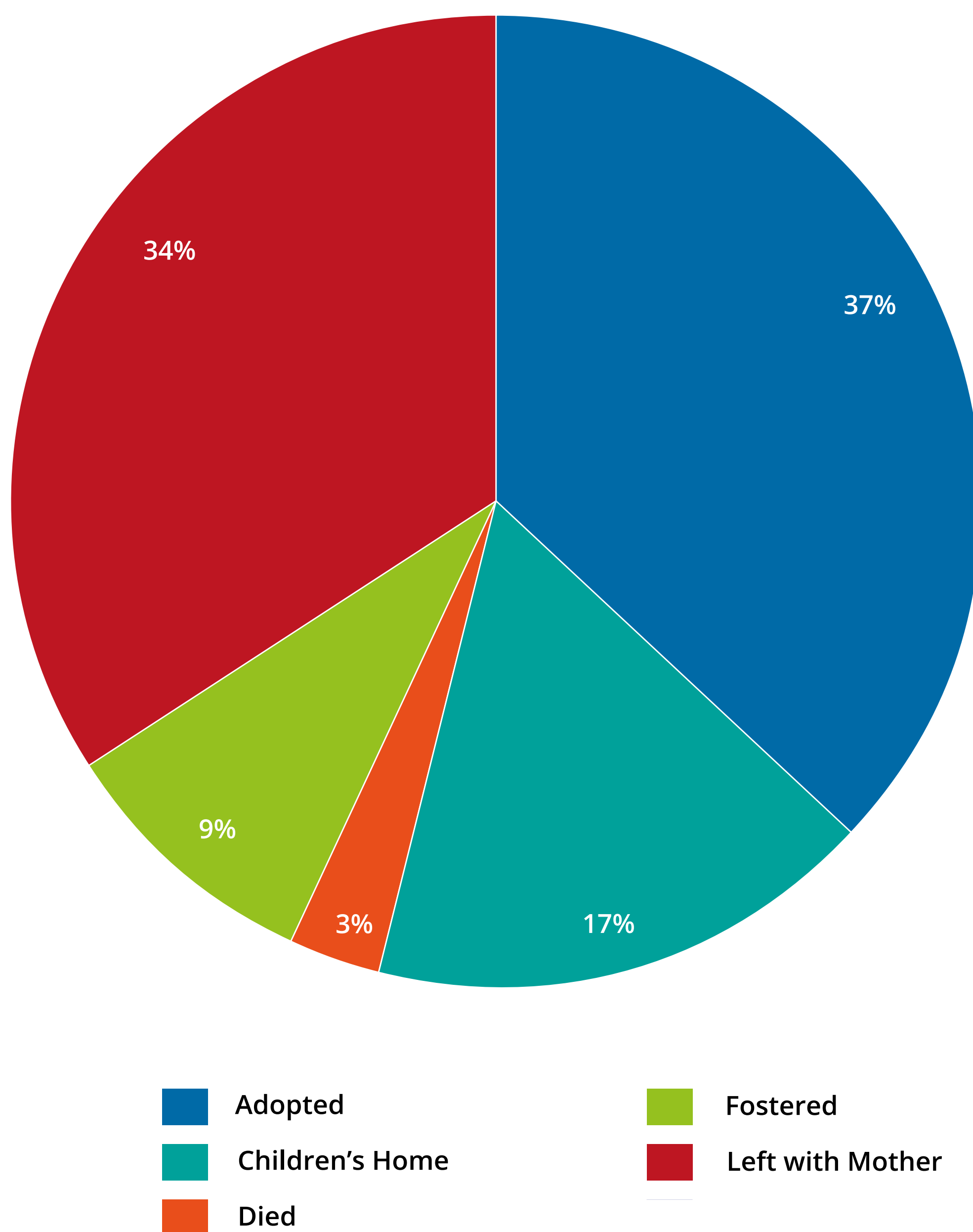
Figure 6. Exit Pathways for Babies Leaving Thorndale, 1970-1979



Source: Thorndale Registers

Appendix: C

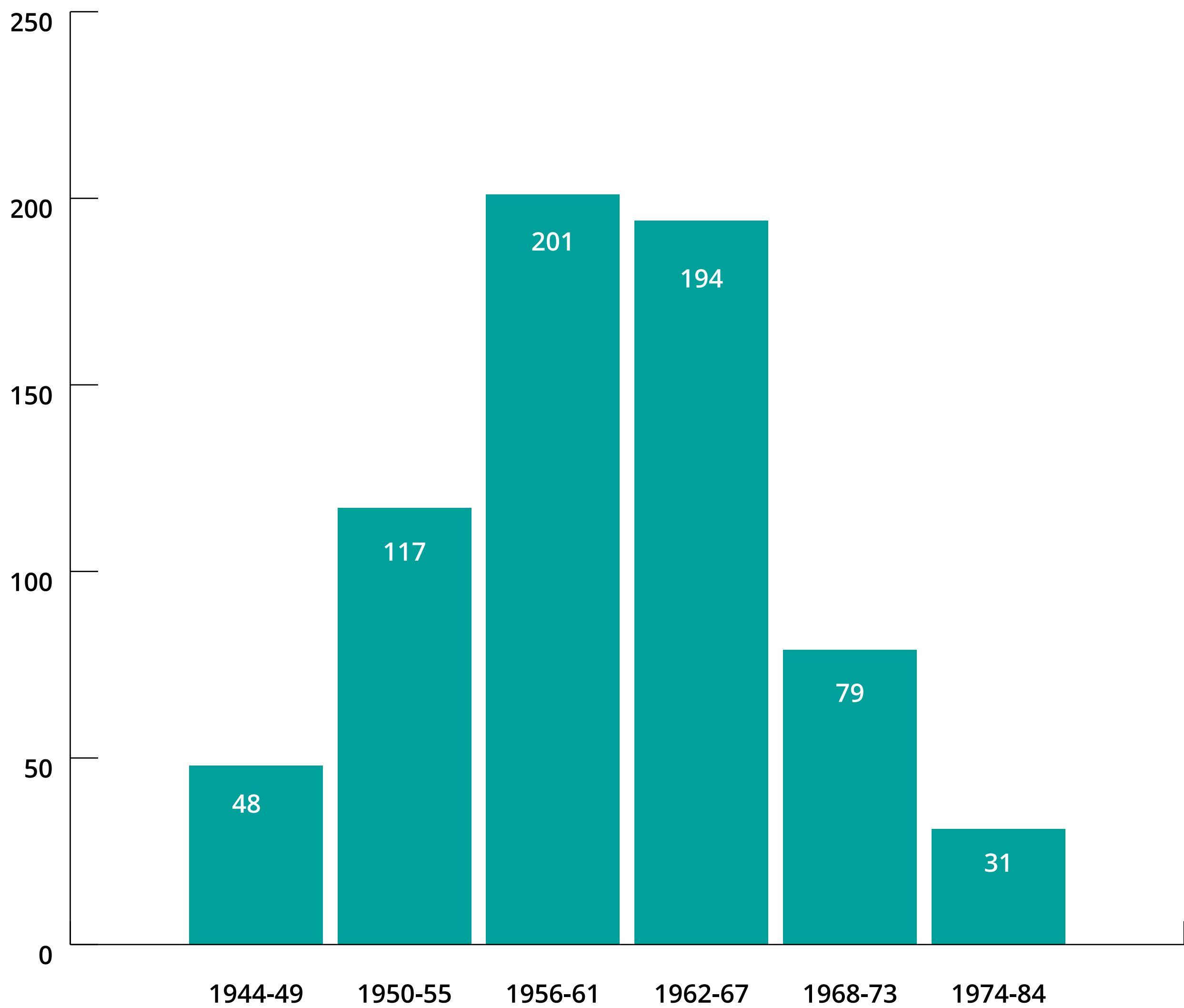
Figure 1. Kennedy House Outcomes for babies, 1950-1955 (where stated)



