

Chapter 4

Circumstances of admission to Industrial and Reformatory Schools

- 4.01** This chapter describes the circumstances of admission to care of the 413 male and 378 female witnesses who gave evidence to the Committee about their experiences of abuse in Schools. Thirty eight (38) Schools were situated in rural and provincial Ireland and 17 were in cities.
- 4.02** There were 18 junior and senior boys Schools named in evidence to the Committee. The junior Schools admitted boys up to the age of 10 years and were all managed by religious Sisters. Boys were generally transferred to senior boys Schools when they were 10 years old. However evidence was heard of boys being transferred to senior Schools as young as eight years of age and of boys younger than 10 years being placed directly in senior Schools. These Schools were managed by Brothers and/or priests and, with some variations, admitted boys between the ages of 10 and 16 years.
- 4.03** There were 37 girls Schools reported in evidence to the Committee. A number of these Schools were certified to admit girls and boys up to the age of 10 years. In the period after the mid-1970s a number of girls' Industrial Schools began to admit boys and girls, both individually and in family groups. As reported, girls generally remained in the same School for the duration of their admission. Eleven (11) Schools were the subject of reports of abuse by both male and female witnesses.
- 4.04** The Reformatory Schools were all gender segregated and were certified to admit young people from the age of 12 years who were convicted of an offence.
- 4.05** Seven hundred and nine (709) of the 791 witnesses (90%) were first admitted to residential institutions between 1914 and 1965. The remaining 82 witnesses were first admitted to an institution in 1965 or later. The earliest date of admission relating to Schools for male witnesses covered in this section of the Report was 1919. All 413 male witnesses had been discharged from the School system by 1989. The earliest date of admission for the 378 female witnesses was 1914, all of whom had been discharged from the School system by 1988. The educational, social and welfare changes introduced nationally in the 1960s and 1970s were reflected in the evidence heard by the Committee, as noted throughout the Report.
- 4.06** For the purpose of analysis and reporting the Committee combined witness evidence into four periods by the decade of the witness's discharge. The four periods were: pre-1960s, 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The breakdown for each decade is shown below.

Table 11: Number of Witnesses by Decade of Discharge – Male and Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools

Decade of discharge	Males	%	Females	%	Total witnesses	%
Pre-1960s	177	43	133	35	310	39
1960 – 1969	170	41	169	45	339	43
1970 – 1979	50	12	68	18	118	15
1980 – 1989	16	4	8	2	24	3
Total	413	100	378	100	791	100

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

4.07 It is important to note witnesses discharged in one decade may have been in residential care and also reported abuse in relation to the previous decade.¹

Pathways to Industrial and Reformatory Schools

4.08 Witnesses who gave evidence were admitted both directly from their parents' home to the Schools and also from various other residential settings, including:

- *Mother and Baby Homes.* These were often either the place of birth or first residence for non-marital children. A number of witnesses reported that they remained in these homes with their mothers, for up to 3 years.
- *County Homes.* These were also both places of birth and first residences. Some witnesses reported being with their mothers in county homes until they were up to five years old.
- *Foster Care.* Provided for infants and young children in some circumstances prior to placement in an Industrial School. Before 1983 such arrangements were also known as 'boarding out' or 'at nurse'.
- *Children's Homes.* These facilities admitted infants and young children. A number of witnesses reported being placed in Children's Homes until they were transferred to an Industrial School.

4.09 Witnesses who were admitted to Schools from the above facilities were most often non-marital children, frequently referred to as 'orphans'. The term orphan was used by witnesses in relation to their own circumstances and in reference to co-residents who had no contact with any family outside the institution. Witnesses generally believed that these residents had been in institutions all their lives and either had no known family or their parents had died. Many later learned that they had lived with their mothers for the first few years of their lives and/or had been initially reared by relatives prior to placement in out-of-home care. A number of those witnesses who identified themselves as orphans reported that frequently their mothers had, for various reasons, been unable to support them. The majority of these witnesses had known little or nothing about the circumstances of their admission to out-of-home care. This lack of information included not knowing where they had been born, who their mothers and their fathers were, whether they had siblings, why their parents were unable to care for them and who decided they would be admitted to the Industrial School system. In many instances information available to witnesses through Freedom of Information legislation and other sources in later years indicated that they were not in fact orphans. Witnesses described learning that their parents, particularly mothers, had made representations to the authorities to have them placed close to where they lived.

