

## Chapter 9

# Record of abuse (female witnesses)

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- 9.01** This chapter summarises the nature and extent of abuse reported to the Committee by 378 female witnesses in relation to Schools in Ireland that admitted girls. The 378 witnesses made 389 reports regarding four types of abuse specified by the Acts.<sup>1</sup> They are physical and sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse. Not all Schools were reported for each of the four types of abuse.
- 9.02** The report of abuse by a witness may either refer to a single episode or multiple experiences of being abused in a School. In most instances reports of abuse refer to more than one episode of abuse and more than one type of abuse. One hundred and twenty three (123) witness reports (32%) were of all four types of abuse. Eleven (11) witnesses reported abuse in more than one School.
- 9.03** The chapter is divided into five parts that address each of the four abuse types and what was known about the abuse at the time it occurred. The reports of abuse compiled in this chapter refer to admissions to Schools between 1914 and 1988. Twelve (12) of these witness reports refer to abuse in both Schools and 'Other Institutions'. The reports of abuse in relation to 'Other Institutions' are referred to in Chapters 12-18.<sup>2</sup>
- 9.04** For the purpose of compiling this Report, witness evidence is presented by period of discharge as follows: pre-1960s, 1960s, 1970s and 1980s. Witnesses who were discharged in one period may have spent time in care in the previous decade(s).<sup>3</sup>

## Physical abuse

*The wilful, reckless or negligent infliction of physical injury on, or failure to prevent such injury to, the child.*<sup>4</sup>

- 9.05** This section describes witness evidence of actual incidents of physical abuse, non-accidental injury and lack of protection by failing to prevent such abuse, given in evidence by witnesses to the Committee. Witnesses described being abused by many means including being beaten, punched, bitten, kicked, slapped and bodily assaulted by hand and by implements, being force fed, physically restrained, burned and subjected to deliberate physical cruelty. The Committee heard disturbing accounts of severe assaults causing injuries.

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<sup>1</sup> A number of witnesses were admitted to more than one School, and made reports of abuse in more than one School, therefore the number of reports are greater than the number of witnesses.

<sup>2</sup> 'Other Institutions' – includes: general, specialist and rehabilitation hospitals, foster homes, primary and second-level schools, Children's Homes, laundries, Noviciates, hostels and special needs schools (both day and residential) that provided care and education for children with intellectual, visual, hearing or speech impairments and others.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Section 1(1)(a).

## Nature and extent of physical abuse reported

**9.06** There were 383 reports of physical abuse given in evidence to the Committee by 374 witnesses (99%) involving 39 Schools. Witnesses reported being physically abused by religious and lay staff and other adults who were associated with the Schools. Witnesses also reported being physically abused by co-residents. The number of witness reports heard in relation to physical abuse in different Schools diverged widely:

- Three (3) Schools were collectively the subject 144 reports<sup>5</sup>
- Eight (8) Schools were the subject of 12-18 reports, totalling 119 reports
- Nine (9) Schools were the subject of 6-10 reports, totalling 74 reports
- Nineteen (19) Schools were the subject of 1-5 reports, totalling 46 reports.

**9.07** In most instances, reports of physical abuse were combined with reports of other types of abuse. The following table illustrates the combinations of abuse types and the frequency with which the different combinations were reported by witnesses:

**Table 32: Physical Abuse Combined with Other Abuse Types – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

Abuse types	Number of reports	%
Physical, emotional and neglect	226	59
Physical, emotional, neglect and sexual	123	32
Physical and neglect	20	5
Physical and emotional	8	2
Physical	3	1
Physical, emotional and sexual	2	1
Physical and sexual	1	(0)
<b>Total reports</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>(100)*</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

\*Some rounding up/down was applied

**9.08** One hundred and twenty three (123) witness reports (32%) were of all four types of abuse. With six exceptions every report of abuse made by witnesses included reports of physical abuse and, as indicated, physical abuse was most often reported in conjunction with emotional abuse and neglect (59%). In 126 instances (33%), physical abuse was also reported with sexual abuse and the Committee heard three witness reports of physical abuse only.

**9.09** As with male witnesses, the largest number of reports made to the Committee relates to witnesses discharged during the 1960s. Table 33 shows the distribution of witness accounts of physical abuse across the decades covered by this Report:

<sup>5</sup> In order to maintain confidentiality further details regarding the numbers of abuse reports in these Schools cannot be specified.

**Table 33: Number of Physical Abuse Reports by Decade of Witnesses' Discharge – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

Decade of discharge	Number of physical abuse reports	%
Pre-1960s	132	34
1960-69	175	46
1970-79	69	18
1980-89	7	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>383</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 9.10** Physical abuse was a component of the vast majority of abuse reported in all decades and 46% of physical abuse reports refer to witnesses who were discharged from Schools between 1960 and 1969. It is noted, however, that approximately 50% of the witnesses discharged in the 1960s were in institutional care for most, if not all, of the previous decade.

***Description of physical abuse***

- 9.11** The forms of physical abuse reported by witnesses ranged from being smacked on the hand to being beaten naked in front of others. They described being hit, slapped, beaten, kicked, pushed, pinched, burned, bitten, shaken violently, physically restrained, and force fed. The Committee also heard reports of witnesses having their heads knocked against walls, desks and window ledges, being beaten on the soles of their feet, the backs of their hands, around their heads and ears, having their hair pulled, being swung off the ground by their hair, and made to perform tasks that they stated put them at risk of harm and danger. The locations where physical abuse was most frequently reported to have occurred included dormitories, refectories, landings, corridors, classrooms, churches, offices, kitchens, work areas and recreation halls.

*(We were)... beaten everywhere, bang your head off the wall, pinch your cheeks, beat you with a cane.... She ...(Sr X)... would grab you and hit you.*



*I remember once I got a big yellow blister on my hand, it was really painful.... Normally when you got a beating from someone you had to hold your hand out for a slap like that ... (demonstrated outstretched palm)... not always of course, some of them would hit you anywhere on the legs or anywhere. ... She ... (Sr X)... said "Why are you holding your hand out like that? Give me the other hand"... You have to have 10 on that hand and 10 on the other. I couldn't part with this hand, it was yellow and throbbing it was, and she forced it open and slapped it. The blister burst, I'll never forget the pain.*

- 9.12** Further forms of physical abuse described by witnesses involved being made to kneel for hours on hard surfaces, both indoors and in outside yards, being locked in confined and dark areas such as coal houses, furnace rooms, animal sheds, broom cupboards and fridges, made to stand for lengthy periods and being doused and immersed in cold water.

- 9.13** The physical abuse described by the majority of witnesses included both detailed accounts of particular beatings and more generalised accounts of the daily experience of being hit and otherwise physically abused or witnessing others being abused.

***Implements of physical abuse***

- 9.14** The most commonly reported implement used to physically abuse a resident was some type of a wooden stick. One hundred and sixty six (166) female witnesses reported being hit or beaten with wooden sticks, blackthorn sticks, rulers, pointers, window poles, wooden spoons and other

kitchen implements, chair legs, wooden crutches, hurley sticks, cricket bats, coat hangers, towel rollers and sally rods. A further 77 witness reports were heard of being hit or beaten with bamboo canes. *'They would hit you anywhere, the nuns, with a wooden spoon, a silver spoon or a cane. I remember I had the stripe of the cane on my leg, the mark.'*

*I remember getting the spoon, the wooden spoon. Sr ...X... was running after me and I was running from her, you would be all stinging and raw where she hit you. You would be sore.*

**9.15** Ninety nine (99) witness accounts were heard of being beaten with leather straps, including cinctures, some *'with strings attached to them'* and thin straps on occasion referred to as whips. In addition there were a further eight accounts of witnesses being hit with large Rosary beads and crucifixes that nuns wore at their waist.

**9.16** There were 37 witness reports of being beaten with brushes of various kinds, including hand brushes, sweeping brushes, hairbrushes and yard brushes.

*Once she ... (named lay care staff)... came into the dormitory and another girl and I were talking, she went and got a wooden hairbrush and she came and pulled down my pyjamas and she whacked me on the bottom. She whacked me so hard it was impossible to sleep afterwards, and the next day it was still sore.*

**9.17** Having objects such as a wooden statue, metal tray and knives thrown at them was reported as a physical abuse by a small number of witnesses.

**9.18** In addition to being hit, witnesses reported that, at times they were burned, had water thrown over them or were held under water, as described:

- Nineteen (19) witnesses reported being put into cold or scalding baths or showers.
- Twelve (12) witnesses reported having water thrown over them, five of whom were scalded with hot tea or water.
- Eight (8) witnesses reported having their heads held under water, including two whose heads were held under a cold running tap.
- Five (5) witnesses reported being burned with hot pokers or by having their hands held to a fire or on a hot stove.
- Two (2) witnesses reported having their fingers held to electric sockets.

*One of the girls she was very sick. I let her come into my bed one morning, she was very, very ill. They brought me down to the shoe room, they stripped me off, they threw cold water over me ... (prior to severe beating)... It was the shoe room you know where all the shoes were, even now if I get the smell of shoe polish, the feeling of enclosure, it was awful.*

**9.19** Six (6) witnesses gave accounts of nettles being used by nuns when punishing residents. They described being pushed into patches of nettles, hit on the legs with them, and, in one instance, their bed being full of nettles. *'Sr ...X... put nettles in the bed of the girls who wet the bed.'* Other witnesses described being pinched with pliers, jabbed with a knitting needle, hit with shoes, a shovel, wet dishcloths, bunches of keys, serving spoons, scissors, electric cord and the treadle belt from a sewing machine.

### ***Circumstances of physical abuse***

**9.20** Witnesses described being beaten and otherwise physically abused for many reasons and for no reason at all, which created an environment of pervasive fear. They described physical

abuse in the context of being punished for some misdemeanour, real or perceived, or simply for being in the wrong place at the wrong time. *'No reason was needed, I was hit because I could be hit.'* Witnesses who had little or no family contact, those who were described as orphans, were reported to be most vulnerable to harsh physical discipline.

**9.21** The most commonly reported circumstances that precipitated beatings were: bed-wetting, rule breaking, 'stealing' food, perceived failure at work or educational tasks, soiled or torn clothing, disclosing abuse to others, talking, untidiness, answering back, running away, left-handedness, indiscipline, being cheeky, talking to boys, appearing to engage male attention, having fun and refusing to eat. Other behaviours for which witnesses reported being physically abused included: perceived misbehaviour of younger siblings, babies in their care crying, being sick, linking arms with another resident and not getting up in the morning when called. As one witness said: *'I suppose I was bold, but how bold can a child of 9 be?'*

**9.22** There were consistent reports from witnesses of particularly harsh and humiliating methods of physical punishment and abuse for certain behaviours, for example bed-wetting, running away, school work and not meeting the required standard for hygiene and personal care.

### **Bed-wetting and soiling**

**9.23** One hundred and seven (107) witnesses (28%) reported being beaten and otherwise physically punished for bed-wetting during their time in Schools. The Committee also heard a small number of accounts of physical abuse for soiling. There were accounts heard of severe abuse for bed-wetting and soiling by witnesses discharged in all decades up to and including the 1980s. It was reported as routine for residents to have their beds inspected in the morning and those with wet sheets were punished. Witnesses reported being beaten for bed-wetting in the morning and/or in some Schools again at night, either on the hands or bare buttocks, with a cane, strap or wooden brush. Witnesses described the usual procedure for managing wet bedclothes was to take the wet sheets from the bed and either carry them to the laundry or to a drying room. Twenty three (23) witnesses reported standing with their wet sheet on their head or shoulder outside the Sister's office, often that of the Resident Manager, waiting to be beaten. Twenty seven (27) witnesses also reported being made to wear their wet sheets during breakfast, to the classroom or while saying the Rosary.

*If you wet the bed, Sr ...X... made you stand out at the bed with the sheet over your head, if you fell asleep she would come out with the stick. She hit you on the back and then you would be so sore you couldn't sleep.*

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*You'd be hammered, I used to get killed for it ...(soiling the bed).... Sr ...X... with a cane she used to call me into a small room, she'd be pacing up and down, she would lay into me.*

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*Every night you ...(bed-wetters)... would have to stand at the end of your bed, holding on to the bed, she ...(lay care staff)... would tell you to face straight ahead, in your nightdress, she would hit you with a steel coat hanger, other staff would hold up the nightdress. If you got into bed and cried you would have to get out and the same would happen again.*

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*I started wetting the bed. I don't remember wetting the bed before I was about 6 or 7. There were about 30 of us in the dormitory, only a handful of us wet the bed. We had to stay with the younger ones until we stopped wetting the bed and in my case that was about 10 or 11.... We had long brown mackintoshes ... (rubber sheets)... under our sheets, I remember pulling the sheets off so you wouldn't wet the sheet, if you wet the*

*mackintosh maybe nobody would notice. We had to bring our wet sheets to the girl in charge who would swipe you across the face with it and bring you in to the dressing room for a flogging. I remember trying so hard not to wet the bed.... I remember sitting on the toilet and falling asleep, going back to bed and still waking up soaking wet.*

- 9.24** Witnesses described the distress they experienced observing their younger siblings being physically punished for bed-wetting. Many described protecting them from beatings by any means, including pretending that they had wet the beds themselves and taking the punishment instead of their siblings. They also described hiding wet sheets and trying to dry sheets in advance of an inspection. In some instances witnesses reported swapping their sibling's wet sheet with that of another resident who was then punished instead.

*The girls who wet the bed got beaten. I never wet the bed but my sister did and my older sister and I used to get up early and make sure her bed was dry so that she didn't get hit, the babies who wet the bed got beaten. We would change her bed. I know it's a horrible thing but we would change the bed with someone else, so that she did not get hit and if we didn't get time we'd change her with our own bed and we'd take the beating. We just didn't want her to get hit, she was only a baby. The punishment was, beaten with a leather strap all over. The nun used to get a big girl to go around and check what one was wet, what one was dry. You couldn't save everyone you know.*

- 9.25** Other methods of punishment described for bed-wetting in a small number of Schools were being locked in a cupboard, put into cold baths, beaten with nettles, and put into clothes dryers and other confined spaces. Six (6) witnesses from one School reported being made to spend the night outside in the pig sty or locked under the stairs as punishment for bed-wetting.

### **Classroom education**

- 9.26** The Committee heard evidence from 58 witnesses of being physically abused in the classroom. They reported being hit on the back of the legs, knuckles, backs or palms of hands with sticks, canes, rulers and straps. Witnesses stated that the precipitants for punishment included, not giving the right answer, academic inability, talking, '*being cheeky*', inability to speak Irish, left-handedness, and making mistakes, for instance in needlework or playing a musical instrument. Witnesses who attended 'outside' school in the local area frequently stated that they were beaten for being late and not having homework done as a result of the competing demands on them to do domestic chores in the School.

*There was one nun, a teacher, who beat me black and blue, there were lumps and bruises on the back of me hands. All this beating was over Irish lessons which I never used since.*

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*I was left handed, they used to tie my hand. You were told to pick your stick, you were told to pick out your bamboo ...(to be beaten with).... The more you screamed the more you got beaten.... If you pulled back your hand you got an extra beating.*

- 9.27** A number of witnesses reported being beaten every day in class because, due to learning difficulties, they were unable to learn.