Source- Kennedy House Registers

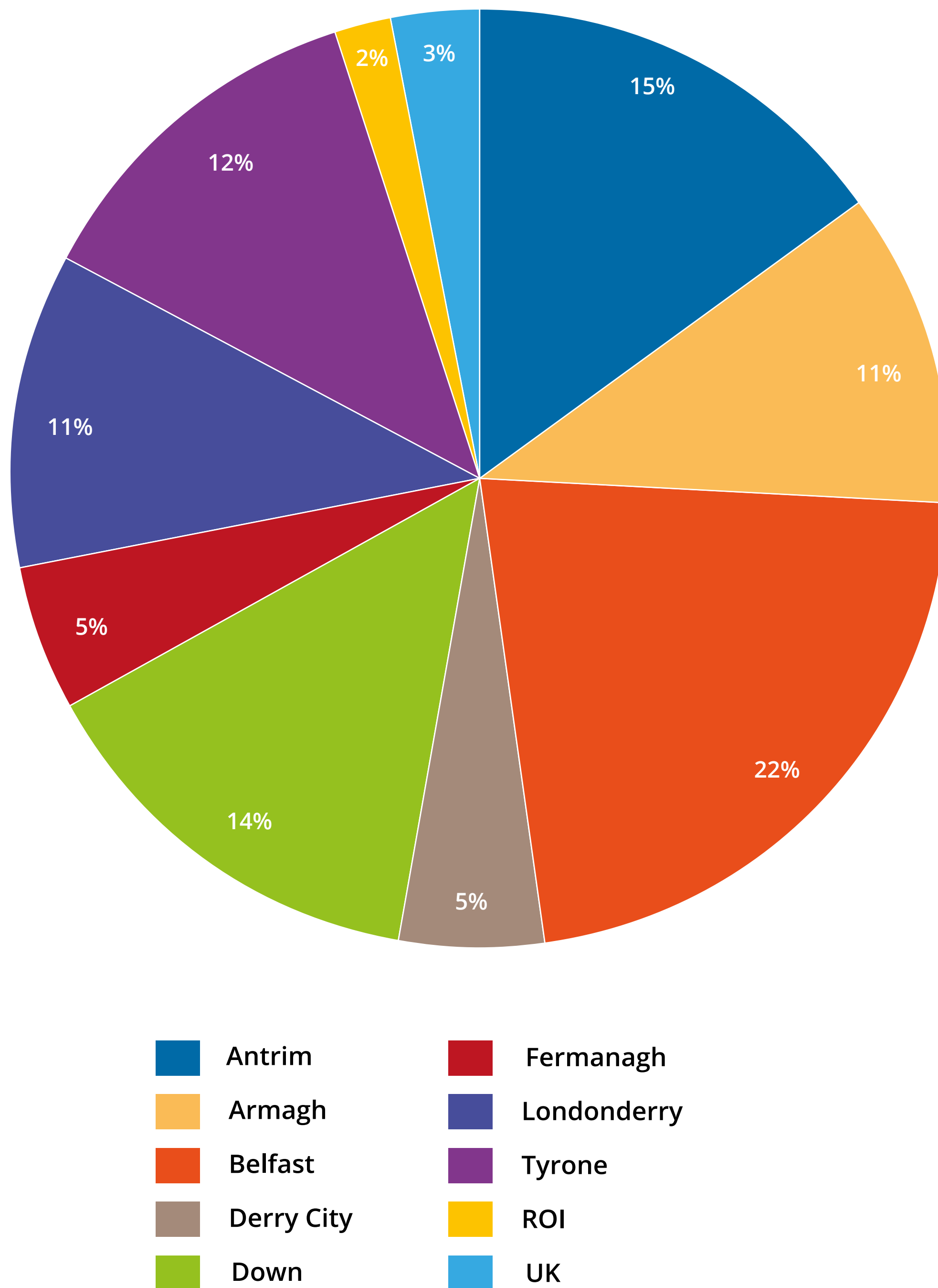
Appendix: D

Figure 1. Hopedene Residents by Number/Year



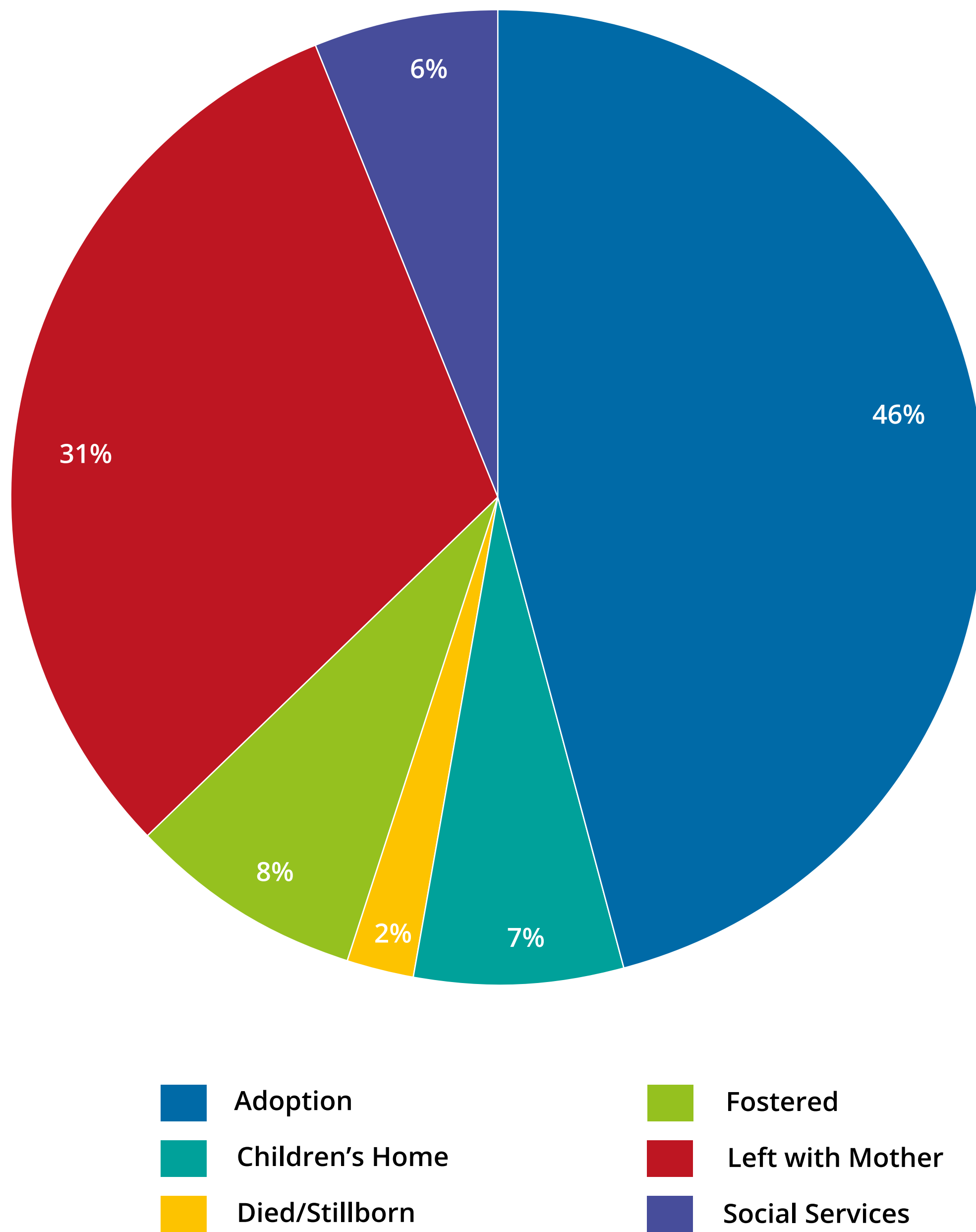
Source: Hopedene registers.

Figure 2. Hopedene Residents by County/City (where stated)



Source: Hopedene Registers

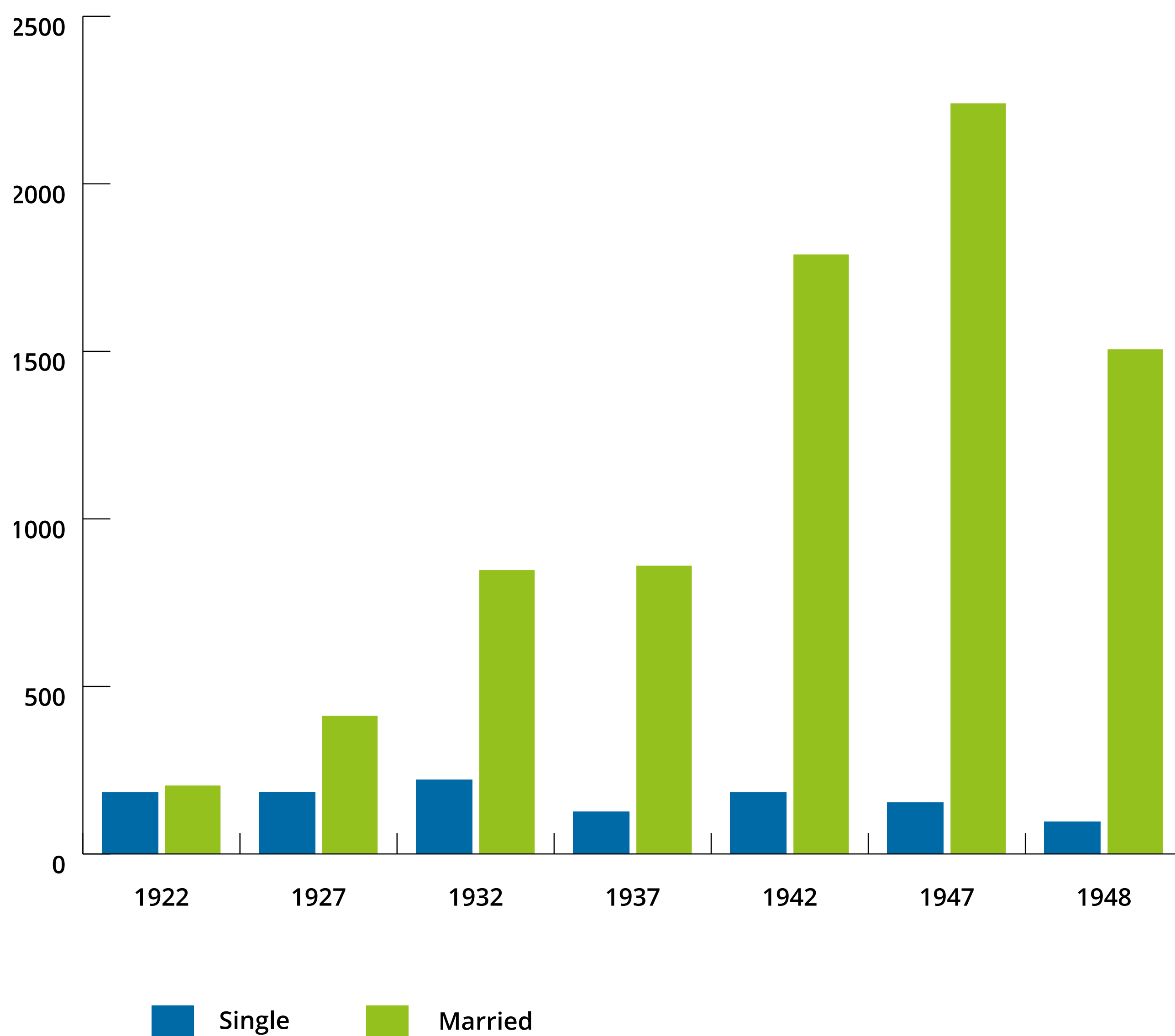
Figure 3. Outcomes for Babies Leaving Hopedene (where stated)