¹ For example: as witness evidence is presented according to the decade of discharge, a witness who spent 12 years in a school and was discharged in 1962 will have been included in the 1960s cohort although the majority of that witness's experience will relate to the 1950s.

Others reported that their parents had sought to have them released before the full term of their detention and also requested information about their children from whom they had been separated. Witnesses reported that most often these requests had not received a favourable response at the time. However, for a number of witnesses access to such information facilitated contact with family previously unknown to them.

4.10 Admissions to Industrial Schools were frequently by Court Order, applications for which could be made by Inspectors from the NSPCC/ISPCC and the Gardaí. Information provided to the Committee indicated that Inspectors from the Society applied for Court Orders on behalf of 120 male witnesses (29%) and 208 female witnesses (60%) who were admitted to Industrial Schools. Placements in voluntary Children's Homes and foster care were reported to have been generally negotiated by individual arrangement between a child's parent, guardian, public assistance boards, local authorities and Health Boards, and the operators of the respective services. Some of these placements were by Order of the Court following on application by the Health Board.

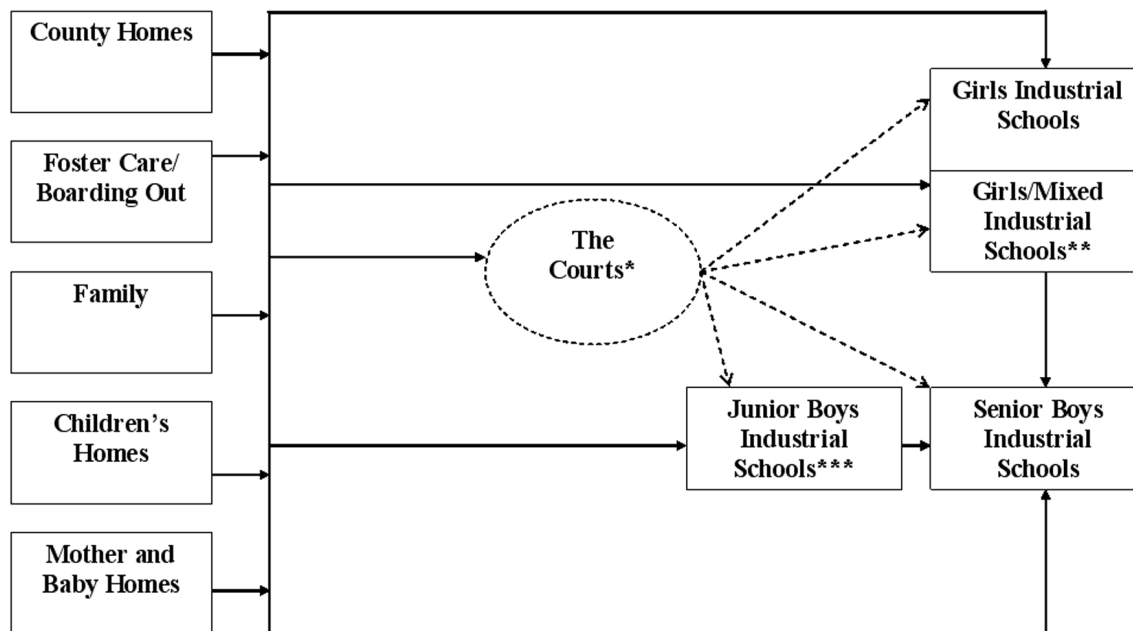
4.11 'Boarding out' and foster care arrangements were other options for the care of a child in circumstances where the parents were unable to provide the necessary care. Records provided to the Committee by witnesses suggest that access to these placements depended on various factors, including either the ability of the mother or her family to pay, the official involvement of State agencies and the availability of appropriate residential services.

4.12 In addition to reports of parental payment for foster care and other placements, the Committee heard evidence from many witnesses of the requirement for parents to contribute financially towards their children's maintenance in Industrial Schools. Copies of correspondence, shown to the Committee by witnesses, between their parents and Department of Education officials, Gardaí and Resident Managers indicated that such payments were assiduously pursued by their officials.