*I had an awful problem in the classroom, I had a problem reading. The more you made mistakes ... it was terrible ... she ...(Sr X)... would humiliate you, and it stays with you. Sr ...X... used hit me with this long belt, they used to have this long belt, they didn't care where they hit you it was just wallop, wallop.*

## Work

- 9.28** Forty seven (47) witnesses reported being physically abused in the context of work activities in the Schools. They described being required to work, both inside and outside the Schools, in many areas, in the kitchens, laundries, bakeries, workrooms, gardens, farms, bogs, convents and residences of clergy, from as young as five years of age. Witnesses reported being beaten as they worked scrubbing and polishing the floors of corridors, dormitories, refectories and staircases, and being beaten for not working fast enough or to the satisfaction of whoever was overseeing the work.

*There was the scrubbing, the drying, the polishing and if there was one speck you would have to do it all over again, she ... (lay care staff) ... would then hit you. She had total control, the nun just passed through, they were in the convent, they had nothing to do with us. I hated 3 o'clock in the afternoon because I had to go back to the work and they ... (town children) ... were going home ... from school, you were going back to her. You got beaten for nothing, she had free rein. Sometimes it would be a wooden brush, hair brush or a wooden spoon from the drawer. She also had a leather with a buckle she would hit you with it, but not with the buckle, the other end of the belt.*



*We would be put down in the dining hall, a massive big room, down on your knees, this would be a punishment, scrubbing, constantly on your knees. That was a punishment, you couldn't get up out of there until it was all clean, clean.*

- 9.29** Witnesses reported being physically abused in the performance of other domestic tasks such as not getting fires lit in time to heat water, scorching clerical vestments and religious habits, cutting themselves while slicing loaves of bread, dropping crockery, not chopping enough sticks or carrying enough coal, getting their clothes dirty while carrying coal, dropping trays while serving visitors in the parlours and burning bread in the bakery.

- 9.30** It was consistently reported that residents in charge of younger co-residents were punished for any perceived transgressions committed by the children for whom they were providing care. Witnesses reported being punished if their 'charge' wet their bed, wet or soiled their clothes or in other ways failed to do what they were expected to do.

*The older girls, we would have "charges", would be in charge of the younger girls. We would have to get up in the night and take them out to the ...toilet.... If they happened to wet the bed you would get beaten for it. They couldn't help wetting the bed, but you got beaten for that.... If your charge was found with lice in their hair you would be punished for it, you were supposed to keep one another's hair clean.*

- 9.31** The Committee heard evidence that some work activities involved safety risks for the residents, for example being given responsibility for lighting and maintaining furnace fires, carrying heavy pots of boiling water and food, cleaning windows on upper floors and being sent alone to work for people who were unknown to them. Other witnesses reported that being taken out of class and being deprived of recreation was punitive. Certain work tasks were considered physically abusive in themselves; for example, four witnesses reported having to clear blocked drains and toilets with their bare hands on a regular basis as physically abusive.

*I was seldom allowed out to the yard to play with the other kids. I remember that I was washing nappies, doing the washing, servile work, out in the ... yard, breaking sticks, I was about 9 or 10 maybe. The working continued until I left. I remember being out in the ... yard, and to the best of my memory they were like floorboards, piles of old floorboards, like from old buildings and we had to chop them up into small sticks for the fire. I was in possession of a hatchet, I remember hitting it off the concrete and watching*

*the sparks fly, thinking maybe I'd like to be hitting something else. We'd be out there hail, rain or snow. I'd be burned in the summer and soaked in the winter.*

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*At 12 years I was taken out of school to work. I got the 9 toilets to do ...(cleaning toilets)... then I had to work in the kitchen.... Then there was the chickens we used to have to put the head of the chicken under the handle of a brush and twist its neck, you know, then it would be dead and we used to have to put it in a bucket of hot water to pluck the feathers. I never saw the chickens after that, I don't remember ever eating chicken. I used to see other girls ... (when working)... and I'd see them in the summer holiday, and they would be typing but I didn't, I didn't get that chance. ... I don't know why.*

### **Personal care**

- 9.32** One hundred and thirty three (133) witnesses cited various aspects of personal care as the focus of physical abuse. Torn or dirty clothing was reported to provoke punishment, as did losing hair clips, shoe buckles, hair ribbons and handkerchiefs. Witnesses also reported being beaten if they failed an inspection for cleanliness following bathing or washing. Others reported that they were beaten for not having their socks pulled up properly, poor posture, for wearing a bra and for having long, untidy or lice infested hair.

*We washed our feet at night time in very, very cold water, it was out in a back yard.... There would be a couple of old towels there to dry them. You then went in and had to kneel down for the inspection. There was this lady there ...(lay care staff).... If there was one speck on your feet, she whipped you across the legs with a cane and you were put out again. If there was a speck on your sheet the Reverend Mother would come up and you were lined up for a thrashing.... She had a certain way of doing it. She'd get the lady to hold your hand and she'd beat you until she was tired and then she'd beat the other.*

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*One lay member of staff ...X... she was cruel, she was absolutely cruel. There was one punishment she gave me that I will never forget it in my life. She used to say "hold your head up", she was very nasty. She got my hair and she tied it and she pulled my head back like that ... (demonstrated hair being tied to belt at back holding head up in fixed position) ... and she got a string and she tied it up. Oh the pain of it. So my head was up like that, held like that for a couple days, that is why I will never forget it. The nuns knew of it but they gave her a free hand.*

- 9.33** Thirty seven (37) witnesses reported being beaten for having soiled sheets or pants and/or seeking sanitary protection when menstruating. Facilities for managing menstruation were widely reported as poor and witnesses described being fearful of asking for sanitary protection. This fear inevitably led to clothes and sheets being soiled, and consequent punishment. The lack of toilet paper and washing facilities were reported by witnesses to contribute further to soiled underwear.

*Queuing up for your underwear once a fortnight, I always dreaded it. They would check your underwear and if they were soiled you would get whacked for it with a hand brush, 21 times. It was ...named lay care staff... who done it. ... So on Wednesday night you would wash it and wear it wet so that you wouldn't get hit.*

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*The washroom was known as the most fearful, there was no escape.... If the toothpaste was all gone by the end of the year you got beaten. Then there was the underwear, you all had to undress in front of everybody and then you would have to walk up to her*

...(lay care staff)... with your underwear, if it was stained you had to wear it on your head and stand there and then you got beaten by her.

**9.34** Head lice and scabies were reported as contributing to the risk of physical abuse in the form of head shaving, hair cutting and 'body-painting' with white emulsion. The manner in which these treatments were undertaken was the source of many witness reports of physical abuse. The emulsion caused skin irritation and was reported to have been applied in a rough manner with large brushes.

**9.35** Fourteen (14) witnesses who were discharged prior to 1970 reported having teeth taken out without any anaesthetic. Witnesses reported that crying when teeth were being extracted led to physical abuse by accompanying staff members in a number of instances.

### **Rule breaking**

**9.36** The Committee heard evidence of witnesses being physically punished for rule breaking. Examples of rule breaking were talking during 'silent periods', running in corridors, entering places that were out-of-bounds, fainting or coughing in church, getting out of bed at night, being in another resident's bed, talking to boys and being thought to seek male attention and talking to town children. Examples of being punished for rule breaking included the following witness accounts:

*It was a cruel harsh place.... It was illegal to go out. ... Our letters were always opened and read, she ...(Mth X)... asked "who posted this letter you wrote to your mother?" She came into the dining hall where we eat our meal. ... I knew I was in deep trouble. Sr ...Y... came right up to me and told me "you posted the letters, why didn't you own up?" I said I was afraid, she said to me "you go right up to Mth ...X...". She was outside walking, I told her I posted the letter, she drew out and she hit me across the face several times and "now", she said, "go down and stand up on the table in the refectory and when I go down I will deal with you". I went down and took my shoes off and stood up on the table. She came down and told me to go up to her room. She sent ...lay care staff... to get the cane, she beat me and beat me and beat me, it went on for weeks every time she would pass, she would be walking, she beat me on the legs with a cane. Once when I felt faint I went to pass out, they said I was as white as a sheet, I heard her say "it's not my fault I didn't do anything to her". ... It was Mth ...X... she was the one who would do all the beatings, after that she began to ease off on me, she got ...lay care staff... to help, if ...lay care staff... wasn't around she did it on her own too.*



*Well this night she ...co-resident... was having fits and I was frightened and I got into the bed of another girl. The nun come up in the morning and found us, she made us sleep on the concrete floor, locked in the cloakroom for 3 nights for getting into the bed of another girl. We didn't know what we had done wrong.*

**9.37** Rules of silence were enforced in most Schools at some part of the day. Witnesses discharged in the period up to 1970 reported in many Schools it was routine for work and most day-to-day activities to be conducted in silence, as described:

*The silence was terrible, we suffered in silence, hours and hours of silence, worked in silence and got a severe beating if caught talking.*

**9.38** Witnesses described how as children they were forced to lie in their beds in certain positions including: on their backs with their arms crossed over their chests, on their right side, arms crossed and facing the chapel or with their arms crossed on top of the bedclothes. Inspections were carried out and children woken and, in some instances, physically punished if found not lying correctly.

*You had to sleep with hands out like this ...(demonstrating position)... and your fingers touching you shoulders it was like that and it was very uncomfortable, if you moved you got a beating.*

**9.39** Witnesses reported that they were punished for answering back, being assertive, defending others or attempting to intervene on their behalf in the course of a beating. These behaviours were described as frowned upon and heavily sanctioned.

**9.40** Refusing to eat was another reported precursor to punishment as it was generally expected that all food would be eaten. Witnesses described nausea, distaste and illness as reasons for refusing to eat. Forty one (41) witnesses reported being forced to eat, frequently by having their heads held and mouths prised open. Seven (7) witnesses reported being beaten for refusing to eat and eight others reported being physically forced to eat regurgitated food.

*I remember sitting at the table and, excuse me now, but being forced to eat my own vomit because you were not allowed leave the table until you eat, if you didn't eat it I would get a slap for retching. Sr ...X... hit on the head. They used to hit with the ring they had on their finger or with the knuckles on the head or with a steel comb. The food would be there the next day and it would be left there until you eat it, you would be days without eating and there would be mould on it, so you would have to eat it.*

**9.41** Taking food from the kitchen, pantry, fields, gardens, scrap buckets and animal houses was regarded as rule breaking and punished accordingly. Twenty two (22) witnesses reported being beaten for 'stealing' food. All reported that they took the food because they were hungry or in some instances because it was irresistibly appetising as in the case of scraps from the convent kitchen or the priests' breakfast tray.

*I was hungry, I took an apple. ... I took it off the ground, one of the nuns caught me ... and she gave me a slap on the face ... and she said "when you come in I want to see you". I was kind of afraid, I was kinda confused. I said to myself "will I get over the railings or what will I do?" ... Anyway they called me out and 6 nuns held me and they cut my hair ...crying.... I just can't believe that some people would do that to me. I don't know why they done that, if I had done something, I don't know why they done it, I did nothing wrong, I was hungry.*

### **Absconding – running away**

**9.42** Twenty one (21) witnesses reported running away for reasons including physical and sexual abuse. Eleven (11) witnesses who ran away reported being severely beaten when they were returned to the School. Nine (9) of these witnesses were returned by the Gardaí and described often being greeted warmly on their return and later beaten by one or more Sisters when the Gardaí had left. Five (5) witnesses reported being beaten in a small room separate from the other girls.

**9.43** Witnesses consistently reported that residents who absconded were severely beaten in a small number of Schools either naked or partially clothed when they were returned. The public nature and severity of the beatings were described as traumatic, serving as a caution against absconding and leaving a lasting impression on those who witnessed them.

*The police took us back, it was the second time I ran away. I was stripped to my knickers, Sr ...X... was supposed to hold me and she started beating me as well as Sr ...Y.... I was 13 years, I was beaten in the rec in front of everybody, it did not happen in that way again.*

**9.44** Other punishments for absconding reported by witnesses included three witness accounts of being locked in small rooms and given bread and water or cocoa for several days after running

away. Other witnesses described seeing co-residents following such beatings with their heads shaved, bruised and marked. A number of witnesses reported having their hair cut or head shaved as a punishment for running away.

*They cut my hair ... they had this big thing, a blade, you know like an old man shaving, one of the nuns just had this thing on my head like a man for shaving himself.*



*I suppose we were about 9 or thereabouts, 3 girls from the orphanage got out, they ran away and got about 12 miles.... They were caught by the Gardaí and brought back. Not that night but maybe the next night, we were all brought to this inner parlour. ... There was tiered seating in each parlour ... we had to sit and watch. They ...(Sr X and Sr Y)... were there, and Sr ...Z... was brought over from the convent, this was all planned, she was to beat these girls who ran away. Sr ...Z... she was really, really cruel we were terrified of her, Sr ...X... and Sr ...Y ... and she took out the leg of a chair, it was the leg of a chair, that's as true as I'm sitting here sitting looking at your face, she took it out from under her garb, and she lashed into these girls and we were all terrified. We were spectators, an exhibition was made out of them and she beat those girls into pulp for running away. She took the leg of a chair back to the convent with her because they did not want us to see it. That has stayed with me, to this day I have nightmares about it.*

### **Specific practices used in physical abuse**

- 9.45** Witnesses reported that staff at times employed severe practices that increased the traumatic impact of the physical abuse to which they were subjected. The most frequently reported such practices were 'thrashing', delayed punishment, being beaten by more than one person and in front of others.

### **Severe beatings and thrashing**

- 9.46** Reports were heard of witnesses being severely beaten, the reason for which was not always clear to them. A number reported being severely beaten following disclosures of abuse, running away, and rule breaking. Other beatings were reported to be unpredictable and generally attributed to a small number of the named religious and lay staff. The most severe forms of such beatings were attributed to nine nuns. These beatings were generally referred to as 'thrashings', 'whippings' or 'floggings' and were described as physical assaults that were often administered in front of others.
- 9.47** The Committee heard 69 witness accounts of beatings by more than one person in relation to a small number of Schools, including nine that referred to witnesses more recently discharged in the 1970s. Such beatings were by two or more staff beating the witness simultaneously or one beating the witness while others, including co-residents, held them down. The role of the second person was either to hold the child being beaten or to participate in the beating. The public nature of these beatings was described by witnesses as a further component of the abuse that had a lasting traumatic effect. Twenty eight (28) witnesses reported being stripped of all their clothing to be beaten and another 41 witnesses reported being beaten partially naked either privately or in front of co-residents in areas including the dormitories, refectories or classrooms. Witnesses also reported being restrained to be beaten; for example, seven witnesses reported that their wrists were tied to the frame of the bed that they were lain across, either naked or with their nightdress pulled up.
- 9.48** Others described being made to bend over chairs or other furniture to be beaten on their bare bottom, backs of their legs and backs. Attempts to escape from the beating resulted in being beaten more severely. Witnesses reported that severe beatings at times caused injury, drew blood and generally left the witness marked with bruises, welts or red marks. One witness described her bottom looking 'like a plaid skirt' after a beating.