Source: Hopedene Registers

Appendix: E

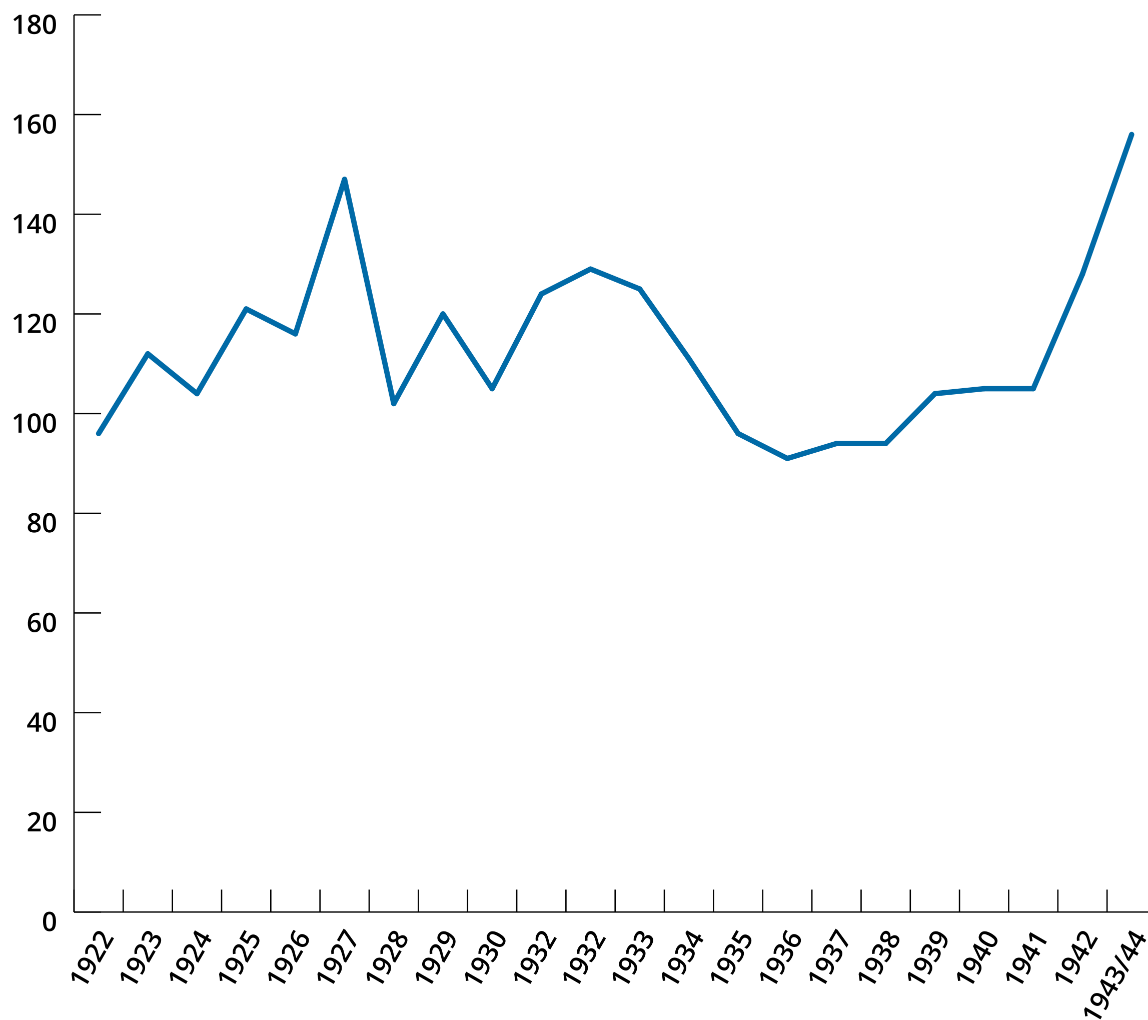
Figure 1. Belfast Workhouse Maternity cases 1922 - 1948