I was illegitimate ... I went into the orphanage ...(Industrial School).... My mother was unmarried, her mother had died in childbirth. My grandfather never saw me, my father didn't want to know.... She was wandering the streets and there was this man a Mr ...X... he was sort of in charge, an overseer, of unmarried mothers, to keep an eye on them for the Government. He got her into the workhouse ... run by nuns and she worked scrubbing and cleaning ... the nuns told her she had to be punished for committing a mortal sin, they were the words from my mother to me. She was there from when she was 7 months pregnant until I was born.... She was kept in the workhouse, for 2 or 3 months. Then her sister went up one Sunday to see her, and took me and her out. She then went to work ... it was then I was left with ...(foster mother).... I was minded by ...(foster mother)... for the first 2 years ... and my mother paid that woman to mind me. It ...(the cost)... became too much for her I suppose and I went to ...named School... through the Courts. It was through Mr ...X ... I went into the orphanage ...(Industrial School).... I did not know I had gone through the Courts until I got the records, it said my mother was incapable of minding me and so I went into the orphanage.

4.13 The chart below is an outline of the general pathways into and through institutional care for most witnesses who gave evidence in relation to abuse in Industrial Schools. The representation of Court intervention on the Chart is intended to indicate that it was not a necessary prelude to admission to the Industrial Schools. It is important to note that children were also admitted to the Schools without recourse to the Courts.

Figure 1: Outline of Pathways to Industrial Schools



Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

*Court involvement – see Chapter 4.3

**Girls/Mixed Industrial Schools – Small number of girls Schools also admitted boys up to the age of 8-10 years, prior to transfer to senior boys Schools. There was no distinction between junior and senior Schools for girls as there was for boys.

***Some boys were discharged at this stage.

4.14 The Committee heard accounts of older children being looked after by relatives while younger siblings went into care. In other instances babies were kept at home either with parents or relatives while the other children were admitted to care.

- Five hundred and seventy (570) witnesses (72%), 327 male and 243 female, reported being admitted directly from parental and extended family homes to either an Industrial or Reformatory School.
- Ninety six (96) witnesses, 29 male and 67 female, reported being admitted to an Industrial School from mother and baby homes, county homes, hospitals and hostels where they were born and where many had spent some time with their mothers prior to their admission to Schools.
- Fifty three (53) witnesses, 22 male and 31 female, reported being admitted to Industrial Schools from foster care placements, including 'boarding out' and 'at nurse' arrangements.
- Thirty seven (37) witnesses, 23 male and 14 female, reported being admitted to Industrial Schools from Children's Homes.
- Three (3) witnesses reported being admitted to an Industrial School from special needs schools.
- Thirty two (32) witnesses, nine male and 23 female, have been unable to determine where they were prior to their admission to an Industrial School.

4.15 One hundred and two (102) male witnesses (25%) were initially admitted to junior Schools as young children and transferred to a senior School at between eight and 10 years of age.

Reasons for admission

- 4.16** Social circumstances, including combinations of poverty, illness, neglect, parental death, non-marital birth and unemployment were reported as significant factors in the admission of all 791 witnesses to the School system. Two hundred and forty one (241) witnesses (30%), 119 male and 122 female, reported parental alcohol abuse, poverty, unemployment, family violence and lack of care and control at home as contributory factors in their admission to a School.
- 4.17** Two hundred and twenty nine (229) witnesses (29%), 88 male and 141 female, identified themselves as non-marital children, who as a consequence of the circumstances of their birth were generally in some form of institutional care for most of their childhood.
- 4.18** One hundred and forty (140) witnesses (18%), 75 male and 65 female, reported the death of one or both parents as a significant factor in their admission to a School. Of those, the mother's death preceded admission in 82 instances and father's death preceded admission in 49 instances. Death of both parents was reported as a reason for admission in nine instances. The main known causes of death reported by male and female witnesses were tuberculosis, mother's death in childbirth, cancer and heart disease.

My father died, my mother had 8 of us. She went to the parish priest, she was friendly with him, and he said "put them into an orphanage until you get yourself sorted out in your new home". So she went to the Court, she was looking for a pound, that's all she wanted, a pound a week. But they threw her out of Court and put us into Schools, all except the youngest of us.