*She ... (Sr X)... brought me upstairs, she'd throw you on the first bed inside the dormitory door, she put me across the bed naked, it was always naked, herself and Sr ...Y... and tied me to the bed with a sort of a tweedy rope. She had this thing of tying you to the bed, an iron bed, you know, and you couldn't move then... She would beat you with the leather strap and count to 100 as she was beating. Then she'd say "get up and go down and do your homework". I know I was beaten often with a strap but I was beaten like that 5 or 6 times. If you cried you got worse so I learned not to cry.*

•

*She ...(Sr X)... literally took off your underwear and got one of the bigger girls to hold your hands and another held your legs and literally walloped you until you were bleeding and you were hot and sticky and you went to bed and slept that off if you could. ... (It would)... leave bumps on you.*

•

*If you did something bad during the day you would be laid across the table in the refectory, you would be beaten on the behind with the cane and anywhere else if you used your elbow to protect yourself. I was sent to the middle of the room, with all the children standing around so they could see. The other girls would be in the refectory, you would be beaten on the behind, your skirt lifted up. She ...(Sr X)... would have them there watching you, some of them would be crying, they would be scared.*

•

*After school I was told to go and wait at the top of the stairs, to a small room where Sr ...X... and Sr ...Y... would make you kneel with your knickers down. They would beat you on the bare backside with a stick, sometimes you would have to hold each other down. If you were on your own they would hold you by the hair ... 6 severe whacks with a stick, if you jumped around you would get more.*

**9.49** The Committee heard evidence from 31 witnesses of what they believed was a loss of control by staff to the point where other residents or staff intervened to protect a resident. They described the person beating them as 'in a lather of sweat' and 'out of control'. In relation to the most severe beatings witnesses described nuns being very angry and being in a rage. A small number of witnesses described being beaten to the point that they feared for their own lives and/or thought that the person beating them would collapse or suffer a heart attack.

*I remember her putting that cane in water and then whacking us, the cane had a crook and she would catch us around the neck. Mth ...X... she would loose control her eyes would roll, she would really flip, she would be in a sweat, her face would be so red.*

### **Delayed punishment**

**9.50** Witnesses from a small number of Schools stated that at times the more severe beatings were administered in a deliberate and planned manner. They described being made to wait, sometimes overnight for beatings by the Resident Manager or other religious staff. In a number of Schools it was reported that the Resident Manager publicly called out the names of residents who were to be beaten, at a later time, by another Sister. They reported that being sent to wait in a particular place generally indicated a more severe beating. Witnesses variously reported being 'sent to the office', to 'wait by your bed', 'stand on the landing', 'stand in the refectory' and 'wait outside the chapel'. Fifteen (15) witnesses reported being left waiting for lengthy periods of time, sometimes in the dark, naked or in their nightdress, to be physically punished. Others described waiting with co-residents for their turn to be beaten. Some witnesses described the waiting as often worse than the beating.

*She ... Sr ...X... would hit you with a cane in public, but she would hit you in private too. She would make me go to the dormitory and wait by my bed, I knew then it was going*

*to be a bad one. ... I'd have to get into my nightdress, and wait and when Sr ...X... would arrive I'd have to take it off. She'd beat on the bare bottom, she'd work up such a sweat I thought she was going to get a heart attack. She'd ... be breathless, no matter how you yelled you were sorry, you weren't sorry enough I guess.*

•

*She ...(Sr X)... had cuffs in her pocket, she'd take the cuffs out, we used make them, things you know you would put them up over your sleeves to protect whatever they had. She pulled the skirt up, they had a big wide skirt you know, and she'd pin the veil back over her shoulder like hair. She was getting herself ready, and she took her time doing it eyeballing me all the time, then she'd take out the strap, all rolled up in her pocket she carried it with her all the time on her, the keys were on a strap, she'd hit you with them, big huge keys too.*

## **Injuries**

**9.51** Witnesses made 136 reports of sustaining injuries as a result of physical abuse. Many witnesses reported more than one injury and 109 (80%) of the reports refer to admissions prior to 1970. The injuries included broken bones, head injuries and damage to eyes and ears, lacerations that required stitches as well as injuries to their backs, legs and arms. Thirty three (33) witnesses reported that they attended hospital with injuries received following physical abuse by religious and lay staff, eight of whom said that no questions were asked about how their injuries occurred.

- Fifty seven (57) witnesses reported bleeding and/or being marked with welts and bruises following physical assaults.
- Nineteen (19) witnesses reported receiving injuries to their head, four of whom lost consciousness.
- Eighteen (18) witnesses reported being attended by a local doctor for treatment of their injuries, including witnesses who had partially severed earlobes reattached.
- Thirteen (13) witnesses reported being left untreated following physical assault and injury.
- Thirteen (13) witnesses reported receiving eye or ear injuries following assault with a strap, stick or brush.
- Sixteen (16) witnesses reported broken noses or bones in their hands or arms.
- Ten (10) witnesses reported being scalded, burned by a hot poker or having their hands held over a fire.
- Nine (9) witnesses reported that as a result of beatings they were unable to sit, walk or move a limb for a time.
- Six (6) witnesses reported injuries with knives, in some instances requiring stitches.
- Four (4) witnesses reported treatment for infections caused by imbedded splinters and brush bristles as a result of beatings.

*My wrist broke, it was a nun broke it with a hurley ... (while beating witness)... there was metal bands around them. She whacked me, she caught me there ... (indicated spot on arm)... oh the pain it was awful, I was cheeky or something. When it's going to be bad weather it hurts.*

•

*She ...(Sr X)... had a pointer stick, you would have to put out your left hand and then your right. One time, after a beating from her I had to go to the infirmary and ...(Sr Y)... she put iodine on it ...(injured arm)... for me and I had to wear a sling on my arm, she made a timber sling from wood for me.*

Two nuns ...Sr X and Sr Y ...(beat me).... *I was in bits, Jesus Christ, it was just awful. They left me all night, it was cold there ...(shoe room)... the next morning they took me out, I was in bits I was all black and blue.... They took me to the infirmary and the nun there said "my God we are going to have to get her to hospital", they said "no". They left me in the infirmary.*

**9.52** The Committee heard from a number of witnesses that they were denied visits from their parents or were kept in bed, out of sight from visiting family members and inspectors, including seven witnesses who gave evidence of being hidden from visiting inspectors, because they were bruised or otherwise injured following beatings.

**9.53** There were 16 reports from witnesses of injury in one particular School, including three accounts of being unable to walk following a severe beating and four accounts of head injury. One witness reported being unconscious following a beating by two Sisters and then being hidden from the visiting doctor. Another witness reported the following experience of being severely beaten in the same School:

*Sr ...X... she took me by the top of the uniform and pulled me into the kitchen she gave me 16 of the best across the knuckles with the pantry roller.... At first I couldn't feel the pain because I was after being in such pain with the chilblains. Then she said "16 on the back".... She didn't get to finish the 16 on my legs the sweat was running off her so much. It was only when I went to move I collapsed, I couldn't move with the pain, my knees were twisted.... She called in 3 girls to help me up to my bed and there I stayed for almost 3 months. I couldn't move with the pain in my hands and my legs and I never even got a tablet. She told me not to open my mouth or if I did I'd get worse. I was warned to keep it to myself, I had an accident that was it.*

**9.54** Five (5) witnesses from another School reported injuries, including two who gave accounts of hospital admissions for head injuries in the 1960s. There were no injuries reported in any other period for this School. It is of note that in both this School and the School mentioned in the previous paragraph, the Resident Managers at the time were identified by witnesses as the perpetrators of many reports of severe beatings and abuse.

### **Reported abusers**

**9.55** Three hundred and seventy four (374) witnesses identified 354 people by name as physically abusive. Witnesses reported being physically abused by a variety of staff, religious and lay, who they understood were engaged as Resident Managers, teachers, nurses, care and ancillary staff. It should be noted that Resident Managers or their designated deputies were authorised as Disciplinarians, as regulated.

**9.56** In addition to reports of physical abuse by both religious and lay staff, there were a small number of adults not employed as staff, but associated with the Schools who were named as physical abusers. Witnesses also reported being abused by co-residents. In addition to those named as physically abusive by witnesses, there were six religious staff, 20 co-residents and 11 lay staff who were identified by their position but not by name.

**9.57** The following table lists by position held those reported as physical abusers by witnesses:

**Table 34: Position and Number of Reported and Named Physical Abusers – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

<b>Position held by named physical abusers</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<b>Religious</b>		
- Authority figure including Resident Manager	0	54
- Care staff	0	130
- Teacher	0	42
- Ancillary worker	0	15
- External priest or other clergy	4	0
<b>Lay</b>		
- Care staff	0	50
- Teacher	0	14
- Ancillary worker	2	15
<b>Weekend or holiday placement carer</b>	1	2
<b>Work placement provider</b>	0	2
<b>Co-resident</b>	0	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>347</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**9.58** As Table 34 shows the majority of those reported as physically abusive were female religious staff, reflecting the staffing profile in institutions in the period up to the 1970s. The witnesses described the different staff by name and according to their understanding of the staff person's position and role within the School.

**9.59** The term 'care staff' is used for the purpose of this Report to describe religious and lay staff whose main contact with the witnesses was in the context of their everyday care. Those described above as care staff were in charge of the dormitories and activities of daily living such as washing, dressing, meals and recreation. Care staff were described as having a more supervisory function and the ancillary workers were described as having designated tasks such as working in the laundries, kitchens or the Schools' grounds and farms. Witnesses generally believed that care staff employed in the Schools prior to the 1970s did not have professional training and reported that a small number were ex-residents of the Schools. Authority figures were generally religious staff who held what were perceived by the witnesses to be positions of authority. They were described as 'in charge', Officer in Charge, Sister in Charge, Reverend Mother or Resident Manger. The external male clergy who were described as physically abusive were reported to be priests and others of higher rank who at times provided a pastoral service to the School.

**Religious (staff and others)**

**9.60** Witnesses named 241 religious Sisters and four members of the clergy as physically abusive. The Committee heard evidence about a small number of Schools where named religious staff were reported as physically abusive by many different witnesses and in other Schools single witness reports were heard about many named abusers. For example, three Schools were the subject of 144 (38%) physical abuse reports, 72 of which were made in relation to two Sisters.

- Four (4) Sisters were named as physical abusers by 125 witnesses.
- Seventy six (76) Sisters were named as physical abusers by between 2-9 witnesses.
- Five (5) Sisters were named as physical abusers by between 10-20 witnesses.

- One hundred and sixty (160) religious, 156 Sisters and four members of the clergy, were named as physical abusers in single witness accounts.

**9.61** Among the 241 religious Sisters reported as abusive, 54 were identified as authority figures or the Resident Managers in charge of the Schools and 130 were described as care staff. In addition, 42 Sisters were described as teachers and 15 as ancillary workers occupied in the kitchens, laundries, sewing rooms and on the farms. The four members of the clergy identified as physically abusive were reported to have pastoral and other roles within the Schools and were described by witnesses as physically abusing them in different circumstances. A witness who was constantly punished for bed-wetting reported that she prayed and asked for guidance to stop bed-wetting. She reported the following consequences:

*I went to one nun and said "I had this dream that I saw God coming off the cross and he won't let me wet the bed anymore". I got a belt with her hand across the face. So she marched me down to the priest, made me go to Confession, I was to denounce the devil and all my sins. ... When I went in to make Confession I knew something was going to happen. I said "I saw God and he said I wasn't going to wet the bed anymore". I was made make a Confession, it was the same priest as said Mass every day. He brought me into the ...room... and he said "denounce the devil or you will go to hell". ... I said "but Father, I did see God and he said he won't let me wet the bed anymore". He made me bend over on a chair it was like a bishop's chair, and he lashed me. He made me take down my underwear. ... Next day I told them that it was a dream, I had told her it was a dream.*

#### **Lay care and ancillary staff**

**9.62** Witnesses identified 79 female and two male lay staff as physically abusive. As indicated in Table 34, 50 of the female lay staff were described as care workers and 14 were teachers. In a number of girl's Schools the title of 'teacher' was ascribed to lay staff who were not involved in a formal educational role.

**9.63** Ten (10) of the named lay care and ancillary workers were described by witnesses as former residents who it was believed were reared in the Schools and had spent their lives in the institution. Many witnesses expressed sympathy and understanding for that group of staff, who were employed in both care and ancillary roles within the Schools. Nine (9) female lay staff, including some former residents, were the focus of 70 witness reports and were recalled as extremely harsh in their dealings with witnesses and other residents. 'She was a lay worker Miss ...X (lay care staff)... used to hit us with the big keys, she was kind of a supervisor. I thought I was never going to get out alive.'

*When you got older you were allocated the task of looking after her ...(named lay care staff).... You would have to go into her room and tuck her into bed and then you would sometimes have to sleep in her room in the other single bed and you would be terrified that your breathing would waken her. You'd have to dust her room, mind her make up, and bring her tea in bed if she ever took a day off. I used to live out my life wondering how will I escape a beating, how will I escape being sent to bed without anything to eat? It could be a random outburst, somebody getting a beating for raising your eyes, for getting your hat wet.*

**9.64** Two (2) men employed as tradesmen and general handymen in the institutions were reported to have been physically abusive, one of whom was reported to have assisted a religious Sister, at her request, to beat a witness.

## Co-residents

- 9.65 Witnesses reported that in a small number of Schools there was pervasive bullying and in many instances it was stated that bullying occurred with the knowledge and awareness of staff. Fifty three (53) witnesses reported being beaten or otherwise physically abused by co-residents, 23 of whom were identified by name. There were another 30 reports heard by the Committee of physical abuse by older co-residents who were not identified by name.

*Two girls ...(co-residents)... hit me with a broom and cut my eye, I've got scars to prove it.... I thought they were going to kill me. I went to the hospital, I remember the doctor, Dr ...X.... He asked me what had happened but I was too scared to tell him in case I'd get beaten again, I told him I fell because you'd be scared. I had stitches ...(displayed mark to Commissioners).... No one ever said anything about it, the nuns were never there.... I mean I was covered in blood and my sister asked me what happened, my sister took me to the hospital.*



*An older girl ...(named co-resident)... she made my life hell ...crying.... She got the sweeping brush one day, she brought me up to where the turf was and she said "I am going to beat you until you tell me you are afraid of me". Oh, she used beat me so much. She'd say "you get me bacon, eggs and sausage" and she knew well I could never get that ...crying.... I used get into the little hole, you know where the chickens get in, at least I would have eggs for her ...crying.... I was so afraid, she was cruel.*

- 9.66 Witnesses reported that older residents were supported by the staff to maintain discipline and that they were also involved in administering punishment. In the absence of staff supervision in some Schools older girls were described as having the task of caring for co-residents in the dormitories and recreation areas. Many of the beatings by co-residents reported by witnesses were in the context of older girls being left in charge of babies and young children whom they physically punished for bed-wetting and various perceived misdemeanours. Older girls were also reported to be involved in beating younger residents while working alongside ancillary care workers.

## Other reported abusers

- 9.67 Witnesses also reported being physically abused by individuals who were neither staff nor co-residents while in holiday or weekend placements. It was a commonly reported practice in a number of Schools that the Resident Manager or those in charge made arrangements for some residents to spend holidays with or work for local families. The Committee heard three accounts of witnesses who were hit or beaten when on weekend or holiday leave with such families.

*The families we were sent out to, the first one, her husband was a nice man. One time she was hitting me and her husband said "you can't be doing that". ... I remember my time there being very, very unhappy, every time I was due to go I would always be sick. From the time we would arrive there she would talk to Sr ...X.... When she ...(Sr X)... would be gone she ...(the 'foster'/'holiday' mother)... would hide my sister and tell me she was gone, I was 6 or 7, even younger than that. I used to feel sick and start getting sick, then she would let my sister out and she would tell me it was only a joke. One time I got sick and left a bit of vomit on my hair, she clattered ...(hit)... me for that.*

- 9.68 Two (2) other witnesses reported being beaten by employers in work placements, the witnesses had been placed there during the school holidays. In each instance the witnesses reported being hit as a reprimand for unsatisfactory work.