Source: Belfast Board of Guardian Records, PRONI

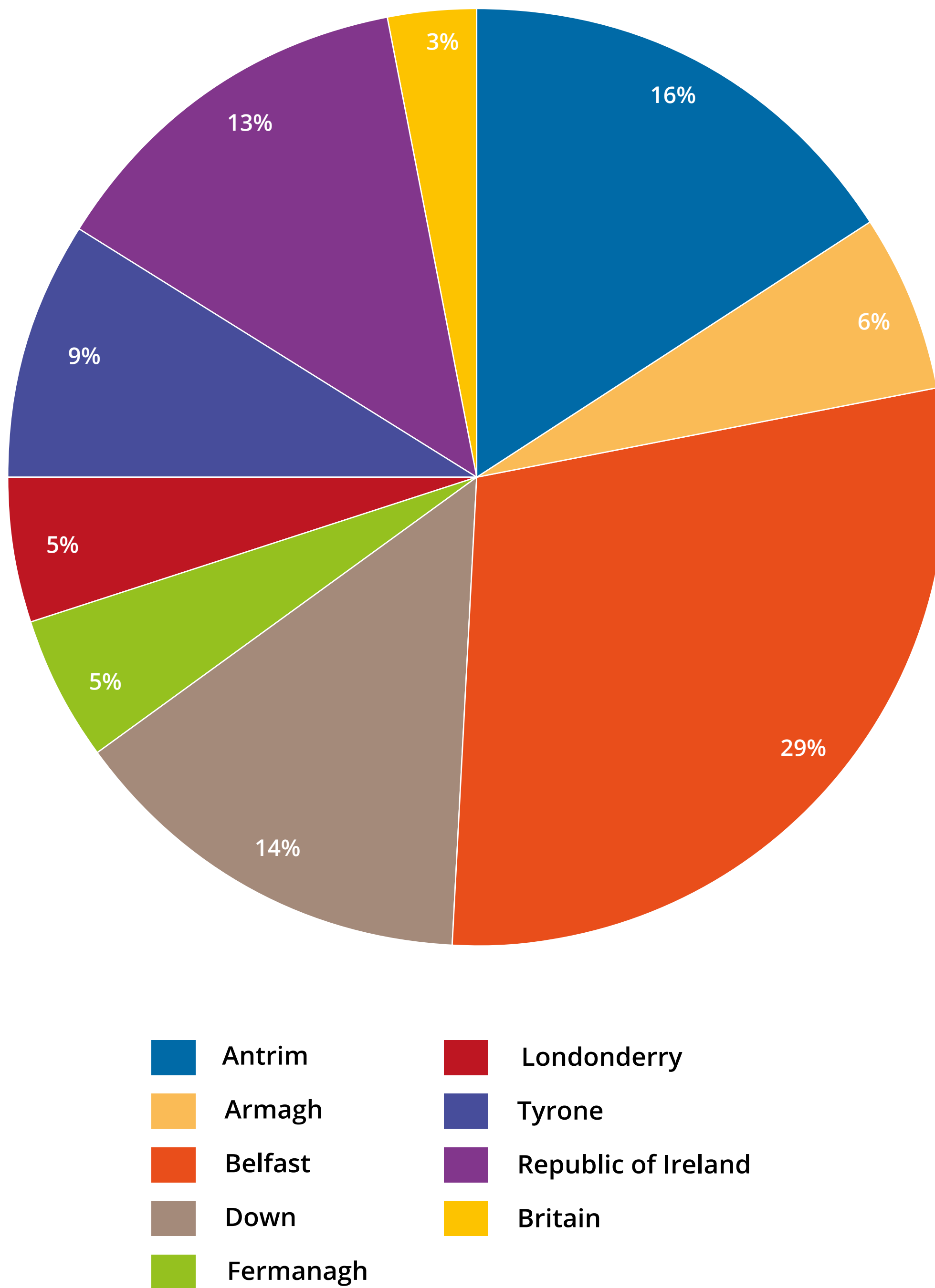
Appendix: F

Figure 1. Admissions to Midnight Mission/Rescue &Maternity Home, 1922-1944



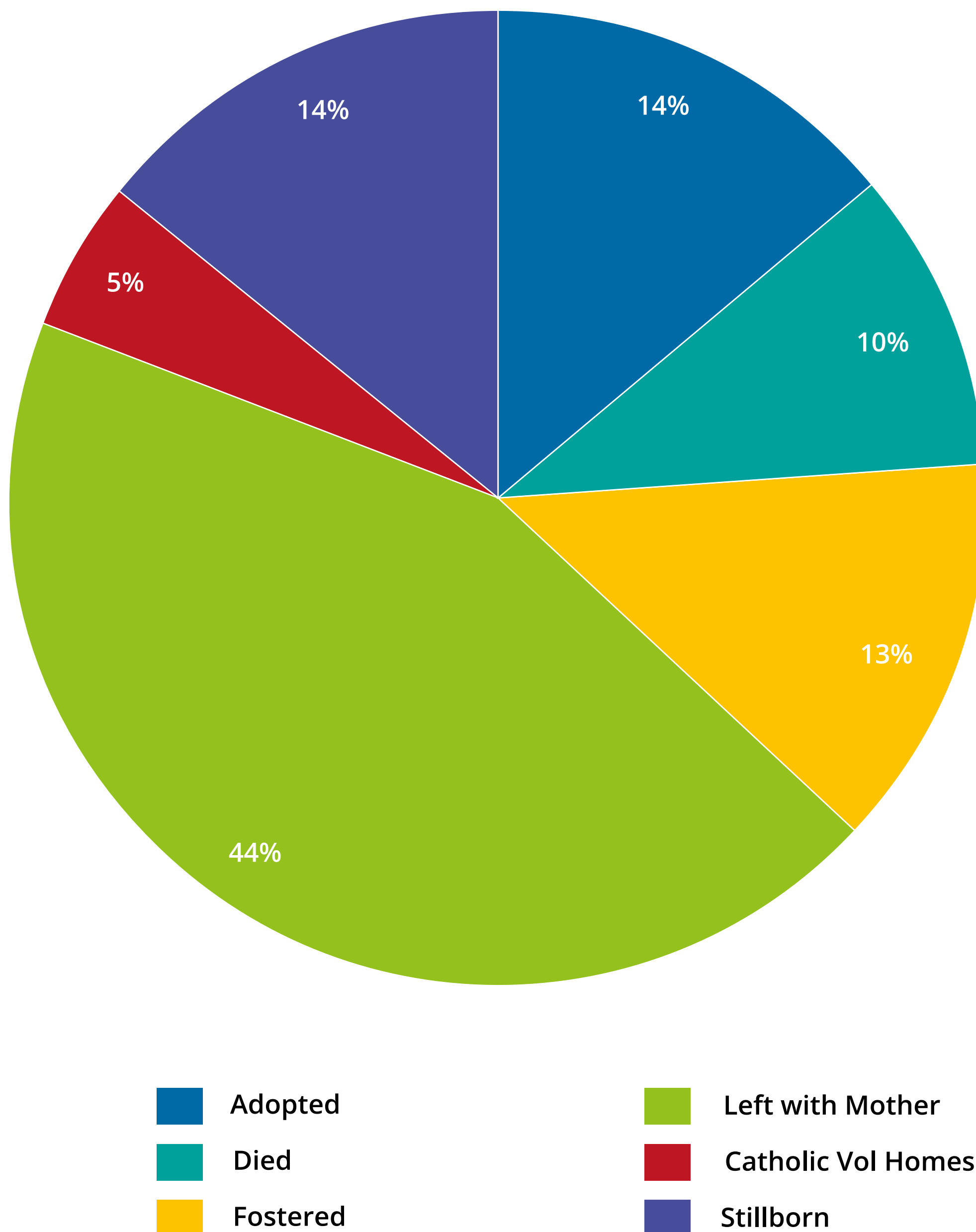
Source: Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home Registers

Figure 2. Origin addresses of Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home Residents (where stated)



Source: Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home Registers

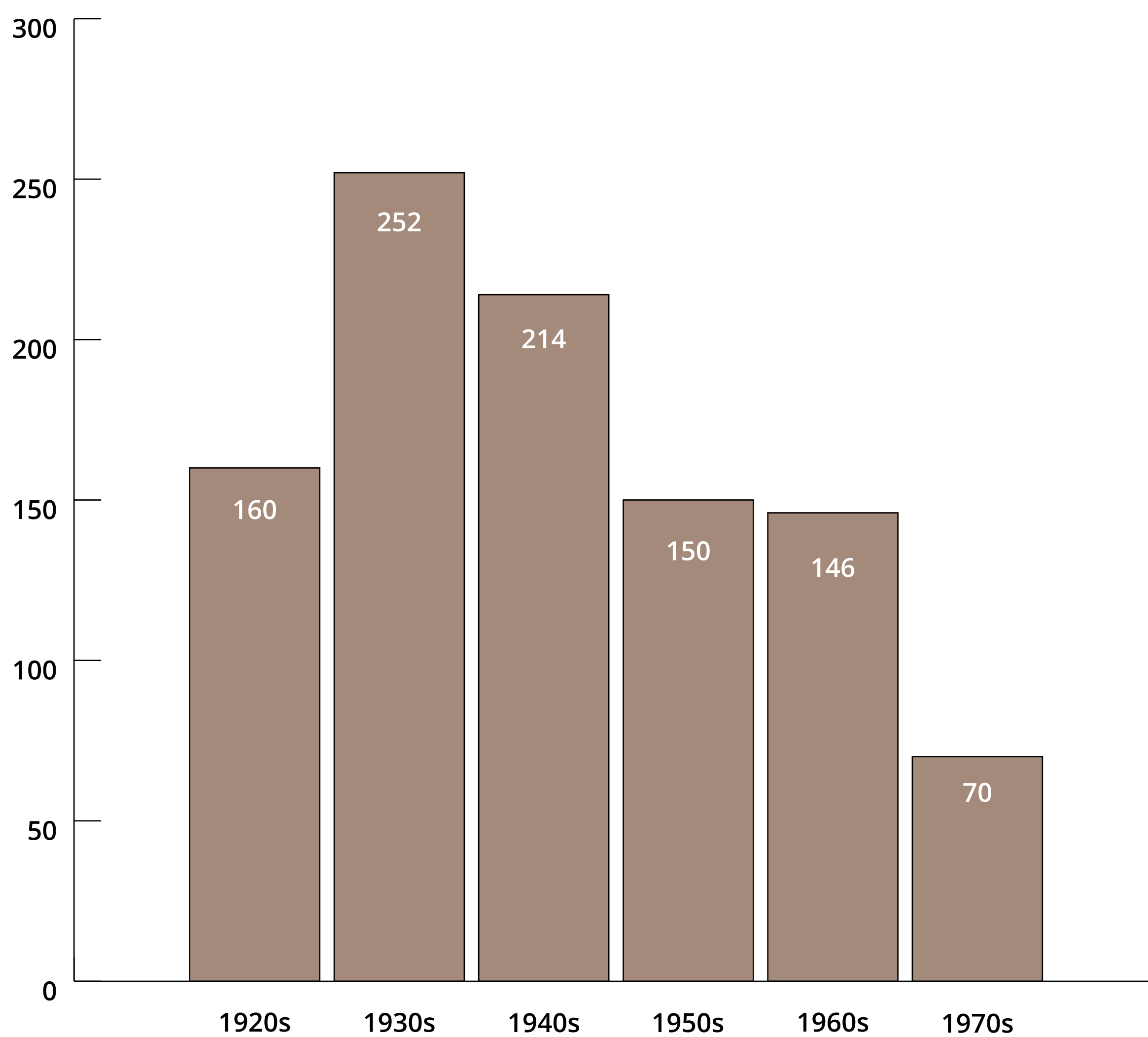
Figure 3. Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home: Exit Pathways for Babies (where stated)