- 4.19** One hundred and eleven (111) witnesses (14%), 107 male and four female, reported that their conviction for criminal offences was the major factor leading to their admission to a School.² The nature of the offences mainly involved theft of food, fuel, bicycles, clothing or money. There were eight reports from male witnesses of admission as a result of charges for more serious offences such as 'breaking and entering' and 'attacks on the person'.
- 4.20** Sixty seven (67) witnesses, 38 male and 29 female, reported parental abandonment as a factor in the circumstances leading to their admission. Fifty one (51) of these reports referred to fathers leaving the family home, sometimes to seek work in the UK or USA, at other times leaving the family home in the context of domestic violence, alcohol abuse or illness. Witnesses reported the remaining parent, usually the child's mother, was unable to manage alone and by a variety of means children were placed in institutional care. Sixteen (16) witnesses reported that their mother left the family home, in circumstances similar to those reported above and with similar consequences.

I didn't deserve the life they gave me, I was and am branded a criminal by the Courts and I did nothing wrong, all because the ...X... County Council wouldn't spend a few lousy pounds repairing our house and because they would rather give money to the ...named religious order... to look after us than give my mother some help after he ...(father)... left so that we could stay together as a family....

- 4.21** Fifty six (56) witnesses were admitted to institutional care as a result of a Court Order under the School Attendance Acts. Non-attendance at school was reported by a number of witnesses to be the result of difficult circumstances at home, including poverty, neglect and domestic violence. Parental alcohol abuse was a frequent feature of these reports. Eleven (11) male

² The age of criminal responsibility under the Children Act, 1908 was seven years. The age was raised to 12 years by section 52 of the Children Act, 2001. This was subsequently amended by section 129 of the Criminal Justice Act, 2006 which confined the power to bring criminal proceedings against children to those aged 12 and older with certain exceptions.

witnesses reported being absent from school specifically because of learning difficulties and/or severe treatment at school.

4.22 Fifty four (54) witnesses, 19 male and 35 female, reported chronic illness and hospitalisation of a parent as the main contributing factor in their admission. Twenty six (26) witnesses reported that their mothers were in psychiatric hospitals and five others reported that their fathers had psychiatric illnesses. Ten (10) witnesses reported that one of their parents had tuberculosis and the remaining parent was unable to cope alone, resulting in the more dependant children being admitted to an Industrial School. Other witnesses reported that both parents had tuberculosis.

Mum had TB, my father couldn't look after us ... he was an alcoholic. I was put in by Court Order ...(with consent of parents).... My sisters joined me, except my eldest sister, she stayed with my Nan.... I have no recollection because I was only 18 months ...(old)... going there. Basically from what my sister told me I know it was 3 or 4 months after me that they came in. All my mam's family had died of TB, she was the only one that survived, basically she was on her own. I saw my father once, I remember him coming up one Christmas. I didn't know I had brothers until ...(later years)....

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Seven of us went into institutions. The baby she ...(mother)... kept and an older sister as well. The house was examined, it was in very poor circumstance. I have a letter from the sergeant ...displayed copy of correspondence and garda report.... My father had a disability. I remember it ...(admission)... distinctly. I was going in ... I was sitting on my mother's lap, she left me and she didn't come back and get me. ... She didn't visit until I was 5, I didn't recognise her as my mother.

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They brought us to the Court. I remember my father screaming ...distressed... he was a good father. I remember him playing with us, he was a good man, he'd play with me and my sister, he did not want us to go. I remember the love my parents had for me, they were poor and my mother was another religion.

- Thirty two (32) witnesses, 21 male and 11 female, reported being admitted to a School following family disruption through parental separation, cohabitation or as a result of extra marital relationships.
- Twenty seven (27) witnesses, 10 male and 17 female, reported that their parents, 20 fathers and seven mothers either were or had also been in prison.
- Five (5) witnesses, two male and three female, reported being admitted to a School because of familial sexual abuse.
- Sixty five (65) witnesses, 57 male and eight female, stated that they have not been able to determine the circumstances of their admission to institutional care.

Admission by Court Order

4.23 Six hundred and eighty four (684) admissions of 356 male and 314 female witnesses were required by Order of a Court. These included 14 admissions to more than one institution under separate Court Orders. The admissions took place as the result of a Court Order under provisions of the Children Act, 1908, as amended, and the School Attendance Acts, 1926-1967.