## Sexual abuse

*The use of the child by a person for sexual arousal or sexual gratification of that person or another person.<sup>6</sup>*

**9.69** This section summarises the evidence provided by witnesses of being sexually abused for the gratification of others while a resident of the Schools. The reported abuse ranged from contact sexual abuse, including vaginal and anal rape, to non-contact abuse such as enforced nakedness and voyeurism. Recounting sexual abuse to the Committee was described as a difficult experience for witnesses, who spoke in as much or as little detail as they wished when describing the abuse they experienced. Some witnesses struggled to find words to express the details of what happened to them while others were able to provide full and at times disturbing accounts. The descriptions provided were sufficient to clarify the acute or chronic nature of both contact and non-contact sexual abuse.

### ***Nature and extent of sexual abuse reported***

**9.70** Reported abuse ranged from inappropriate fondling and touching to oral/genital contact, vaginal and anal rape. There were 128 reports of sexual abuse from 127 female witnesses (34%).<sup>7</sup> One witness reported that she was sexually abused in two different Schools. Witnesses described their experience of sexual abuse as either acute or chronic episodes occurring throughout their admissions in the Schools. Witnesses reported being sexually abused by religious and lay staff in addition to other adults, the majority of whom were understood to be directly associated with the Schools. Witnesses also reported being sexually abused by co-residents.

**9.71** The frequency of sexual abuse reports varied widely between 35 Schools:

- Two (2) Schools were collectively the subject of 37 reports.
- Seven (7) Schools were the subject of 5-8 reports, totalling 43 reports.
- Twenty six (26) Schools were the subject of 1-4 reports, totalling 48 reports.

**9.72** One hundred and twenty three (123) reports were of all four types of abuse combined, as shown below:

**Table 35: Sexual Abuse Combined with Other Abuse Types – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

<b>Abuse types</b>	<b>Number of reports</b>	<b>%</b>
Sexual, emotional, neglect and physical	123	96
Sexual, emotional and physical	2	2
Sexual, emotional and neglect	1	1
Sexual and neglect	1	1
Sexual and physical	1	1
<b>Total reports</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>(100)*</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

\*Some rounding up/down was applied

**9.73** There were no reports of sexual abuse alone and, almost all reports were of sexual abuse combined with physical abuse, neglect and emotional abuse.

<sup>6</sup> Section 1(1)(b)

<sup>7</sup> One witness reported sexual abuse in more than one School.

9.74 The following table details the distribution of sexual abuse reports, according to the witnesses' discharge period:

**Table 36: Number of Sexual Abuse Reports by Decade of Witnesses' Discharge – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

Decade of discharge	Number of sexual abuse reports	%
Pre-1960s	22	17
1960-69	64	50
1970-79	35	27
1980-89	7	5
<b>Total</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>(100)*</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

\*Some rounding up/down was applied

9.75 Sixty four (64) reports (50%) of sexual abuse were made by witnesses discharged from Schools in the 1960s. It is important to note that approximately half of the witnesses discharged in the 1960s were in institutional care for most, if not all, of the previous decade. It is also of note that a higher proportion of the abuse reports by witnesses discharged in the 1970s and 1980s were of sexual abuse; for example there were eight reports of abuse from witnesses discharged in the 1980s, seven of which were of sexual abuse. By comparison there were 178 reports of abuse from witnesses discharged during the 1960s, 64 of which were of sexual abuse.

### ***Description of sexual abuse***

9.76 The secretive and isolated nature of sexual abuse together with witnesses' experience of having their complaints disbelieved, ignored or punished contributed to the environment in which sexual abuse was reported to have occurred. Witnesses reported that the culture of obeying orders without question together with the authority of the adult abuser rendered them powerless to resist sexual abuse. Witnesses further reported that the fear of punishment, the threat of being sent to a more restrictive institution or their siblings being removed to another School also inhibited them in resisting, reporting or disclosing sexual abuse. Some witnesses spoke for the first time about being sexually abused during their hearings with the Committee.

9.77 Witnesses reported sexual assaults in the forms of vaginal and anal rape, oral/genital contact, digital penetration, penetration by an object, masturbation and other forms of inappropriate contact, including molestation and kissing. Witnesses also reported several forms of non-contact sexual abuse including indecent exposure, inappropriate sexual talk, voyeurism and forced public nudity. Witnesses gave accounts of being sexually abused both within the Schools and in other locations while in the care of the authorities in charge of the particular institution. They reported being sexually abused in many locations, including: dormitories, schools, motor vehicles, bathrooms, staff bedrooms, churches, sacristies, fields, parlours, the residences of clergy, holiday locations and while with godparents and employers. The Committee developed a classification of the different forms of sexual abuse described by witnesses that are shown in the following table:

**Table 37: Forms and Frequency of Sexual Abuse Reported – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

Forms of sexual abuse	Frequency reported	%
Inappropriate fondling and contact	102	38
Enforced nakedness/ voyeurism	52	19
Vaginal rape	27	10
Forced masturbation of abuser by child/mutual masturbation	22	8
Attempted rape and associated violence	15	5
Kissing	14	5
Vaginal penetration by objects	10	4
Digital penetration	8	3
Oral/genital contact	7	3
Indecent exposure	6	2
Anal rape	3	1
Other	8	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>274*</b>	<b>(100)**</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

\*Some witnesses reported more than one form of sexual abuse

\*\*Some rounding up/down was applied

- 9.78** Vaginal and anal rape, forced masturbation, oral/genital contact, various forms of vaginal penetration and attempted rape with associated violence accounted for 92 of the witness reports made to the Committee. Five (5) witnesses reported that they sustained injuries as a result of the sexual abuse to which they were subjected.
- 9.79** One hundred and two (102) other witnesses gave accounts of what was recorded as inappropriate contact including touching and fondling of breasts, genitalia, and buttocks.
- 9.80** The application of white lotion for the treatment of scabies was reported by 10 witnesses as a form of sexual abuse. The witnesses described both religious and lay female staff applying the lotion, paying particular attention to their genital area and breasts and passing derogatory remarks about their bodies. Four (4) witnesses reported being forced to wash the breasts of female religious staff.
- 9.81** Thirty five (35) witnesses from 16 Schools reported the practice of being stripped naked to be beaten as sexually abusive and stated that this happened most often in view of others but occasionally in private. Two (2) witnesses reported being observed by a workman and a priest in the course of naked beatings.
- She ...(Sr X)... would lay you across the bed and give you unmerciful beatings. I remember one day she had hit me on this side so much that I had to move and turn around, there was this priest there, and I looked around, and he was smiling.*
- 9.82** Non-contact sexual abuse also included enforced nakedness that witnesses considered voyeuristic. Seventeen (17) witnesses described the manner in which they were made to stand in line without clothes waiting for a bath while being observed by staff and co-residents as sexually abusive. This practice was reported consistently from four Schools for both pre- and post-pubertal residents.

9.83 Six (6) witnesses reported being subjected to indecent exposure by men including clergy who visited their Schools and men in families where they were sent to work or for holidays. The other form of non-contact sexual abuse reported by eight witnesses included being exposed to inappropriate sexual conversation and adult sexual activity.

### ***Circumstances of sexual abuse***

9.84 Witnesses consistently reported that sexual abuse occurred in an environment of fear and secrecy. Sexual abuse was also described as prevailing in circumstances where special relationships of trust existed between the abusers and those responsible for the welfare of those they abused. In particular witnesses commented on the relationship between religious Sisters and clergy. One witness stated '*He ... (Fr X)... was always around the School, morning, noon and night, including bath time and bedtime. He was in the School for all meals*'. Witnesses who had little or no family contact formed the majority of those who reported being sexually abused among the female cohort. These witnesses were believed to be particularly vulnerable to the effects of harsh discipline. Sexual abuse was also reported to have occurred in the absence of appropriate supervision, particularly in holiday and work placements in the community, and when adults from outside the School, understood to be in positions of trust, were given unsupervised access to residents.

9.85 The culture of fear engendered by persistent physical abuse, affectionless discipline and inadequate supervision provided circumstances where witnesses reported being sexually abused without recourse to protection or appropriate intervention. The following sections describe particular features of the circumstances in which female witnesses reported being sexually abused.

### ***Threats***

9.86 Fifty three (53) witnesses described how abusers forcibly coerced them to comply with and remain silent about sexual abuse by means of verbal threats and actual violence. In the most extreme instances witnesses reported that their lives and the lives of their siblings were threatened. One witness described being taken down to the furnace room when she was a young child by a workman and told he would put her in the fire if she told anyone their '*secref*'. A witness who reported being raped, by a named lay ancillary worker, on a number of occasions was silenced by threats:

*He ...X... got us back to his house, said he had a sandwich for us. After that he used to follow me around the place, the nuns would have to be blind not to see this. He threatened to burn down the School and threatened to kill my sisters, so you went to bed at night petrified, thinking he was going to break in and burn down the School. You were just petrified, so if I didn't go to his house, this is what he would do, burn down the School and kill my sisters. He ... (witness described anal rape)... several time over years ...crying.... It stays with you, it sticks in my mind, and the threat to burn down the School.*

9.87 Another witness reported that she was frequently sexually abused by a visiting external child welfare professional who threatened that her sibling would be placed for adoption if she told anyone about his abuse of her. The Committee heard evidence from three witnesses of sexual abuse by this man.

*Mr ...X... he sexually abused me, we used to have to go and see him, we had a sick room for children who were sick, we used to have to go in there ...crying.... He used make, you know, make me ...crying... take off all my clothes and used to make me lie on the floor ...crying.... It started happening, um, it seemed quite a long time after my First Holy Communion and then it stopped then when I got my period. He was always on his own. I think Mth ...Y... was probably somewhere around. ... He probably used to*

*come and go as he pleased, he used bring me chocolates. He used to say "this will be our little secret, if you do tell anyone we will send ...witness's sibling... for adoption". I was frightened to death, I never ever said anything. It happened more than once.*

**9.88** Thirty seven (37) witnesses reported being sexually abused by men in families where they were placed for holiday or to work. Many reported that the fear of being returned to the Industrial School, sent to a Reformatory School or transferred to a laundry or psychiatric hospital was the most common experience. Many witnesses reported that it was generally known there were 'worse places' where girls were sent when they were thought to have disclosed abuse or misbehaved. The threat of being 'sent away' was a potent incentive to which several witnesses reported they responded by enduring the abuse to which they were subjected.

### **Abuse by more than one person**

**9.89** Twelve (12) witnesses reported being sexually abused in what they believed was a deliberate manner by more than one person simultaneously. Nine (9) of those accounts referred to abuse within the Schools, eight of which referred to combinations of male or female lay staff with religious staff. The other report was of abuse by a priest and a Sister. Three (3) reports referred to abuse by other adults that occurred while in the care of, but external to, the School, on work or holiday placements.

**9.90** Five (5) of the above witnesses reported being abused by being molested and digitally penetrated by combinations of religious and lay staff, both male and female. Three (3) of those witnesses reported being sexually abused on different occasions by two religious Sisters, a member of the clergy and a lay male care worker. The other two witnesses reported being sexually abused on a number of occasions by pairs of female lay care workers. One witness also reported that episodes of sexual abuse perpetrated by two female lay staff were associated with physical violence during which she was stripped of her clothes and beaten. Another witness reported being restrained by two male ancillary workers in a farm shed while she was sexually assaulted. The men were employed by the Sisters as farm workers. Another witness gave the following account of being sexually abused by a lay care worker:

*I was sexually abused by a nun and a carer ... (lay care staff).... He was supposed to be in charge of the boys section. He had no business over with the girls. There was a nun with him ...Sr X and lay care worker... she would come into the room with him. You didn't need a nun to wash you at 13 years of age, but she did, she would fondle you in the bath and examine you and get you ready for him .... He used then collect me from boarding school and he used do it ... touching, fondling and then you would have to masturbation...(masturbate)... him.... I remember even telling Sr ...Y (Resident Manager)... and she told me to keep the rug over my legs in the car.*

**9.91** Two (2) witnesses reported being sexually abused by lay female staff members and other adults, one by lay female care workers and their female friends, the other by a lay female care worker and an older male resident in the institution. Two (2) witnesses reported being raped and otherwise sexually assaulted by pairs of men while they were placed by the School with 'holiday' families. In one instance the men were farm workers employed by the particular family where the witness was placed. In the other instance the men lived locally and were known to be aware that the witness was from an Industrial School. They threatened her that she would be sent back to the institution if she told anyone that they had abused her. Another witness described being sent to work for a family during school holidays where she was sexually abused by two female members of the family. She reported being molested and forced to witness the sexual activity of adults.

### **Inducements**

**9.92** There were 11 accounts of witnesses being given inducements or bribes in return for either compliance or silence following incidents of sexual abuse. Money and sweets were the main inducements reported by witnesses. Pennies, sixpences, half-crowns and ten-shilling notes were received from two local priests, two workmen and a doctor. One witness reported being so

worried about being asked where she got the money that she threw it away before she returned to the School. Another witness reported being given a gift by the person who sexually abused her which she treasured as it signified some kindness to her and was her only personal possession. Another witness was given items of clothing by a man who abused her over a period of time. She described how good it felt to own nice things that were both new and fashionable. The witness remarked on the fact that none of the staff questioned how she had obtained these items.

### **Reported abusers**

**9.93** One hundred and twenty seven (127) witnesses identified 188 people about whom there were one or more reports of sexual abuse in relation to 35 Schools. One hundred and thirty two (132) of those individuals were identified by name. The other 56 reported abusers were not identified by name but by what witnesses understood to be their position in the institution and they are included in the total number of sexual abusers described below. It is possible that there is some overlap between those identified by name and those who were not named.

**9.94** Those reported to the Committee as sexual abusers included: religious and lay staff, adult friends and relatives of staff, external clergy and professionals, ex-residents and co-residents. Also reported by witnesses as perpetrators of sexual abuse were adults to whom witnesses were sent for external holiday placements and other adults in work placements or associated with work placement providers. The following table lists by position held those reported as sexual abusers by female witnesses:

**Table 38: Position and Number of Reported Sexual Abusers – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

<b>Position of reported sexual abusers</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
<b>Religious</b>		
- Authority figure including Resident Manager	0	4
- Care staff	0	10
- Teacher	0	1
- External priest or other clergy	14	0
- Novice and clerical student	1	1
<b>Lay</b>		
- Care staff	2	12
- Ancillary worker	15	0
<b>External professional</b>	4	0
<b>Family member</b>	9	0
<b>Weekend or holiday placement carer</b>	23	0
<b>Work placement provider</b>	17	2
<b>Associate of weekend or holiday provider</b>	14	0
<b>General public</b>	10	0
<b>Ex-resident</b>	2	1
<b>Co-resident</b>	8	38
<b>Total</b>	<b>119</b>	<b>69</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**9.95** The above table shows that 144 (77%) of those identified as sexual abusers were non-staff members, 79 of whom were external to, but associated with, the Schools. They included holiday and work placement providers, relatives and friends of people in those placements, external

clergy and clerical students, professionals, and ex-residents. Nineteen (19) other individuals were identified as members of the general public and witnesses' family members who abused them while on leave from the School.