Source: Midnight Mission/Rescue and Maternity Home Registers

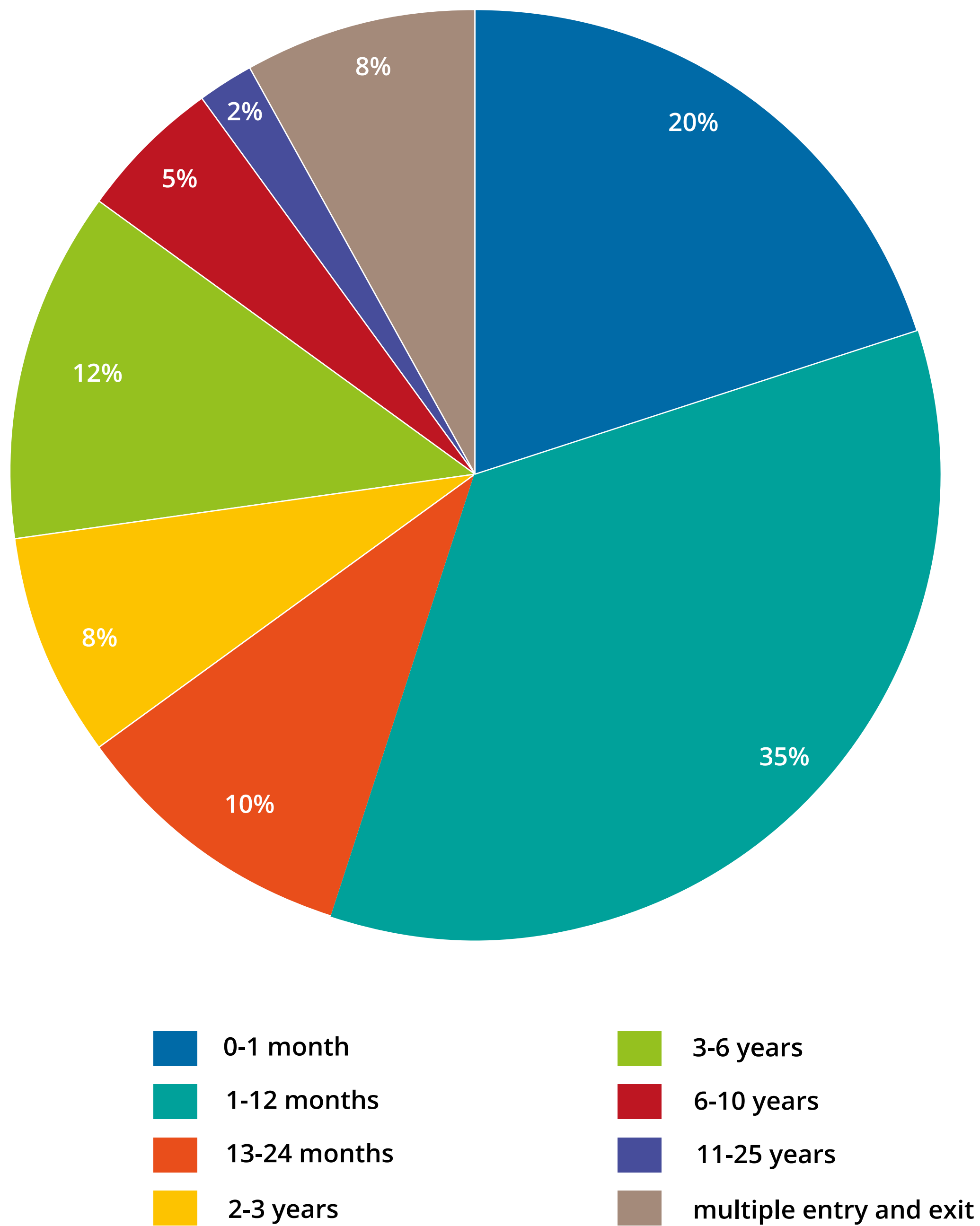
Appendix: G

Figure 1. Number of St Mary's Entrants by Decade



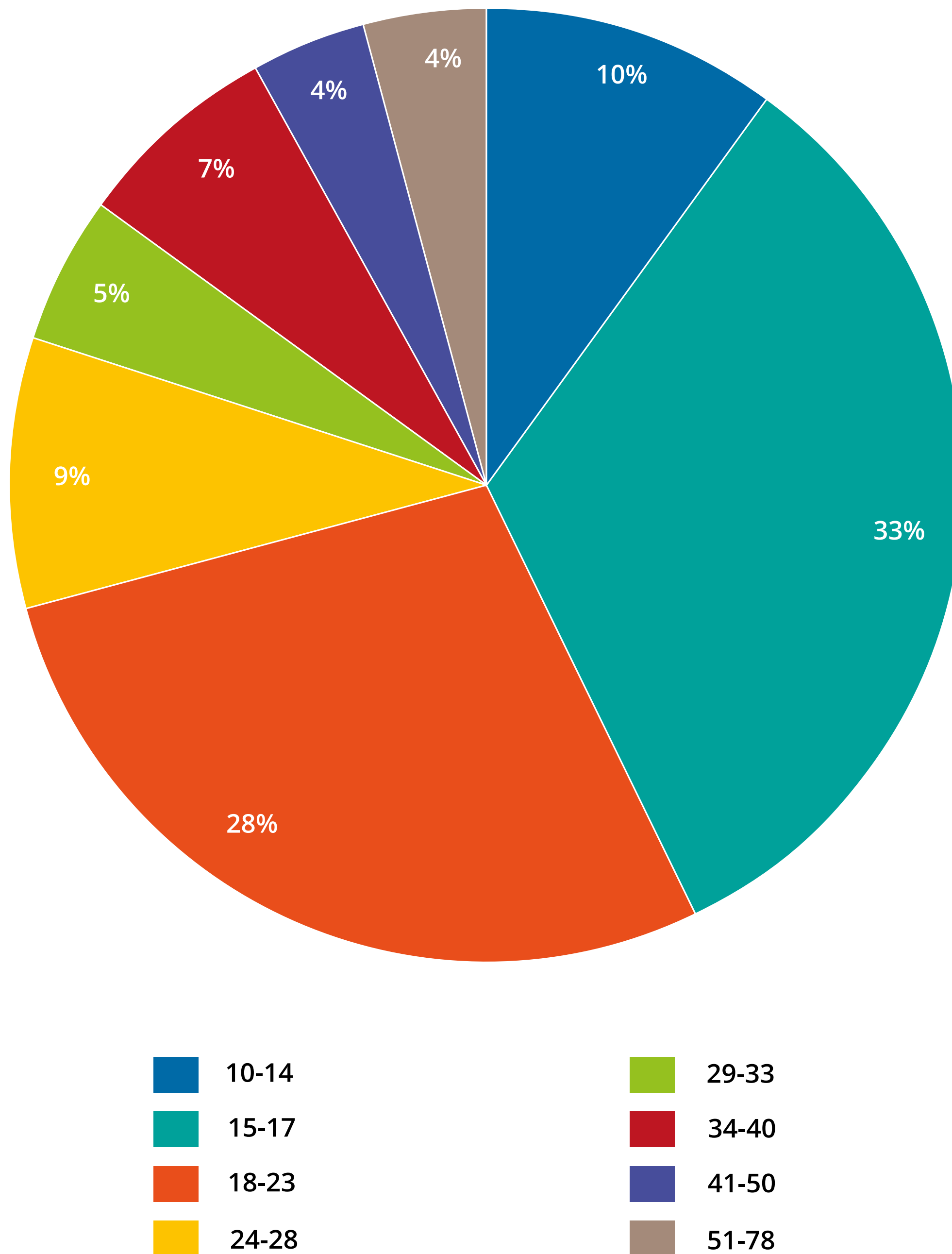
Source: St Mary's Derry registers

Figure 2. St Mary's Derry, Length of Stay (where stated)