4.24 The following chart summarises the provisions of the Children Act, 1908, as amended, and the School Attendance Acts, 1926-1967 under which these witnesses were admitted to Industrial and Reformatory Schools.

Table 12: Summary of Statutory Provisions under which Witnesses were Detained in Industrial and Reformatory Schools – Male and Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools

Source of jurisdiction	Grounds	Number of court orders males	Number of court orders females
Children Act, 1908 section	In need of Care/Protection where the child was under 15 years old (under 14 up to 1942)		
58(1)(a)	Found begging or receiving alms	10	22
58(1)(b)	Found not having a home or not having parent/guardian exercising proper guardianship.	141	207
58(1)(c)	Found destitute where parent/s are in prison.	3	7
133(17)	Found destitute being an orphan.	3	3
58(1)(d)	Having a parent/guardian who by reason of reputed criminal or drunken habits is therefore unfit to have care of the child.	15	31
58(1)(h)	Found destitute and parent/s unable to support child.	30	38
Children Act, 1908	Uncontrollable		
58(4)	Parent unable to control the child and desires child be sent to Industrial School.	4	1
Children Act, 1908	Offender – Committal to Industrial School		
58(2)	Child under 12 charged with offence, where Court decides to send him or her to Industrial rather than Reformatory School.	25	0
58(3)	Child aged between 12 and 14,(13 before 1942), charged with an offence, and not previously convicted, where Court decides to send him or her to Industrial rather than Reformatory School, and he or she will not exercise an evil influence over other children there.	40	1
Children Act, 1908	Offender – Committal to Reformatory School		
57(1)	Offender from age 12 up, but less than 17, (16 before 1942), could be sent to Reformatory School.	42	2
School Attendance Acts, 1926-1967	Non-Attendance at School		
Section 17(4)	Where parent has used all reasonable efforts to cause child to attend school or is convicted for second time (of failing or neglecting to send a child to school).	55	1
Others ³		1	2
Total admissions by Court Order		369	315

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

³ For reasons of confidentiality details regarding the provisions governing these admissions cannot be specified.

- 4.25** The section of legislation under which witnesses were most frequently admitted to the School system was section 58(1)(b) of the Children Act, 1908, under which 141 male admissions (38%) and 207 female admissions (66%) were effected. Section 58(1)(b) of the Act provides for situations where a child is found not having a home or having a parent or guardian not exercising proper guardianship.
- 4.26** There were six witnesses admitted under section 133(17) of the 1908 Act, which specifically provided for the detention of children ‘found destitute, being an orphan’.⁴
- 4.27** One hundred and eleven (111) admissions (16%) of 107 male and four female witnesses were under sections of the Children Act, 1908 that refer to offenders. Twenty five (25) of these admissions were of witnesses who were charged with offences when they were less than 12 years old and a further 41 were of witnesses who were aged between 12 and 14 years.
- 4.28** Fifty six (56) witnesses, all except one of whom were male, were admitted to the School system under section 17(4) of the School Attendance Act, 1926. This Act and its amendments were applied to children who failed to attend school and were younger than the official school leaving age of 14 years. School Attendance Officers and gardaí generally initiated Court proceedings in these circumstances.
- 4.29** Many witnesses who gave evidence to the Committee reported being angry that the wording of their Court Order appeared to ‘criminalise’ them for reasons such as ‘found not having any home or settled place of abode, or visible means of subsistence, or having a parent or guardian who does not exercise proper guardianship’.⁵ The absurdity of an infant being charged with ‘receiving alms’ was remarked upon.⁶

Age on first admission

- 4.30** The following information refers to what was known regarding witnesses’ age when they were first admitted to any form of care outside their own family. Many witnesses were admitted to Schools from other institutions where they may have resided from birth or early childhood. The age of first admission to out-of-home care for both male and female witnesses is shown in Table 13:

Table 13: Age on First Admission to Out-of-home Care – Male and Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools

Age at first admission	Males	%	Females	%	Total witnesses	%
0–5 years	133	32	244	65	377	48
6–10 years	119	29	99	26	218	28
11–15 years	144	35	35	9	179	23
16–17 years	17	4	0	0	17	2
Total	413	100	378	100	791	(100)*

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

*Some rounding up/down was applied to percentages

- 4.31** The marked difference in the age profile of witnesses’ admission to out-of-home care is demonstrated in this table. One hundred and thirty three (133) male witnesses (32%) compared

⁴ Section 133(17) of the Children Act, 1908.