- Twenty nine (29) named abusers were reported by 37 witnesses from two Schools.
- Sixty five (65) other named abusers were each reported by between five and nine witnesses from 10 Schools.
- Thirty eight (38) named abusers were each reported by between one and four witnesses from 19 Schools.

### **Weekend, holiday, and work placement providers**

**9.96** The most frequently reported group of adult sexual abusers were members and relatives of families to whom residents were sent from the Schools for either a holiday, weekend or work placement. These were known as 'holiday', 'weekend' or 'foster' families or 'godparents'. There were 42 men and two women identified by the female witnesses as sexually abusive in these circumstances. It was consistently stated that the religious Sisters in charge of the Schools arranged the placements, visits or holidays, most often without consultation with the resident being placed. It was stated that these placements were generally arranged for residents who did not have their own families to visit during the school holidays. Witnesses consistently reported that there was little or no supervision or follow-up by staff from the Schools in relation to these placements.

**9.97** Twenty three (23) witnesses reported being sexually abused by the fathers of families to whom they were sent for weekends or holidays. The Committee heard 13 reports of witnesses being sexually abused, by male relatives in seven instances and by sons of the families with whom they were placed in six other instances. Two (2) witnesses reported being raped by both the adolescent son and a friend in their holiday placement. In both of these instances the witness was less than 12 years old at the time.

*I remember going back in the car, he ...(father in holiday family)... stopped and said to me "if you tell anyone ...(about sexual abuse)... I will tell the priest it was your fault". This is the hold they had over you, you were petrified. The nuns wouldn't believe you. I told Sr ...X... once and she beat me black and blue with a hand brush, she said "you are a terrible liar" and what a good family they were. O God, I can't even talk about it, I feel sick ...distressed.... I couldn't sleep at night it was on my mind for a long time. I went to that family every month until I ...(left the School)... even after I had told Sr ...X....*

**9.98** Thirteen (13) witnesses reported being sent by School staff to particular weekend and 'holiday' families where they were repeatedly raped or sexually assaulted, despite a number indicating to staff that they did not want to go. Some witnesses complained to the religious Sisters in the School that they did not like going to a particular family where they were being sexually abused and reported that they were not sent again. Other witnesses were told they should be grateful to the family for their kindness and continued to be sent.

**9.99** Witnesses also reported the practice of residents being sent by staff in the Schools to mind children and do housework for families during school holidays and being sent out to work for local families and clergy in the afternoons and at weekends. Twelve (12) men, including one member of the clergy, were identified as sexually abusive by witnesses in this context. All the witnesses reported being less than 16 years old at the time they were abused. The abuse reported included rape and attempted rape, digital penetration, molestation and genital exposure. One witness reported that she was hospitalised having taken an overdose of tablets in the context of repeated rape by the father of the family in her work placement. The family were professionals and made discreet arrangements for her to be hospitalised, following which

the sexual abuse ceased although she continued to be sent to the family. She reported she had told the religious Sisters she did not like going to this family but they insisted she continue.

*I think they were very, very stupid, the people in the care home. We were very unhappy going out and they should have known that. I feel very, very angry with them.*

**9.100** Two (2) witnesses reported being sent at different times as the live-in housekeeper for a local member of the clergy who was identified by name. They both described being fondled by him, bringing him breakfast in bed and being forced to observe him washing and dressing himself. One witness refused to go back to his house after she woke to find him standing over her in bed one morning. Witnesses said that this member of the clergy had a reputation for inappropriate sexual behaviour and he was named in three other witness accounts of sexual abuse.

**9.101** Five (5) witnesses reported being sexually abused during the night by male employers in work placements, two of whom reported being raped in these circumstances. Others described attempted rape or did not describe the sexual abuse in detail.

*I was working looking after the children. One time the mother had gone away. She was very nice, he... (work placement father)... was horrible.... One time she left me looking after the children. I was in bed he ...(work placement father)... came to me in to bed, I was asleep and he woke me up, and took me to his room ...crying.... I didn't know why, I didn't know what he was trying to do, he tried to rape me.... I was so scared, I was terrified. I couldn't tell anyone, there was this threat of being sent to ...named laundry....*

### **Religious (staff and others)**

**9.102** There were 31 male and female religious, including a clerical student and a novice, reported as having sexually abused witnesses during their time in Schools. Twenty seven (27) named Sisters and clergy were each identified by individual witnesses as perpetrators of sexual abuse, four others were named by more than one witness. The Sisters were all members of the Schools' religious Communities. The clergy included priests and others of higher rank from the external community who had contact with the Schools in various capacities. The types of contact sexual abuse reported included vaginal and anal rape, oral/genital contact, masturbation, kissing and inappropriate fondling and touching.

**9.103** Witnesses reported being sexually abused by 16 nuns, 10 of whom were named. The abuse included contact sexual abuse such as kissing, fondling and vaginal penetration by an object. Sexual abuse by religious Sisters was most often reported to have occurred in collaboration with another person, either religious or lay staff, in the context of personal care and preparing for bed. Four (4) witnesses also described separate instances of inappropriate fondling by Sisters. *'At night she would come to the bedroom, stroke my breasts, and then give me a packet of biscuits and say something like it was all temptation from the devil.'*

**9.104** Fourteen (14) clergy, 11 of whom were named, were reported by 23 witnesses to have sexually abused them. The reported abuse ranged from inappropriate touching and fondling to vaginal and anal rape. Two (2) of the clergy were each named by five witnesses as perpetrators of sexual abuse, both of the witnesses and their co-residents. One of the priests was described as *'thinking he owned the convent and us girls'* as a witness described:

*He was always there ...(Fr X)... when we were getting a bath, he was there all the time. I could see what he was doing to other girls, touching them. Nobody wanted to bring his breakfast in, none of the girls. We used say it to Sr ...Y... she was a nice nun, she would have protected us from the other nuns, she was a lovely nun. But she couldn't see past Fr ...X... because he was a priest. We said to her what he was doing and she said "but he is a priest, he is just being friendly". I rebelled against him then when I was*

*12 or 13, I fought him and wouldn't let him go near me. He beat me then with a leather, a belt from his trousers ... on the legs, on the hand and the back of the hands.*

- 9.105** Six witnesses reported being sexually abused when they were serving breakfast to visiting priests in the parlour. One priest was reported to have his breakfast in the parlour and 'sent for girls every morning'. A witness described the priest as sitting her on his lap, where he fondled her, kissed her on the lips and gave her money saying 'you're a good girl'. This witness reported that the priest was attended at mealtimes by residents 'who he fondled constantly', kissing, and touching them. Other witnesses provided the following accounts of being sexually abused by local and visiting priests:

*The parish priest used to be always around at the time, around the convent. He used to pick me up in the grounds or if you went in to him with his breakfast, he would put you sitting on his knee and give you a kiss on the mouth. He would put me sitting on his ...(genitalia)....*



*There was a visiting priest, Fr ...X... he used to come in holiday time and say Mass. I had the job of polishing the sacristy, I had to peep in to see if he was gone. He called me in. He was a tall man, he called me over, I had to kneel next to him, the next thing I could feel his hand up under my underwear. I nearly died, I thought "Jesus what will I do?" I couldn't tell anyone. They were Gods, the priests were God, no one would believe you. I was about 11.*

- 9.106** Three (3) female witnesses reported being fondled and kissed by a clerical student and a Novice who were on placement in their respective Schools.

#### **Lay care and ancillary staff**

- 9.107** Witnesses reported 29 lay care and ancillary staff, 17 male and 12 female, as sexual abusers. Fourteen (14) of those reported were lay care staff, including childcare workers and 15 were ancillary workers. The 14 lay care staff were identified by name; 12 were female and two were male. Six (6) of the female care staff were described as former residents of the School who had been retained as live-in care staff.

- 9.108** Twenty five (25) lay staff, 11 care staff and 14 ancillary workers, were the subject of single witness reports of sexual abuse. Four (4) other lay staff were each the subject of more than one report; one care staff member was reported as sexually abusive by six witnesses and two others were each reported by two witnesses. One ancillary worker was also reported by two witnesses.

- 9.109** The most commonly reported form of sexual abuse described in relation to this group of lay care staff was masturbation and fondling. Witnesses reported at times being taken out of their beds to warm a staff member's bed, where they were then sexually abused. Others reported being inappropriately fondled on the pretext of checking if they had wet their beds. One witness reported that she was sexually abused on a regular basis by a childcare worker as he drove her to school. The abuse involved fondling and forcing her to masturbate him. The following account refers to one witness's abuse experience during the 1980s:

*Every night he ...(lay care staff)... used to come up to the room, there were 3 girls in it, and he used to come up to the room every night and absolutely insist that he would put Sudocreme on us. There was absolutely no reason for it, down with the knickers and all, he insisted on doing it to every one of us.*

- 9.110** Witnesses reported 15 ancillary workers as sexually abusive, 12 of whom were identified by their occupations and three others were identified by name. Witnesses reported the ancillary workers as farm workers, gardeners, tradesmen and caretakers employed by the religious staff

on the grounds of the Schools. The forms of abuse described were vaginal rape, oral/genital contact, masturbation and inappropriate fondling. As described, the abuse generally occurred in sheds and work areas used by the abuser and most often under threat not to tell anyone. Three (3) witnesses from different Schools reported being sexually abused by ancillary workers who lived on the Schools grounds.

*I ... used to go out to the garden, there was this man in the fields there ... (lay ancillary worker).... He'd say "howya". ... I said "hello" but I didn't have anything to do with him. He brought me into a room, it was kinda like a little house and locked the door and ... he raped me, he just took every thing off me and he kept saying, "you tell them and I'll kill you", I was only about 14. I felt dirty and to this day I feel dirty.*



*There was a man there, he worked as the...lay ancillary worker... there. He had a shed, he would get you in there and feel your breasts and your privates, feel you all over, he was just ...ugh... he used to do it to all the girls. You'd know because all the girls would be talking about it. You daren't tell the nuns they wouldn't believe you, they all liked him.*

### Co-residents

- 9.111** Reports of sexual abuse by co-residents were concentrated in particular Schools at particular periods of time. There were 46 witness accounts of sexual abuse by male and female co-residents, 38 of those reports related to abuse by older girls and eight reports were of abuse by older boys. Two (2) male co-residents who were identified as abusers were described as having learning difficulties. The most frequently reported circumstance of co-resident or peer sexual abuse was of witnesses being abused over a period of time by residents who were understood to have been given some authority over them and who threatened to beat or otherwise physically abuse them if they did not comply. A small number of witnesses reported extreme threats including of being killed, or that their siblings would be beaten, abused or sent away. Accounts of abuse included being taken into an older girl's bed and fondled, forced to participate in mutual masturbation, and fondled in the process of bathing or providing personal care.

*She ...(older co-resident)... used take me to the boiler house and make me fondle her. She used not do it to me but make me do it to her. She was cruel, I told ...named lay care staff... she told me not to be bothering her. The nuns did nothing about her, they weren't blind, they saw what was happening.*

- 9.112** Most witnesses reported being between seven and 12 years old when they were abused by co-residents and in some instances it was reported that the sexual abuse progressed to become consensual. Witnesses reported that there was minimal supervision in the dormitories or sleeping areas at night in those Schools where sexual abuse by co-residents was identified.

- 9.113** Of note is the higher proportion of reports of co-resident abuse from witnesses discharged during the 1970s and 1980s. Twenty seven (27) reports (59%) of co-resident abuse was reported by witnesses discharged since 1970. A particular feature of peer sexual abuse reported by witnesses discharged after 1970 was the number of accounts of abuse by groups of co-residents. Five (5) witnesses reported being regularly abused by groups of older girls, and in one instance older boys, using coercion to force compliance. The witnesses reported being locked in toilets or taken to isolated rooms and fields where they were sexually abused and personally degraded. One witness reported that she was beaten so badly in the course of such an assault that she had to be taken to a local doctor for stitches. The lack of adequate supervision was consistently reported in the context of peer sexual abuse.

## Family members – relatives

- 9.114 Six (6) witnesses placed from their families in institutional care reported being sexually abused by their family members to whom they were sent for weekends and holidays or into whose care they were discharged from the Schools. Two (2) witnesses reported being raped by their fathers to whom they were discharged despite, they believed, there being a known history of violence and incest. One witness reported being sent to an uncle's house for holidays where she was sexually abused and molested by both her uncle and two male cousins. Another witness reported being fondled and otherwise sexually abused by her grandfather when on holiday leave; she reported another family member was aware of the abuse at the time.

## Professionals

- 9.115 The Committee heard evidence from witnesses of abuse by four professionals who were not members of staff, but provided a service to the residents in the School. These individuals were described as taking opportunistic advantage of the witnesses' circumstances to sexually abuse them.
- 9.116 The professionals identified by witnesses as sexually abusive were three doctors and one external professional with responsibility for child welfare associated with the Schools. The doctors were reported to have fondled and masturbated witnesses in the course of physical examinations. The professional person was reported by three witnesses to have sexually assaulted and raped them.

*The ...external professional... he was worse than the nuns, Mr ...X ... even the thought of him makes me cringe. We would go in one at a time in the parlour. ... I hated him. ... Oh, he was horrible, horrible, ugh, the thought of him ...distressed.... Nobody liked seeing him, being sent to him. He'd have papers, I suppose you'd call them files ... he seemed to be there a lot, nobody liked him. The nuns were never there, they would knock on the door and put their hand on your back and push you in. Nobody liked him, nobody liked going to him ...distressed.... I remember the door opening and that was it.*

## Members of the general public

- 9.117 Ten (10) members of the general public, all male, were identified by seven witnesses as having sexually abused them by vaginal and anal rape, molestation and inappropriate contact. The witnesses remarked that these men were aware they came from an Industrial School. Those reported as abusive included public service workers, visitors and others whom the witnesses encountered in the course of some everyday activity in association with the School. The consistent theme with these reports of sexual abuse was the lack of due care and protection provided to the witnesses by those responsible for them.

*On the way to ...named city... for an eye appointment in the ambulance, there was nobody with me there or back. The driver, he made me masturbate him, he put his fingers in me, on the way there and again on the way back. I told another girl, she told the nuns, 4 of them ... (Sisters)... beat me.*

•

*He... (visitor)...asked us to cane him on the bare bottom with the cane. He wanted to take girls out of...named School...to be nice, I got a packet of Aeros...(sweets)...You never came back saying that...(sexual abuse) ...happened.*

## Ex-residents

- 9.118 The Committee heard reports of sexual abuse by ex-residents who witnesses stated were allowed to return on a casual basis to two Schools following their discharge. Three (3) witnesses described the ex-residents as being friends or having special relationships with staff members;

they were said to have unsupervised access to the School and its residents. In one instance the reported abuse occurred over a period of years and continued until the late 1980s:

*I was abused...(from)... the age of 6 'til I was 14. He was kind of a past pupil. ... He was friends with the staff. There was a room where past pupils used to sleep, he would come into the room at night, he used to tell me, "you tell anyone and your ...family members... will be moved and you will be on your own". I didn't eat for a year, I went silent for a year, I went from minding myself to nothing. He was always there. I seen school as my escape.... I'd fall asleep in the class because of all the abuse I was going through at night time. I was afraid to sleep at night but I felt safe in school, one teacher was my first good memory. Someone should have asked what was happening....*

## **Pregnancy**

- 9.119** Among the 27 witnesses who reported being raped, four reported pregnancies while still in the care of the School. The witnesses reported that three of those pregnancies proceeded to full term and one miscarried. One witness reported she was sexually abused by a labourer on the farm attached to the School and she became pregnant at 15 years of age. Another witness reported that she was discharged by the School to the care of a male relative when she was 15 years old. She became pregnant as a result of rape by this man and the child was placed for adoption. This adoption was reported to be facilitated by the Resident Manager of the School where she had been a resident.