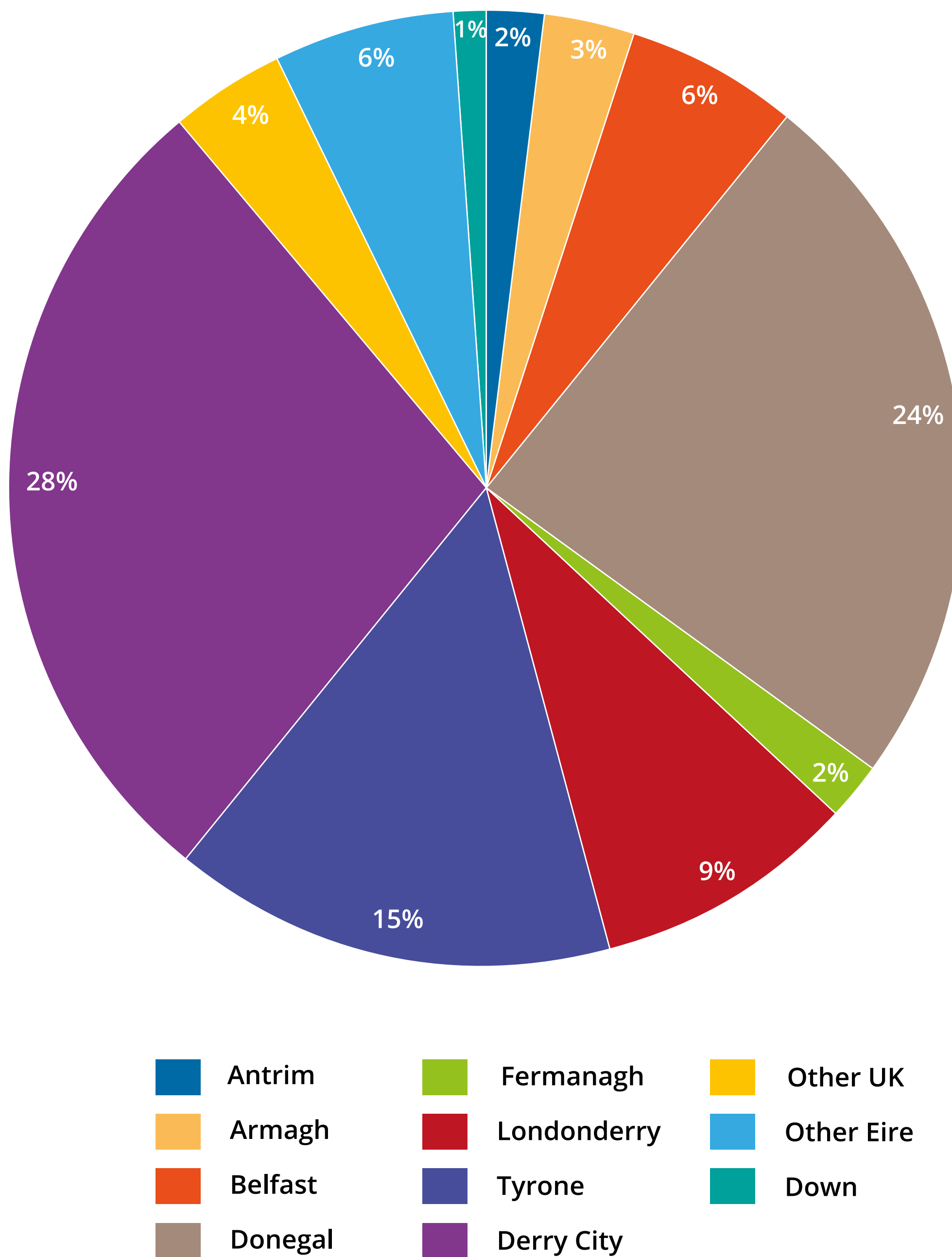
Source: St Mary's Derry Registers

Figure 3. St Mary's Derry, Age of Entrants (where stated)



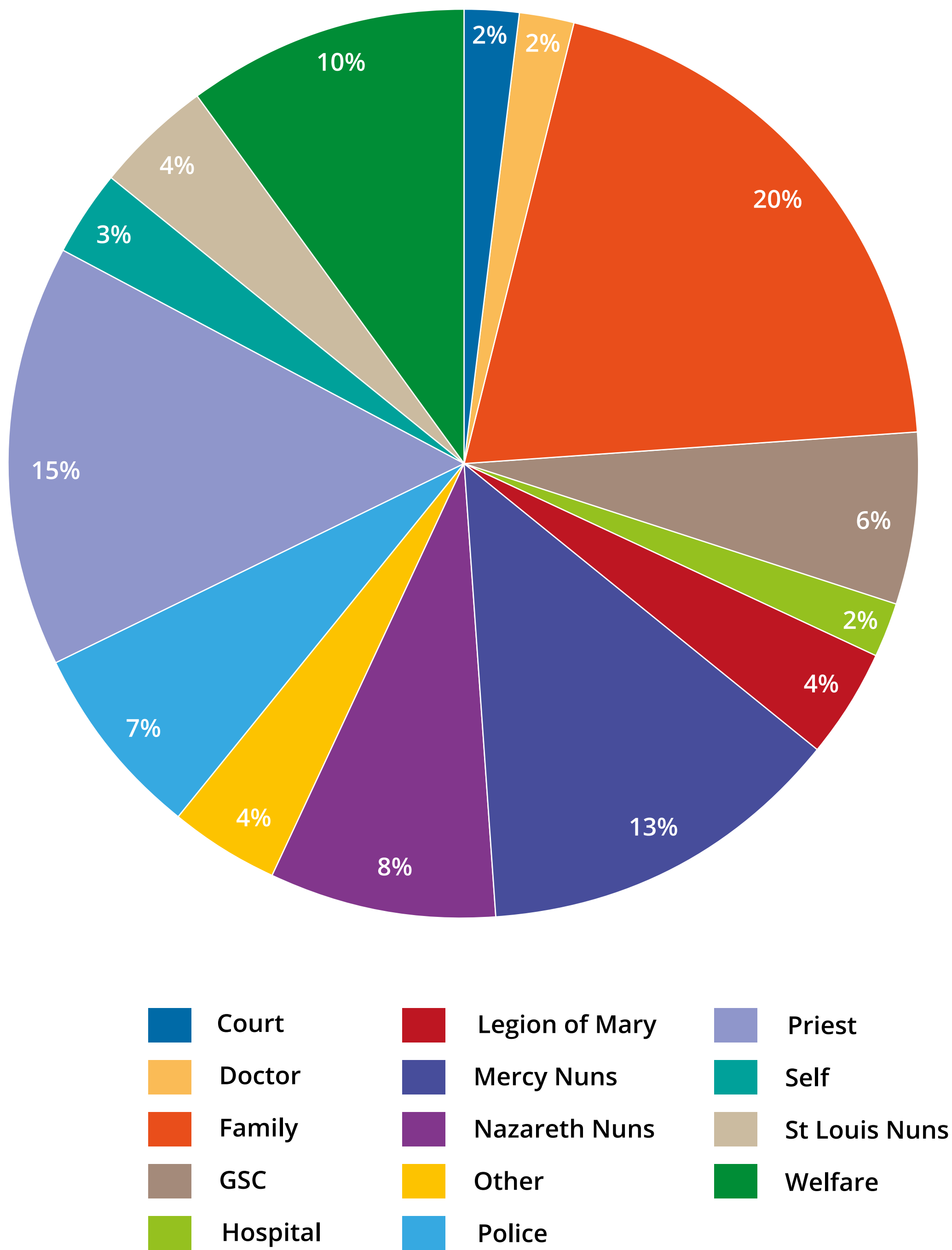
Source: St Mary’s Derry Registers

Figure 4. St Mary's Derry, Place of Origin (where stated)