⁵ Section 58(1)(b) of the Children Act, 1908.

⁶ Section 58(1)(a) of the Children Act, 1908.

with 244 female witnesses (65%) were admitted to out-of-home care in their first five years of life and 61% of male witnesses compared to 91% of female witnesses reported being placed in out-of-home care by the age of 10 years. Finally, 161 male witnesses (35%) were first admitted to care at age 11 years or older, compared with 35 female witnesses (9%).

Length of stay

- 4.32** It can be observed from information provided by witnesses that the length of stay in out-of-home care varied depending on a number of factors including their age at the time of admission and the particular reasons for their admission. As shown in Table 13, most female witnesses were admitted at a young age and spent longer periods of time in institutions. By contrast, a higher percentage of male witnesses (39%) than female (9%) were admitted over the age of 10 years and were discharged within six years.
- 4.33** The majority of witnesses were in care for more than six years. The average length of stay for male witnesses was seven and a half years and the average length of stay for female witnesses was 11 years. Table 14 below shows the length of stay in out-of-home care for both male and female witnesses:

Table 14: Length of Stay in Out-of-home Care – Male and Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools

Length of stay in care	Males	%	Females	%	Total witnesses	%
0–5 years	181	44	53	14	234	30
6–10 years	109	26	103	27	212	27
11–15 years	99	24	181	48	280	35
16+ years	24	6	41	11	65	8
Total	413	100	378	100	791	100

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 4.34** As the table shows, 345 witnesses (44%), 123 male (30%) and 222 female (59%), were in out-of-home care for more than 10 years. Two hundred and thirty four (234) witnesses (30%), 181 male and 53 female, were in out-of-home care for five years or less.
- 4.35** Witnesses admitted to Schools for committing an offence under sections 57(1) and 58(3) of the Children Act, 1908 were generally admitted at a later age and for a briefer and defined period of time than those admitted under section 58(1)(b). For the female witnesses brief admissions to Schools were an unusual experience and in most instances reflected admissions at a later age in the context of a family crisis or an offence.

Age when discharged

- 4.36** Four hundred and eleven (411) of the 791 witnesses (52%), 198 male and 213 female, were discharged from the Schools when they were 16 years of age or older. With the exception of admission to Reformatory Schools, it was most often reported that court-ordered admissions were until the witness was 16 years rather than for a specified number of years. Seventy five (75) witnesses were discharged before their 14th birthday, 30 of whom were male and 45 female. Table 15 shows the age of discharge for both male and female witnesses.

Table 15: Age when Discharged from Out-of-home Care – Male and Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools

Age when discharged	Males	%	Females	%	Total witnesses	%
<10 years	3	1	11	3	14	2
10–13 years	27	7	34	9	61	8
14–16 years	315	76	243	64	558	71
17+ years	68	16	90	24	158	20
Total	413	100	378	100	791	(100)*

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

*Some rounding up/down was applied to percentages

- 4.37** Five hundred and fifty eight (558) witnesses (71%) left the School system between the ages of 14 and 16 years. Of those, 319 witnesses (40%), 130 male (31%) and 189 female (50%), reported being discharged when they were 16 years old. A further 158 witnesses (20%) were discharged up to 10 years later. Forty eight (48) of those witnesses, six male and 42 female, reported being kept on to work either within the School or for an individual or a service associated with the School.
- 4.38** Sixty nine (69) witnesses, 19 male and 50 female, who remained in the School system after their 16th birthday, had been in institutional care since they were aged three years or younger and were regarded as orphans, having no known family contact. Thirty eight (38) male witnesses who were discharged over the age of 16 years were admitted under Court Orders that permitted their detention until they were 18 years old. Sixteen (16) witnesses, eight male and eight female, remained residents in the School after their 16th birthday to continue secondary education.⁷
- 4.39** The next five chapters of the Report summarise the evidence provided by witnesses regarding family contact, everyday experiences and abuse while in the Schools.

⁷ With permission from the Department of Education and the consent of the parent(s) or guardian, detention could be extended beyond the residents' sixteenth birthday (but not beyond their seventeenth birthday) for the purpose of further education or training. See section 12 of the Children Act, 1941.