*I had a child then ... I will never get over that, that will never go away from me. ... You can ask the hospital ...named hospital.... I had a little child. I went and told them ...(Sisters)... about rape, and they killed me. I told 2 nuns, they put me into ...named psychiatric hospital.... I told them, 2 nuns, they said, "no, no, he would never do that". They killed me, they said, "you are filth, you are filth". I will never forgive them. I often thought of going out and telling the guards ...(Gardaí)... but I was afraid, I was terrified. They said I broke a window, they said I was mental. ... After that even the doctor said "I don't know what you are doing in hospital".... The doctor said I didn't need to be there, I went to ...named mother and baby home....*

- 9.120** A third witness had been sent as a live-in housemaid to the relatives of a Sister from the School. A visitor to the house was reported to sexually abuse her on a regular basis when the family were absent. The witness became pregnant and her child died at birth. The fourth witness reported that she became pregnant as the result of being raped by the father of the family where she was sent to work; she reported that her pregnancy miscarried and that she had to deal with the physical and emotional consequences on her own.

## **Neglect**

*Failure to care for the child which results, or could reasonably be expected to result, in serious impairment of the physical or mental health or development of the child or serious adverse effects on his or her behaviour or welfare.<sup>9</sup>*

- 9.121** The following section summarises witness evidence of general neglect. Descriptions of neglect refer to all aspects of the physical, social and emotional care and well-being of the witnesses, impacting on their health and development. It also describes other forms of neglect that are regarded as having a negative impact on the individuals' emotional health and development, for example a failure to protect from harm and failure to educate. Neglect refers to both actions and inactions by religious and lay staff and others who had responsibility and a duty of care for the residents in their charge. As the reports of neglect refer to widespread institutional practices, this section of the Report does not identify individual abusers.

<sup>9</sup> Section 1(1)(c) as amended by the section 3 of the 2005 Act.

### **Nature and extent of neglect reported**

**9.122** Three hundred and sixty seven (367) female witnesses (97%) made 374 reports of neglect of their care and welfare in relation to 39 Schools.<sup>9</sup> Neglect was not reported in all Schools in all decades. Many forms of neglect were reported and include neglect of care, health, education and welfare. The frequency of neglect reports in relation to individual Schools varied, as with the other types of abuse.

- Three (3) Schools were collectively the subject of 141 reports.<sup>10</sup>
- Seventeen (17) Schools were the subject of 6-17 reports, totalling 189 reports.
- Nineteen Schools (19) were the subject of 1-5 reports, totalling 44 reports.

**9.123** Neglect was reported in combination with three other abuse types in 123 instances. The reports of neglect were principally combined with reports of physical and emotional abuse as shown in Table 39:

**Table 39: Neglect Combined with Other Abuse Types – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

<b>Abuse types</b>	<b>Number of reports</b>	<b>%</b>
Neglect, emotional and physical	226	60
Neglect, emotional, physical and sexual	123	33
Neglect and physical	20	5
Neglect and emotional	3	1
Neglect, emotional and sexual	1	(0)
Neglect and Sexual	1	(0)
<b>Total reports</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>(100)*</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

\*Some rounding up/down was applied

**9.124** The following table details the distribution of neglect reports according to the witnesses' discharge period.

**Table 40: Number of Neglect Reports by Decade of Witnesses' Discharge – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

<b>Decade of discharge</b>	<b>Number of neglect reports</b>	<b>%</b>
Pre-1960s	131	35
1960-69	170	45
1970-79	67	18
1980-89	6	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

<sup>9</sup> A number of witnesses were admitted to more than one School, and made reports of abuse in more than one School, therefore the number of reports are greater than the number of witnesses.

<sup>10</sup> In order to maintain confidentiality further details regarding the numbers of abuse reports in these Schools cannot be specified.

**9.125** The distribution of neglect reports for the decades of discharge are similar to those reported by witnesses for physical abuse. Ninety six percent (96%) of reports of neglect by female witnesses were in conjunction with physical abuse.

### **Areas of neglect**

**9.126** This Report categorises neglect of care under the headings of food, clothing, heat, hygiene, bedding, healthcare, education, supervision and preparation for discharge, all categories that were referred to by witnesses with varying levels of detail. As throughout the Report, there was inevitable overlap between the different categories of neglect and other types of abuse. Witnesses described the impact of the reported neglect on their social and emotional welfare, and many reported the particularly vulnerable position of orphans and those who had little family contact.

*The girls from the workhouse ...(orphans)... they were treated worse, they suffered worse. ... When we were out for a walk we would bring them back bits of chewing gum and haws that we found on the hedges and on the ground, we were all so hungry and they didn't get out. ... (Orphans)... clothes were different, big patched knickers, boots with no soles in them.*

### **Food**

**9.127** Hunger, together with the inadequate provision and poor quality of food, was the area of neglect most consistently reported by witnesses. There were 335 witness reports of the food provided to residents being of poor quality and/or inadequate quantity. These reports referred to 37 Schools across all the decades from which there were neglect reports. One hundred and sixty eight (168) witnesses (46%) described being constantly hungry, and at times 'starving', while resident in the Schools. The constant state of hunger led to witnesses attempting to supplement their diet in whatever way they could. 'If you saw anybody eating anything you just went up and grabbed it, we were always hungry.'

*A cup of cocoa and one slice of bread for breakfast. Lunch was cold soupy type thing, lumpy potato, you were so hungry you'd eat it. Then in the afternoon it was scraps, bits of stale bread ... we'd be killing each other to get as much as we could, trample each other. We were all like vultures, like dogs eating off the ground to get as much as we could. We were so hungry. ... You were always looking out for a bit of food, the teacher's dining room, you'd run in and grab what was left.... Or you'd get the key of the pantry and go in you were so hungry.*

**9.128** Prior to the 1960s many Schools had bakeries associated with the kitchens. Working in the bakeries and kitchens allowed access to the pantry, extra bread and leftover food. Seventy (70) witnesses described taking food, if and when they had the opportunity, as a means of survival. Witnesses reported taking food from the kitchens and pantries and also reported taking fruit and vegetables from the nun's kitchens, orchards, glasshouses and vegetable gardens. They recalled 'stealing' apples and sweets from shops in the town, 'stealing' lunches from day pupils and fruit from local orchards. In addition to food taken in this manner 53 witnesses said that they foraged for leftover scraps and took animal food and slops intended for the farm animals or from ash pits in the gardens where kitchen refuse was dumped. Witnesses described fighting with co-residents for the contents of the scrap bucket from the nun's kitchen. One witness remembered with gratitude a staff member who worked in the School's staff kitchen:

*I never had enough, I used to eat from the bins. There was a nun in the kitchen, she was an angel, Sr ...X.... I can honestly say she was an angel, she used to throw food away in such a way that it didn't get ...pause... contaminated you'd say now. She threw it away in such a way that we'd get it, she put it in a place she knew you would get it. She was very good, she'd leave apple skins and something that was nice.... A boiled egg, I used to love, but we got them very rare. I was always hungry. If you were*

*punished you were put starving anyway. I used to be caught picking food out of the bins and you would be put starving, for 2 or 3 days, you wouldn't be given anything, all meals ...(were stopped)... for a couple of days.*

- 9.129** Twenty seven (27) witnesses provided reports of seeing and preparing more plentiful and appetising food in the Sisters' kitchens and dining rooms. Serving food to clergy, staff and visitors in the parlours allowed illicit access to some of this food. A small number of witnesses recalled being sent to post food parcels to nun's relatives at Christmas time and of potatoes and other food being given to visiting professionals to take away with them.

*I was hungry all the time. I was caught robbin' bread and they were all told not to talk to me. ... I was working in the kitchen and you'd see the carved roast for the convent but you never got it. You might get the leftovers if you worked in the kitchen.*

- 9.130** Witnesses said that poor supervision by staff during meals resulted in older residents taking food from younger and more vulnerable co-residents. It was also reported that some witnesses took the food and milk provided for infants and younger residents they were looking after in the nurseries.

- 9.131** Twenty two (22) witnesses provided accounts of eating grass, leaves and berries. They reported that they ate field crops including oats, 'crows' bread', 'bread and cheese leaves', 'sally grass' and juice from rose stems, hawthorn berries and apple cores, orange peels and chewing gum from the pavement. Others reported eating flowers, eggshells, candles, glue and, in the reports of two witnesses, the pink ointment used to treat boils.

*I was always going around looking for food. If I was down the town and someone threw away an apple core I would pick it up off the ground and eat it.*

- 9.132** Twenty six (26) witnesses reported on the lack of access to drinking water, and stated that drinking from the toilet bowl was their only means of obtaining water. They described being given nothing to drink except what was provided during their mealtimes. This practice was reported in relation to 10 Schools and to have continued in some Schools until the 1970s.

*You'd be more thirsty than anything else, we'd drink water out of the toilets, there would be little worms in the water, the older girls would show us how to spit them out like that ...demonstrated.... But you weren't afeared ...(afraid).... It was the nuns you feared.*

- 9.133** Reports regarding food from witnesses discharged in the 1970s and 1980s were more concentrated on the type of food than the quantity of food provided. Witnesses said they were expected to eat food they did not like and were not offered any choice in what they had to eat. They also reported that access to food was strictly limited to meal times.

## **Hygiene**

- 9.134** The Committee heard 277 witness reports of poor facilities for the provision and maintenance of personal hygiene in 35 Schools across all the decades, with particular emphasis on those discharged prior to 1970. Many of the hygiene practices were described as primitive and degrading.

- 9.135** The use of communal and shared baths was reported to be a common practice. A small number of Schools were reported to have large communal baths where many residents were bathed together. Others had regular bathtubs that were shared by more than one resident at a time and consecutive groups used the same water. 'You would line up naked, you would be with your own age group but your dignity was taken, the same bath, same water for everyone.' Bathing was reported to take place at the end of the week, usually on a fortnightly or monthly basis, and coincided with the distribution of clean underclothes. There were several reports from witnesses

discharged before 1960 where baths were provided infrequently in tubs with water carried from the kitchens. Cold-water baths were reported as routine in one School in the pre-1960s period unless the laundry was in operation. In other Schools, cold-water baths were reported as punishment for bed-wetting: *'Cold bath if you wet the bed, otherwise you had to put on this frock going into the bath in front of others'*. Witnesses said that the furnace was lit to provide hot water for the laundry and residents were then bathed in laundry tubs. Witnesses had to dry themselves with large sheets and towels shared by many co-residents. In one School residents were bathed in tubs in an outside building and waited in line without clothes in the open air. By contrast, in other Schools modesty was closely monitored when bathing, residents in those Schools had to wear a chemise when they were in the bath. Older residents were reported to wash younger co-residents under this garment and great care was taken to keep one's body covered at all times.

*You got in to the bath with the chemise and there were 2 nuns holding a big sheet so you got out and went into the toilet to dress, still in the chemise.*

**9.136** Witnesses discharged prior to 1960 reported that in some Schools residents shared toothbrushes, other witnesses reported having no toothbrushes and cleaned their teeth with their fingers dipped in salt. The majority of witnesses had no individual toiletries, including toothbrushes, toothpaste and soap, which they reported were put in the bathrooms before inspections and later removed.

**9.137** Ninety one (91) witnesses reported that arrangements for the management of menstruation were poor or non-existent in relation to almost all Schools across all decades covered by this Report. Witnesses from four Schools stated that there were no sanitary towels provided for their use. Residents were obliged to use newspaper, rags and whatever suitable material they could find as substitutes. In a number of Schools witnesses described being provided with reusable sanitary cloths. In the period up to the 1960s it was commonplace for residents to hand-wash their own sanitary cloths, the adequate provision of which was frequently problematic as they were carefully rationed. Witnesses from 13 Schools reported that in addition to their own, they also had to hand wash nun's personal garments including sanitary towels. Witnesses stated that the poor facilities for bathing and the changing of personal garments led to considerable discomfort, chapped skin, rashes and offensive personal odours.

*And the periods, queuing up for sanitary towels, you got 2 that was it. It was horrible, you would smell. You would wash them out and put them back on wet.*

**9.138** Four (4) Schools were reported to have dry toilets prior to 1960; these toilets were outside and unlit. Cleaning toilets and clearing blocked drains was a work task reported as given to residents without protection for their hands and minimal washing facilities. At night time chamber pots were provided under beds for residents of all ages in most Schools prior to the 1960s. In one School a witness reported that *'a bucket in a cupboard was the only toilet for 50 girls locked in the dormitory overnight'*.

*The toilets were always overflowing, it was terrible, we kept ...(cleaned)... them, the girls, you had to keep the toilets the same as the floors, we unblocked them. The stench was terrible.*

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*I had charge of the toilets downstairs and they were ... filthy, you had to clean them. There was no toilet paper or anything, oh God, they were awful.*

**9.139** Five (5) Schools were reported as getting new indoor toilet and bathroom facilities in the 1950s. Witnesses from more than one of these Schools stated that they were not allowed to use the new facilities for some time after they were installed. They reported that these new facilities were opened for use before inspectors or visitors came but otherwise remained unused.

*We had a lavatory room as they called them, but we weren't allowed use them. When inspectors came there was a towel on every sink and a bar of carbollic soap. There was new bathrooms, but we never used them.*

- 9.140** Forty eight (48) witnesses from 12 Schools reported infestations or infections with some or all of the following: head lice/nits, scabies, thrush, ringworm, impetigo and fleas. Witnesses who had head lice commented that the treatment was at times to cut the infected residents' hair. Witnesses from two Schools reported that they manually picked the lice from each other's hair. Other treatments included the application of undiluted Jeyes Fluid, paraffin, treatment lotion and fine combing. *'When we got there ...(when first admitted)... we were put into the care of 2 helpers who put us into a Jeyes Fluid bath, who cut our hair, steel fine combed our hair.'* Staff in three Schools were reported to deal with scabies infections by painting residents with a white or purple solution; witnesses reported that they stood in line naked for this treatment and that the same brush was used on many residents. Witnesses reported that spraying residents' heads and beds with DDT was the treatment for fleas and head lice in six Schools in the pre-1960s period.