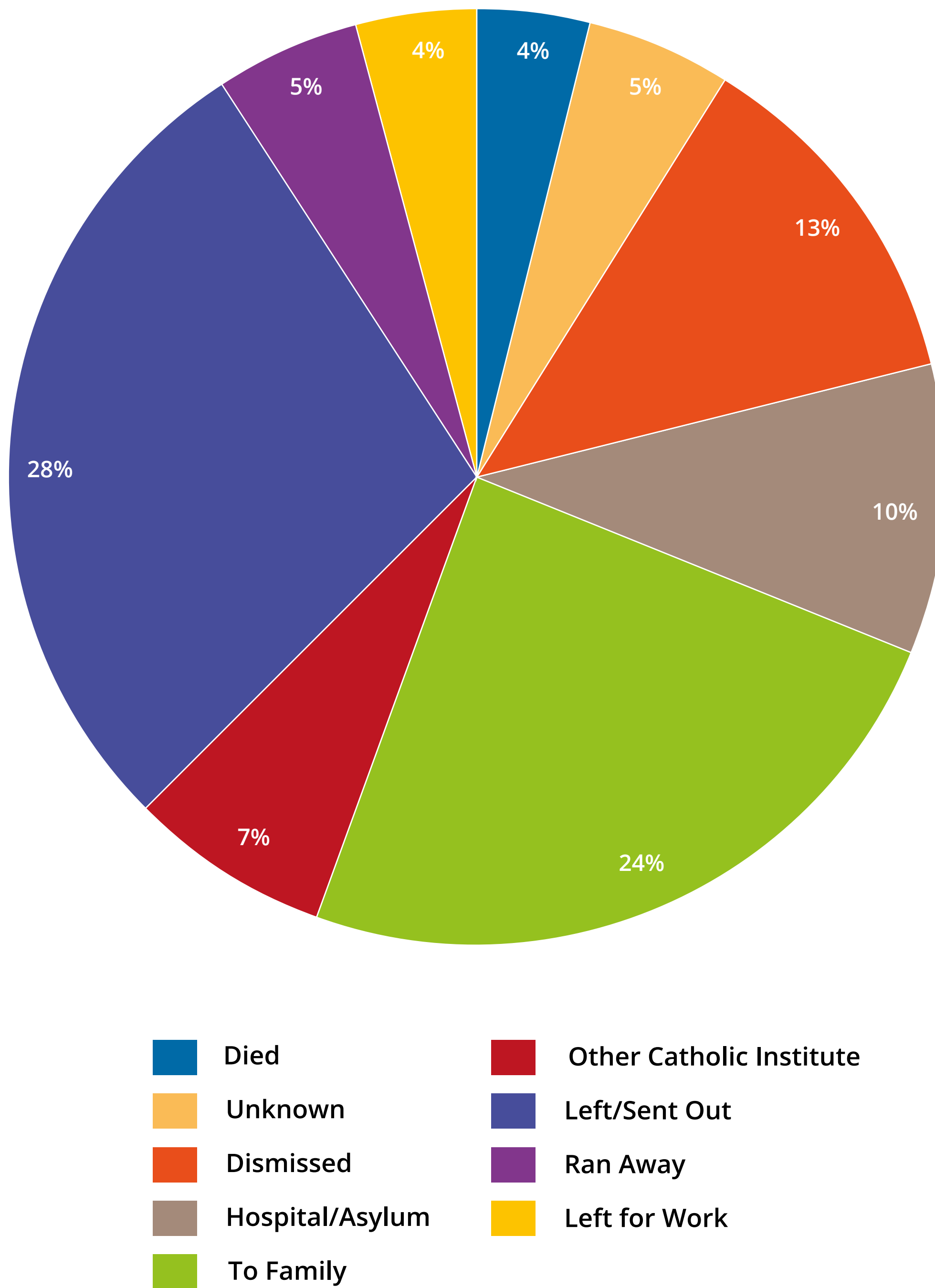
Source: St Mary’s Derry Registers

Figure 5. Referrals to St Mary's Derry (where stated)



Source: St Mary's Derry Registers

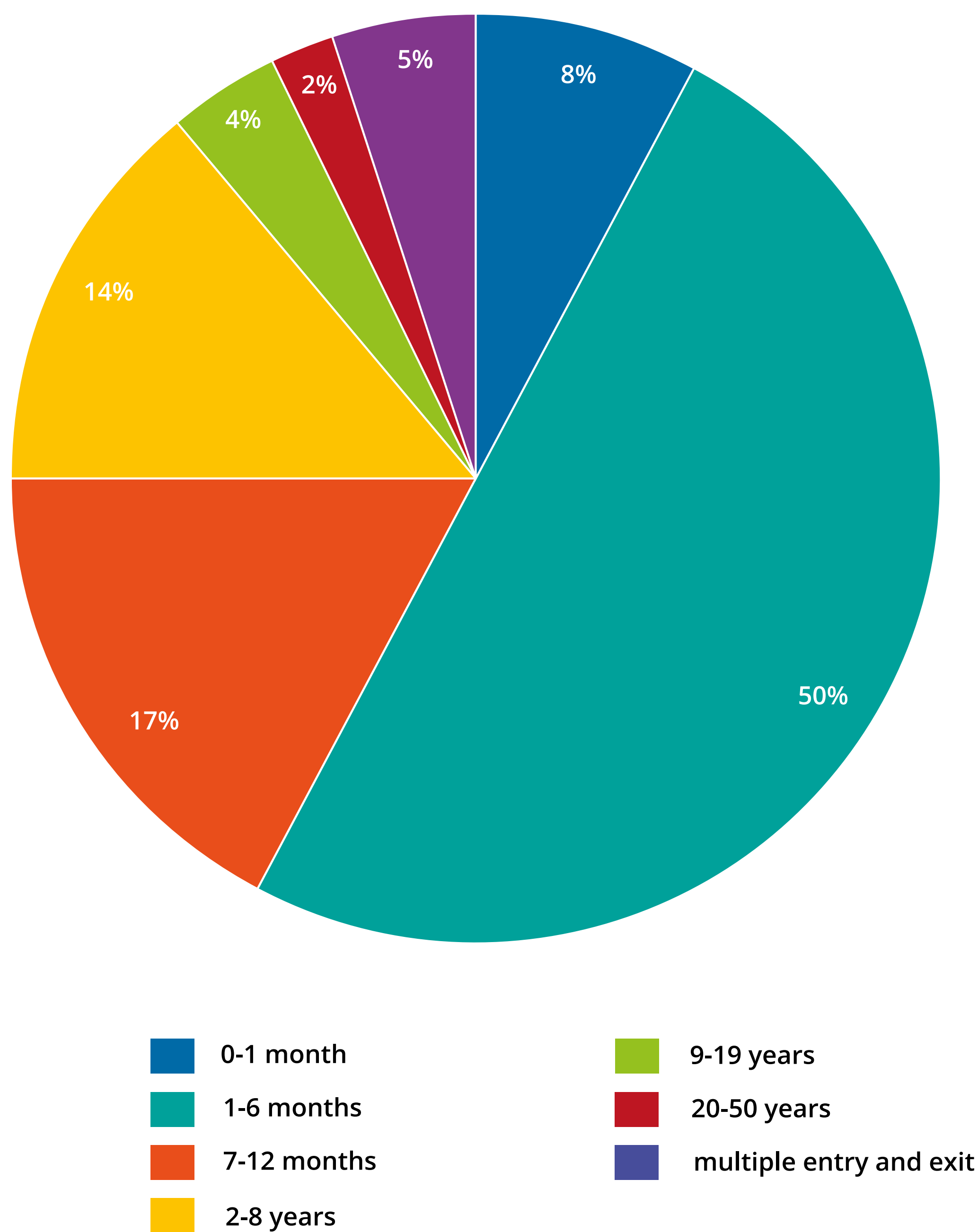
Figure 6. St Mary's Derry, Exit Pathways (where stated)



Source: St Mary's Derry Registers

Appendix: H

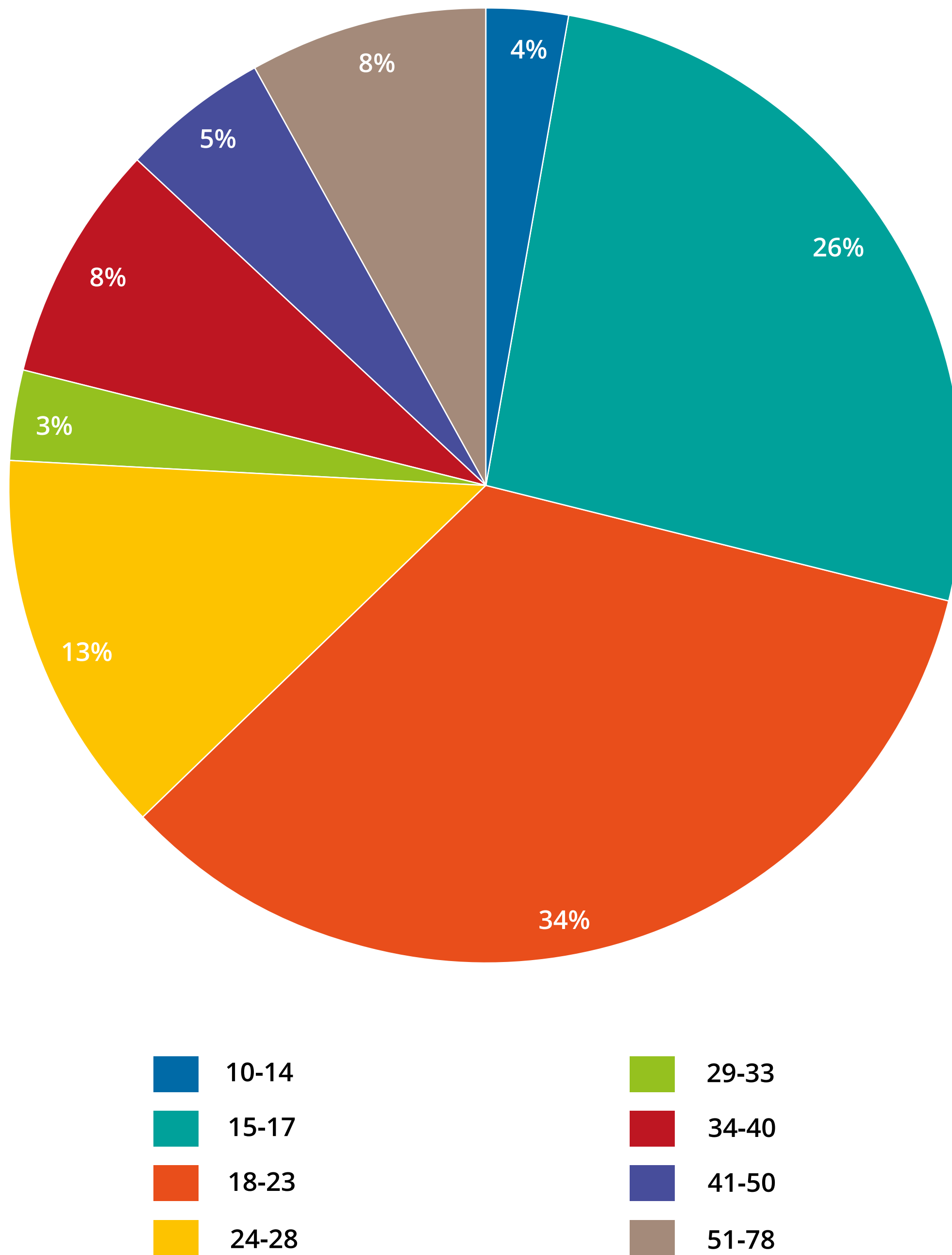
Figure 1. St Mary's Belfast, Length of Stay (where stated)



0-1 month
1-6 months
7-12 months
2-8 years
9-19 years
20-50 years
multiple entry and exit

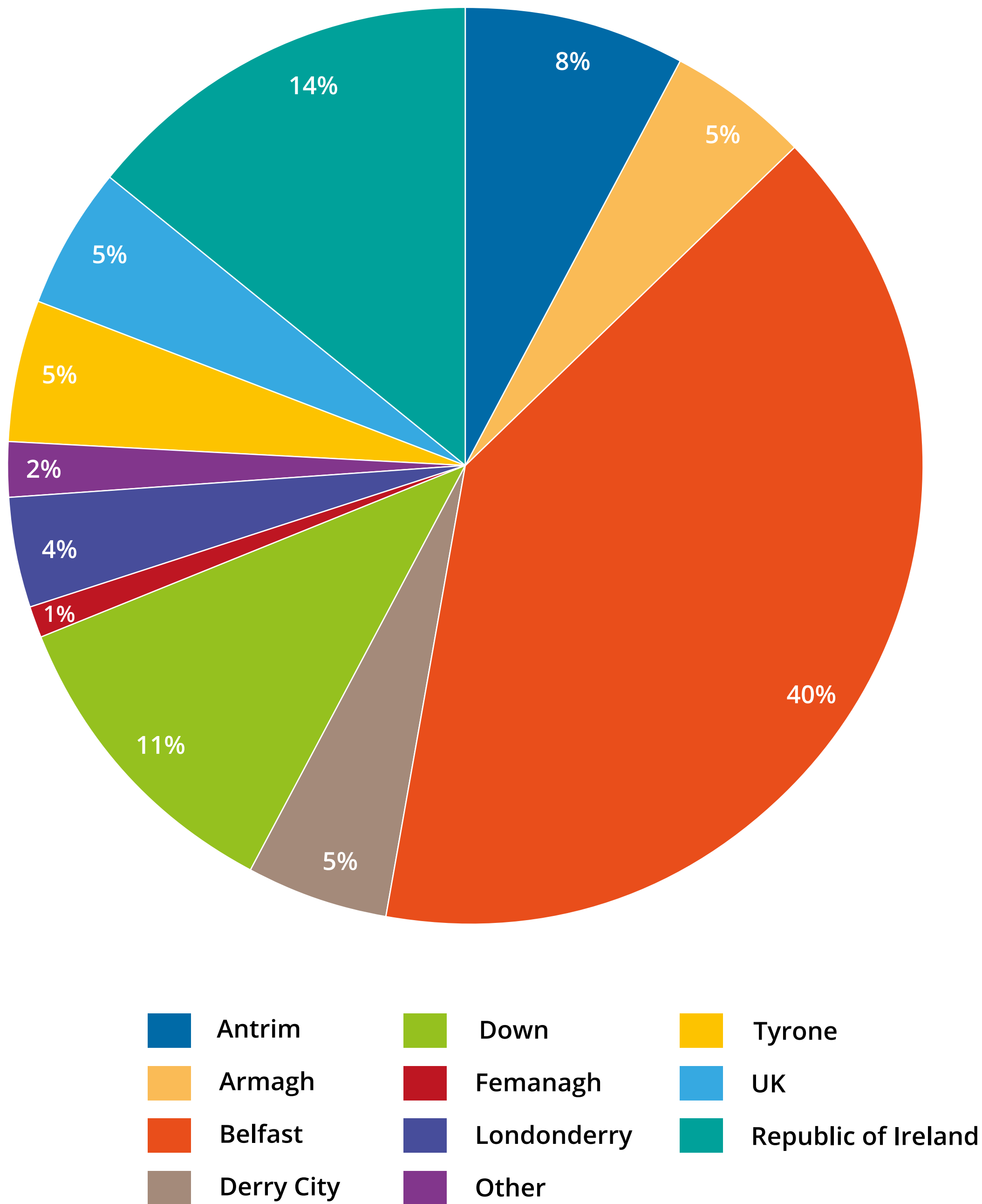
Source: St Mary's Belfast Registers

Figure 2. St Mary's Belfast, Age of Entrants (where stated)



Source: St Mary's Belfast Registers

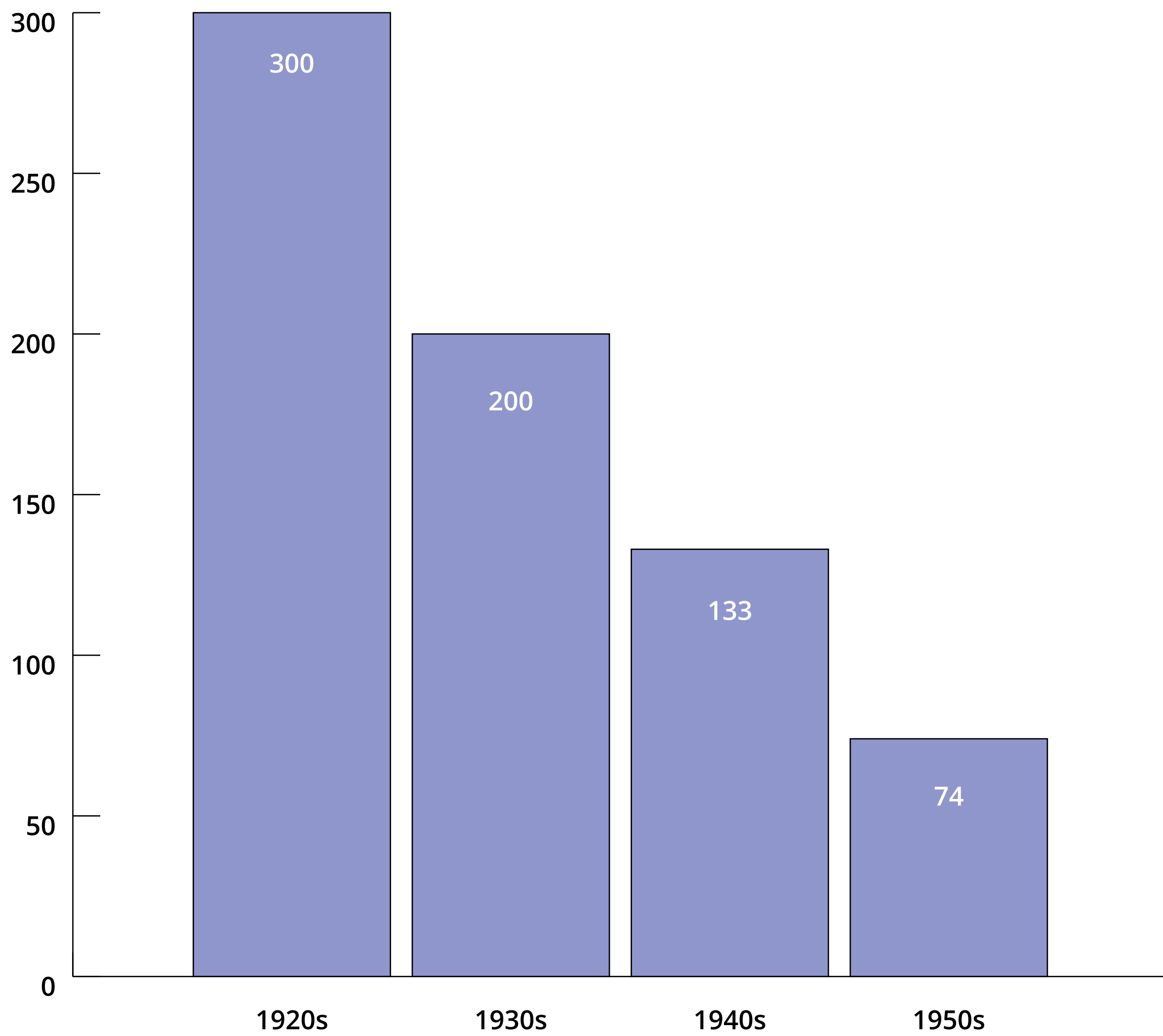
Figure 3. St Mary's Belfast, Place of Residence (where stated)



Source: St Mary's Belfast Registers

Appendix: I

Figure 1. Admission to Thorndale Industrial School



Source: Thorndale New Cases and Day Books