*There was about 26 beds in each room. The beds were full of fleas, they used to put DDT on the bed. Sometimes it was entertaining, we'd watch it jump and say "look at this one, look at this one".*

### **Clothing**

- 9.141** There were 272 witness reports of insufficient and poor quality clothing in relation to 37 Schools. The reports referred to witnesses discharged in all decades up to and including the 1980s. Witnesses consistently reported that their clothes and footwear were old-fashioned, ill-fitting, uncomfortable and unsuitable for cold and wet weather.
- 9.142** Witnesses generally reported that their own clothes were removed when they were admitted and replaced with clothes that were, at times, of inferior quality. This was a reported practice in the Schools regardless of the condition of the witness' own clothes. The loss of personal items of clothing was described as traumatic for some witnesses who had been specially dressed for the occasion in new clothes, or their First Holy Communion and Confirmation clothes. The clothes provided were described as uniform and were reported to have often been made in the institution, especially in the period prior to the 1960s. There were a small number of reports from Schools where flour sacks were used to make clothes and underclothes.
- 9.143** Seventy seven (77) witnesses reported having to wear pre-worn, ill-fitting footwear to which many attributed long-standing problems with their feet. A small number of witnesses reported being bare-footed at times when no shoes or socks were available. These reports were from witnesses discharged prior to 1960 when witnesses rarely reported having new shoes. There were 36 reports of bags of second-hand clothes being periodically thrown out on the floor and residents being left to scramble for what they could find.
- 9.144** Before 1970, several institutions were reported to have had *'Sunday clothes'* including coats and shoes. These clothes were worn when visitors and inspectors came and whenever the residents went out, for example for Sunday walks, to perform in competitions, to attend hospital or to see a doctor. Witnesses also reported that their clothing was generally not adequate for inclement weather and many described being forced outdoors in winter for recreation periods without appropriate clothing, such as coats, rainwear, hats, gloves or scarves, being provided.
- 9.145** Witnesses described underwear garments as loose and shapeless with limited availability of bras for residents in many Schools prior to the 1970s. It was frequently reported that during the early years witnesses were supplied with bodices that were worn tightly bound to flatten their breasts.

*I went with a bra on me, and there was an older girl there and she said Mth ...X... said "take off that bra" and she gave me this thing ...(bodice)... and it had strings on it. It was to flatten me.... I used to be in agony, but they made me wear it.*

**9.146** For witnesses discharged in the 1970s and 1980s clothing continued to constitute reports of neglect and many described being embarrassed by old-fashioned and second-hand clothes that identified them as 'industrials' or orphans in the outside world. Nineteen (19) witnesses discharged in the 1970s reported that they did not have clothes of their own and that everything they wore was communal property.

*One nun, she was teaching us, I remember her saying we were being stigmatised going to school outside and they would have to do something about it ...(get new clothes).... She used to say it was not nice, she was in the convent and she couldn't go against them ... (Sisters in charge of residents)....*

**9.147** Nineteen (19) witness accounts were heard of the best clothes being given to residents who were regarded as 'pets' of staff members while others fought for something that would fit them.

### **Heating**

**9.148** There were 241 witness reports of poor heating in relation to 35 Schools across all decades. Witnesses described enduring memories of being cold, a particular feature of which was the pain of chilblains on the hands and feet. Chilblains were a common ailment in the pre-1970s period and witnesses reported that the pain experienced after being beaten on chilblained hands and legs was extreme.

**9.149** The heating arrangements described in Schools during the years before the 1960s were mainly of open turf and coal fires in classrooms and some recreation areas. Witnesses reported that the furnaces used for heating water for the laundries supplied heat to the refectories, classrooms and dormitories in later years and a number of witnesses reported that heating was limited to times when the furnaces were lit for the laundries. Dormitories were generally described as large cold rooms with bare wooden floors and windows. Witnesses also reported that inadequate clothing and bed-coverings contributed to being cold. Reports regarding heating from witnesses discharged in the 1970s and 1980s were mainly concerned with being poorly clothed for cold weather and having to spend long periods outdoors in cold and wet weather.

### **Supervision**

**9.150** One hundred and ninety five (195) witnesses reported poor or inadequate supervision by staff leaving them unprotected from harm and exposed to abuse. Orphans and those with little family contact while resident in the Schools were reported to have been particularly affected by the lack of supervision. Witnesses stated that 'orphans' did not have the protection afforded by visits from parents or relatives or older sisters to defend them from abusive staff and co-residents. The three most frequently reported consequences of poor or inadequate supervision were:

- Bullying and physical abuse
- Sexual abuse by staff and co-residents
- Compromised care of babies and toddlers.

**9.151** Twenty nine (29) witnesses reported that supervision at play times was inadequate and that bullying by co-residents was a frequent occurrence. Components of the bullying behaviour reported by witnesses included being sexually and physically abused, in addition to being exposed to less direct forms of abuse such as being reported to staff for punishment, forced to do unpleasant tasks and being deprived of food. Supervision in the refectories and dormitories was generally described as minimal, with, in some Schools, as many as 100 residents routinely

reported to be supervised by one staff member. Witnesses stated that the lack of supervision in the refectories allowed older residents to have first pick of the food or simply take it from younger residents, who were generally left to fend for themselves.

*There was fighting among the girls, there was no supervision at all. On Saturday there would be no staff and the beatings by the older girls ... they were terrible, terrible.*

- 9.152** The Committee heard 71 witness accounts of negligent care where residents were left in charge of younger co-residents without support or supervision. Witnesses from a small number of Schools reported that residents from the age of eight years were left in charge of babies and toddlers. Some witnesses reported that minding babies was their exclusive occupation and that they were taken out of class for this purpose; others reported being rostered to mind the babies, including getting up at night to feed them. Some were so tired the next day they fell asleep in the classroom. Witnesses reported that staff checked to see that residents had fed, dressed and changed the infants, otherwise there was no ongoing supervision of the 'charges' care.

*I used to have to look after the babies. I used to have to wash them, feed them and clean them, get them ready for bed. They were like little babies.... You learned, the older girls would show you. I was about 11 or 12 ... there were about 6 or 7 babies.*

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*I remember my brother and his girlfriend coming to visit me, he heard he had a sister. I remember it because he brought a cake. They wanted to take me out for an ice cream and they said "no". I was minding the babies. ... I was only a child myself. I used to have to sleep in the nursery with these babies and there was a row of all these babies and you would have to get up in the night, if they cried, or to go to the toilet, or that. You did it a week at a time, there was only one consolation the next week you were allowed to have a lie on....*

- 9.153** Twelve (12) witnesses reported being so hungry that they either ate the babies rusks and dried food or took their milk, substituting it with water in the babies' bottles. Several witnesses expressed regret about their own harsh treatment of babies and commented on feeling conflicted about resenting the infants they were obliged to look after when their own care was neglected. Others felt sorry for the infants and developed close affectionate bonds with those they had cared for over an extended period of time.

- 9.154** Witnesses reported that there was poor supervision in the absence of staff in many of the Schools over different periods of time. Residents from three Schools were locked in dormitories overnight in the absence of a staff member. Witnesses also reported that there were few domestic staff employed and as a result the residents were required to do the housework, including working in the convent and other areas. This work was reported as generally checked by older residents or lay staff.

- 9.155** Most Schools employed some lay staff who were generally believed to be untrained for the task of providing care for children. Witnesses reported that there were some residents retained when they were 16 years old by the nuns to work as lay staff, many of whom were believed to have been in the Schools all their lives. Witnesses expressed some understanding for the frequently harsh behaviour of these staff: '*They treated others as they were treated themselves*'. Witnesses said that lay staff including the former residents received no specific training for their work with children until the 1970s and 1980s when it was reported that staff from certain Schools were trained as childcare workers:

*The workers were the same age as ourselves like, if we were 15 they were 18.... They started training when I was there; they used to tell us one day a week that they were going for training.*

**9.156** Witnesses also reported that tradesmen, gardeners and farm workers were employed in most Schools and there were isolated reports of these male ancillary staff being inappropriately involved in the care and management of residents.

**9.157** A further area of neglect identified by witnesses in the context of poor supervision related to external placements. Witnesses reported being sent to families they had not previously met and were not visited by any staff from the Schools while they were there. In addition to those sent to families for weekends and holidays others reported being placed alone in work settings at an inappropriate age. For example, girls ranging in age from 10-13 years were sent to housekeep for local families, shopkeepers or clergy. Twenty nine (29) witnesses placed with families for holidays or to work reported being sexually and physically abused in such situations where they were vulnerable and unsupervised.

### **Education**

**9.158** Educational neglect was described by many witnesses both in terms of the standard of education provided and, for some, receiving no education at all. One hundred and eighty seven (187) witnesses reported leaving school with poor literacy skills and no qualifications. Sixty three (63) witnesses reported long-term literacy problems. Witnesses reported that their education was neglected through the competing demands of domestic work, excessive emphasis on religious instruction, fear of punishment in the classroom and being discriminated against as children from an Industrial School. Other witnesses reported that they received no assistance for their learning difficulties and were significantly disadvantaged in later life as a result.

*If you weren't bright they didn't help you and anyway you couldn't learn with the beatings. I only learned how to clean and cook. Mth ...X... used to say to me "you think you will be a star but you won't be, the way your mother turned out". .... When I was leaving Sr ...Y... said "don't turn out like your mother" ...(mother had been in laundry).... I did not know what she meant....*

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*My days were reduced to the laundry and cleaning and scrubbing. You would be getting younger children up and cleaning them and potties ...(chamber pots)... etcetera. Then it was cleaning, polishing and scrubbing, cleaning corridors, folding clothes and the laundry.... I left not able to read and I was always embarrassed of my writing, it's very childlike. Even taking down a message in my job I practice it a hundred times. There was an awful lot of work and no education which is something I always regret. Only a very selective few were sent out to school.*

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*You were constantly told you were a misfit, I had a problem no one could understand, I couldn't write. There were pets, they got special help with their classes, good looking, sweet little angelic looking girls, they were the pets. I got no help, I asked for it but I wasn't a pet.*

**9.159** One hundred and seventy eight (178) witnesses (58%) reported that they completed their classroom education by the age of 14 years, of whom 34 reported that they did not attend class after 12 years of age. Eight (8) witnesses stated that they were taken out of class to work full-time before the age of 10 years, including two who reported no memory of ever attending school.

*We had some sort of education up until about 7 ...(years old)... after that I had no education. After that it was decided who would go to school, outside school ...(local primary school).... I put up my hand, Sr ...X... said "you aren't going anywhere".*

**9.160** In a number of Schools the strenuous nature of the work, rising early for kitchen or laundry duties, and caring for younger co-residents at night left witnesses tired and unable to benefit from education. Ninety eight (98) witnesses reported being kept from attending class to work in and for the institution when their stated wish was to continue their education. Forty five (45) witnesses reported that they were at times called away from the classroom or came late to class because of chores they had to do beforehand. Others reported being routinely kept out of class on a rotating basis to work in the kitchens and other parts of the institution. Six (6) witnesses reported that they attended class only for the day of the inspector's visit and that they were otherwise occupied with domestic chores. In the main these reports related to witnesses discharged before the 1970s:

*I was a very intelligent child. I would soak up knowledge and really resent not having had the chance to have a really good education. ... (I was)... pulled out at 11 and a half or 12 and worked in the orphanage. ... Work in the orphanage prevented me studying. I got highest marks in Primary Certificate in the whole school ...(local primary school)...(and was)... sent around to the whole school with the certificate.*

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*I was in the secondary school one day, I was there for 6 months, she ...(Sr X)... came in and called me out and she said ..."Y...(named co-resident)... is going today, she is 16 and you are now taking her place". I was going to work in the kitchen. I was so shocked, I really wanted to stay in school. ... I had to go to the kitchen and then I was moved to the farm.*

**9.161** There were reports heard of 17 Schools where residents and local children shared the same classrooms either within the Industrial School or in the local community. In 13 Schools residents were reported to attend class in the local primary, secondary or technical schools and in four other Schools the classes were attended by both School residents and local children. Twenty five (25) witnesses reported educational discrimination and neglect in these circumstances either in the classrooms attached to the Schools or in the local schools. They reported being discriminated against in different ways, for example reporting that they were not allowed to play with or speak to children from the town and often had to sit together at the back of the class. Witnesses also reported that they were referred to collectively by teachers as 'the industrials', 'the orphans', 'the house children' or similar terms. They reported having to wear clothes that distinguished them from the other pupils and being treated as part of a separate group. Witnesses from three Schools reported that as residents of the Industrial School it was their task to clean the local schools' classrooms and in another School to clean and work in the secondary school's boarding house.

**9.162** Many reports were heard of co-residents being given preferential treatment in relation to school attendance, particularly from Schools where residents attended external primary, technical and secondary schools. Witnesses frequently remarked that they were not allowed to go out to school because they were not favoured as 'pets' of the religious staff. Forty two (42) of the 83 witnesses who reported attending second level education did so in the period before free secondary education was introduced.

*They used to say to us, "3 children would be picked" to go for education. I was bright I wanted to get ahead, I wanted to go to secondary school. I didn't get the opportunity. Three girls were picked, they were ... (pets) ..... I think it was a bit of class distinction, if they came from a better background, or if their aunt was a nun they would be picked.*

**9.163** Witnesses reported that at times their educational opportunities were denied by not having their own school books or the facilities or encouragement to do homework in the evenings. Many reported being denied the opportunity to participate in extra curricular activities and that, having been reared and educated in an institutional setting, the adjustment to attending second level

schooling in the local area was a considerable challenge. As a witness said: *'I didn't know how to act with people outside the School when I went to the tech ...(technical school)...'*

### **Bedding**

**9.164** The quality of bedding provision was reported as poor by 185 witnesses, the majority of whom emphasised being cold in bed. These reports were in relation to 31 Schools across the decades. Poor bedding also referred to lumpy mattresses, insufficient blankets, sheets changed infrequently, mattresses and bedding smelling of urine and no provision made for seasonal variations in temperature. Rubber sheets were reported to be used in place of a cotton sheet in some Schools for residents who wet their beds and were described as being cold and uncomfortable to sleep on. There were reports from three Schools of all residents having to sleep on rubber sheets. Others had to carry their wet cotton sheets all day and sleep on them that night.

**9.165** Witnesses from a small number of Schools reported having to share their bed with either a sibling or a younger co-resident. For some witnesses there was a comfort in this arrangement; for others it was regarded as unpleasant especially in the context of bed-wetting.

*We slept 2 to a bed. I would be up all night clapping the sheet, trying to dry the sheet to avoid a beating for my sister and blowing on it. I never had my own bed. Later I shared a bed with another girl.*

### **Healthcare**

**9.166** One hundred and thirty eight (138) witnesses reported that when they were ill or injured their healthcare was neglected and necessary treatment was not provided. Forty nine (49) witnesses reported being punished, not believed or ignored when ill. Witnesses stated: *'I got better by myself'* and *'The nuns always thought we were pretending or were looking for notice, it was a crime to be sick'*.

**9.167** A large number of witnesses reported that *'no heed was taken unless you were very ill'* and gave accounts of being hospitalised with infections, appendicitis, ulcers secondary to chilblains, rickets, anaemia, and failure to thrive. Ten (10) witnesses reported suffering with severe headaches and episodes of fainting that were ignored by staff. Sixteen (16) others reported having recurrent earaches that were untreated, resulting in infections and perforated eardrums. Six (6) witnesses reported they suffered permanent hearing loss.

**9.168** A further area of healthcare neglect reported to the Committee by witnesses in the period prior to the 1980s was the lack of investigation by medical and nursing staff who observed or were involved in treating non-accidental injuries in the School, local clinics or hospital settings. Eighteen (18) witnesses reported being attended by a doctor in the School for treatment of an injury, including suturing following assaults, and they were neither questioned about how the injury occurred nor was any intervention made to protect them from further abuse.

**9.169** A small number of witnesses reported that medical advice was not acted upon and that prescribed medical treatment was discontinued in the School. One witness stated that she was hospitalised with tuberculosis while resident in a School. At her hearing, she provided copies of her medical discharge reports containing specific recommendations to the Resident Manager. The medical report advised that she should be moved to a more protective environment and receive better nourishment; she said that neither recommendation was followed.

**9.170** The availability of staff to assist and supervise children who were ill was reported to vary over the decades and between different Schools. Twenty six (26) witnesses said that they were put in the dormitories, left alone and unattended while they were sick. In a number of instances

witnesses reported being locked into dormitories and infirmaries during the day while they were ill.

- 9.171** One hundred and fifty two (152) witnesses reported attending hospital for treatment, a number of whom were admitted for reasons including childhood accidents and illness such as fevers, tonsillitis, ear infections and lacerations. As previously reported, 33 residents were admitted for injuries following physical abuse.

*I went to hospital ...(with a broken wrist following beating).... I had to walk to the hospital, it was 3 quarters of an hour to walk, another girl came with me.*

- 9.172** Two (2) witnesses reported they developed osteomyelitis, which they believed was due to the delay in receiving medical attention when they were first symptomatic. In one of these instances the witness reported that the hospital surgeon who saw her as an adult commented on the contribution of avoidable delay to the final outcome of the osteomyelitis in her foot and the need then for surgery. Another witness reported she had part of her hand amputated following an accident with a bread-slicing machine in the School kitchen.

- 9.173** A number of witnesses reported that improvements in health care provision depended on changes of staff and the attitude of the Resident Manager: *'I was looked after in a kind, loving way if I was sick until I was 12 and then with a change ...(of Resident Manager)... it all changed'.*

- 9.174** An additional form of neglect reported by witnesses was the failure to provide medical records to them when they were discharged. Twenty two (22) witnesses reported that the absence of any information on their medical history has been a significant problem in adult life. A number of witnesses reported that their medical care was compromised by this lack of information and led subsequently to an avoidance of doctors and medical treatment, as they did not wish it to be known that they were reared in an institution.

### **Adolescent development**

- 9.175** Preparation for puberty was specifically reported by 36 witnesses as an area of neglect through misinformation, lack of education and discussion of all sexual matters. The onset of menstruation was described as a particularly distressing experience for many female witnesses due both to their own lack of understanding about what was happening and the response of staff to their circumstances. Witnesses reported that adolescent development and menstruation were not discussed and that in many instances their attempts to seek advice and reassurance were harshly sanctioned. Witnesses reported feeling that normal bodily changes were faults of some kind. A witness reported that when she started to menstruate, she was sent for by the Resident Manager who gave her a lecture about being dirty, calling her a *'filthy devil'*.

*There was absolutely no sanitary facilities for a girl at a certain time of your life, you had to make do yourself. We got no advice at all, we learned from older girls.... We used talk among ourselves. When it ...(menstruation)... first happened to me I hadn't the courage to go up and ask, we were very much afraid to ask ...(for sanitary protection)....*

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*After I had my period the nuns kept telling me "you can now have a baby if a man touches your hair". So when this foster father began touching my hair I thought I was pregnant.*

- 9.176** In addition to the distress associated with menstruation in these circumstances witnesses reported being humiliated and abused in response to any appearance of physical development. They reported feeling embarrassed and ashamed of their breast development. Witnesses

reported that an aspect of the neglect experienced in this regard was being forced to wear inappropriate garments for the purpose of concealing normal physical development.

*When we started to grow breasts, we couldn't ask the nuns anything, you weren't allowed grow breasts, I was told my breasts were ugly. ... I was friendly with an outside girl and she gave me a black bra, you know ... brassiere, we were not allowed wear them. Well she, Sr ...X... caught me and she threw me into a room and she beat me black and blue. We were not allowed wear them you know.*

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*I was obviously growing up by now and I had quite big breasts. Sr ...X... would come up to me get hold of my breasts and squash them as hard as she could, she would then order me to "flatten them down and stop encouraging" it ... "flatten them down, flatten them". She would scream at me. So I would just try and hold myself in 'til she left me alone. ... Then one day she got hold of me and told me she had got me a "roll on", I thought I was going to get some nylons ...(stockings)... and felt very grown up. She said "this will help to keep you in". ... When I put it ...(corset)... on she made me haul it up over my breasts to flatten them down, I could hardly breathe and I had to wear this over my breasts for months.*

**9.177** Witnesses reported having little or no knowledge of intimate relationships and being misinformed about basic details regarding sexual matters. Some witnesses, including three who stated they were unable to read, described being handed a book on the facts of life when they were discharged. Others reported receiving minimal education in relation to sexual matters during the 1970s and 1980s. Witnesses frequently stated that they received no sex education and that sexual matters were never discussed by the staff. The absence of open discussion and information and the culture of silence, fear and denial that witnesses described regarding sexual matters in the Schools were reported to have contributed to neglect and abuse on several levels. A witness who was discharged after 16 years in the School, without any preparation for outside life or relationships with men, reported being raped and abandoned on her first date. Other witnesses said: *'the facts of life were never discussed, I knew it ... (sexual abuse)... was wrong but we had no language to tell.*

*We didn't know anything about getting a period. There was nothing about a period only, "if you sit beside a man you get pregnant". I remember getting a period, I thought something was wrong with me. I didn't tell anyone because I was afraid, I thought "I'll get into trouble". There was no one to tell.*

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*We had no sex education, the only sex education we had was about 10 minutes, from the priest. He did a thing on the blackboard to the whole class.*

### **Preparation for discharge**

**9.178** Witnesses reported that with little or no preparation for independent living their discharge from the Schools and transition to life outside the institution was traumatic and, for some, overwhelming. Areas of neglect most frequently reported by female witnesses in relation to their discharge were:

- Lack of preparation and training in basic life skills
- Lack of assessment, supervision and follow-up of placements
- Lack of opportunity to say goodbye to siblings and friends
- Lack of personal information and related documentation.

**9.179** A large number of witnesses who had spent most of their childhood in institutional care reported a profound sense of displacement and bewilderment when discharged from the Schools. It was

reported as common for residents to be informed they were being discharged on the morning of their departure or the previous evening, without any prior discussion. Most witnesses stated that they left the Schools with few possessions, some reported they were given a suitcase or brown parcel containing a change of clothing, and others described leaving with *'the clothes we stood up in'*. Reports of poor preparation for discharge were heard from witnesses in relation to all decades, including the 1980s. *'You were shown the door and put out, none of us had anywhere to go. The door was open and you were out with 2 suits and your underwear.'*

- 9.180** Most witnesses stated that they left the Schools without necessary life skills, including the ability to handle money, shop, budget, cook, pay bills, use public transport or to participate in the social world beyond the institution. They reported not being given any advice to assist them cope with living outside the institutional life to which they had been accustomed.

*After I left I used to sleep in the mart in ...local town... for about 2 weeks. I had nowhere to go and so I said I'd go to England. When I went over, you know, I couldn't give the right change, I just didn't know ...(how to handle money)....*

- 9.181** A witness from one School reported that a bequest was made by an ex-resident to the institution to allow each resident to receive a small amount of pocket money each week to foster independence. The witness reported that residents lined up to get the money each week. It was immediately taken back and the residents were informed it was being saved for them. This witness reported that she asked for it when she was being discharged and was told it had been used to buy her clothes.

*I didn't know anything about money. ... You don't know how to go into the shop and ask, you never done daily things, you never done your own washing, so you had to find out ...by ... trial and error. I remember going into ...(department store)... and the girl there helped me, she was great. I had never bought clothes before. I had to learn all this, pay your rent, pay your light ...(electricity bill)... and all this, even when you were leaving they should have told us, or got us ready, given us some information but they gave us nothing, we had to apply for everything and then it was different to what you were told in the School.*

- 9.182** A number of the 64 witnesses who were discharged to their family home commented on the difficulty they experienced reintegrating with families from whom they had been separated, in some situations with little contact for a number of years. Witnesses described being dropped on their parents' or older siblings' doorstep without prior notice or any further contact, follow-up or aftercare. Among the circumstances which confronted witnesses were impoverished living conditions, homelessness, sexual abuse and rejection by families who had become strangers.

- 9.183** Witnesses reported being placed directly in employment without consultation as to what they wished to do. *'I was still in their grip, they took me, they told me without asking me. They took me to ...named city... and put me to work in hospital.'* The limited information provided about where they were going and what work they were expected to do was reported repeatedly by witnesses. They reported not being given any practical advice or reassurance about what their new situation might entail or who to contact if they experienced any difficulties. Witnesses described being handed a train and/or boat ticket, with the address of a prospective employer or relative and left to make their own way to Dublin, London or another city in the UK. The Committee heard a small number of reports of witnesses wandering aimlessly when they arrived until *'rescued by the Police'* or some kind-hearted person who assisted them in getting to their destination.

- 9.184** Sixty one (61) witnesses reported being abused in work and holiday placements, many of whom emphasised that the lack of adequate assessment and supervision of aftercare left them

vulnerable to abuse. Twenty eight (28) witnesses reported being abused in various ways by employers following their discharge, often under threat of being returned to the Schools if they resisted or disclosed their abuse. The types of abuse reported by witnesses in these circumstances included physical and sexual abuse, not being paid and working excessively long hours.

*We used to go on holidays and from the first day I hated it. He was all right, the father..... She ...(mother in the holiday family)... wanted me to look after the kids and do the work, she was cruel. She made me ...(work).... I was in secondary school for one year, and then I went to the holiday family and at the end of the summer, the School used to phone up and say to come back, this time they did not phone so ... the family phoned and the nuns said "will you not keep her, is there not a school there that she can go to?" So they kept me and did not send me to school, I was a skivvy. I was only about 14 and got no more school....*

- 9.185** Fourteen (14) witnesses reported being transferred to laundries when they were discharged, with no recollection of any formal transfer procedure. One witness reported being transferred to a laundry as punishment for having a boyfriend; others reported being transferred as punishment for what might be described as assertive behaviour.

*I'm pushed up against the wall and they ...Sr X and 3 lay staff... had me in on the wall beating the head off me, beating me unconscious. I put me hand out to save myself.... I knocked Sr ...X's...veil off, it was accidental I did not strike that nun. I'm put into this room, it was out in the yard, there was no light in it and I was there until next day. Then I'm taken out by a Miss ...Y... a lady she was, a real lady she was a lovely woman, and she told me I was being sent down the country, I was being transferred. She put her arms around me and said "I'm sorry".... I went down ... early in the morning and never got a chance to say goodbye to my sisters.... (Sent at 13 years to work in laundry)*

- 9.186** The lack of planning and involvement of witnesses in any discussions about discharge resulted in them having no time or opportunity to say goodbye to siblings and friends. This abrupt ending to their years in care was reported by witnesses to be traumatic. 'No great goodbyes from what had been my home for 9 years'. Discharges in these circumstances were particularly distressing for witnesses who were leaving younger siblings behind whom they knew were being abused. Others reported that the loss of friendships was distressing, both at the time and in subsequent years, as they never regained contact.

*It was the day our ...witness's sister... left, I were sitting on the swing. I were crying, my sister, she just said goodbye to me. I just heard that she was gone for good, she didn't know herself where she was going. She ...(Sr X)... gave me a backhand because I was crying. I split my head. I told them ...(in the hospital)... I fell, the nun was there beside me you couldn't say anything or you'd get worse.*

- 9.187** Another witness who had spent several months in hospital following a leg injury was 16 years old when she was ready to be discharged. The witness reported that the Resident Manager of the School where she had previously resided for many years refused to readmit her or offer any further assistance. She was discharged from hospital to the local county home and reported ongoing medical problems that required several subsequent operations.

- 9.188** Many witnesses reported that there remained a consistent lack of preparation for independent living and little aftercare provided by Schools in the 1970s and 1980s. Others reported that there were some improvements and changes in practice and procedures since the 1970s, with planned discharges and some preparation for independent living.

*Sr ...X... said "it's time for ye to leave". I said "what?" She said "I'm going to give ye a few days now, you can finish your Junior Cert and then you have to go". We ...(witness*

and co-resident)... *thought, "what on earth are we going to do, where are we going to go?" We had nothing. Within a couple of days we had found a flat, the 2 of us, we found it ourselves and we left out the door with a couple of suitcases. I had to leave school, I would have liked to have stayed on. I did alright in my Junior Cert, but I had to leave. A teacher in the school phoned up and explained the situation and got me a job.*

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*When I left I wanted to do ...training... she ...(Sr X)... was giving out about the funds ...(cost).....named lay care staff... persuaded her to let me go. I remember I was brought up to a big city, a place I hadn't a clue of where we were, I was put into a B&B by Sr ...X... and Sr ...Y... and she ...(Sr X)... gave me a cheque for £200 and I had to find a flat for myself, I had no pots, no pans, nothing, I was on my own. There were times when I was there when I was hungry, a friend from School would give me soup and bread.*

- 9.189** Most witnesses who had been in institutional care for an extended period of time reported that when they were discharged they were given little information about the terms of their admission or discharge, their medical history or any of their formal documentation such as educational or birth certificates. The Committee heard 15 reports of witnesses being provided with incorrect information regarding family circumstances, for example being told that their parents were deceased or that they had no siblings. For many of these witnesses such misinformation has continued to be a cause of great distress and unresolved anger:

*I applied for my birth cert after I left the School and discovered that my mother wasn't married. I had been told all my life ... (in named School)... that she was dead and that my father died when I was 2. It was a shock, I went looking ...(for information)...when I was getting married and the priest put me off.... Since then ...(in recent years)... I got the details off the social worker, she arranged for me to meet her ... (witness's birth mother).... When I met the poor lady, she was a lovely woman, she didn't want me given up, she was supposed to be paying for me. They ...(Sisters)... had her name and details all the time and she lived near, and none of this was told you before you left. They should have talked to us, you had to deal with it all yourself, it ...(the information)... was coming through the post, in a flat, on your own, finding out she was alive all the time.*

## Emotional abuse

*Any other act or omission towards the child which results, or could reasonably be expected to result, in serious impairment of the physical or mental health or development of the child or serious adverse effects on his or her behaviour or welfare<sup>11</sup>*

- 9.190** This section of the Report describes witness evidence of emotional abuse by deprivation of secure relationships, family contact, identity, affection and approval, and by both a lack of safety and a lack of protection from harm. Such deprivations impaired the social, emotional and physical functioning and development of witnesses and were identified by them as disturbing both at the time and in the subsequent course of their lives.
- 9.191** Emotional abuse described by witnesses generally referred to routine practices that failed to recognise the individual needs of children and provide adequately for their care. Practices in relation to personal care, the separation of siblings, and enforced isolation and silence were reported as part of the rigid institutional system. A further component of emotional abuse described by witnesses referred to the constant physical and verbal abuse that engendered a culture of fear. Emotional abuse was described as pervasive and systemic and was less often ascribed to individual staff members. Therefore, while some staff were identified by witnesses, the following section does not include a list of reported abusers.

<sup>11</sup> Section 1(1)(d) as amended by section 3 of the 2005 Act.

### **Nature and extent of emotional abuse reported**

**9.192** The Committee heard 364 reports of emotional abuse by 356 witnesses (94%) in relation to 40 Schools that admitted girls.<sup>12</sup> There was a wide variation in the number of reports made in relation to each School.

- Two (2) Schools were collectively the subject of 115 reports.<sup>13</sup>
- Seventeen (17) Schools were the subject of 6-20 reports, totalling 198 reports.
- Twenty one (21) Schools were the subject of 1-5 reports, totalling 51 reports.

**9.193** Emotional abuse was reported in combination with each of the other abuse types, physical, sexual and neglect, as shown in the following table:

**Table 41: Emotional Abuse Combined with Other Abuse Types – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

<b>Abuse types</b>	<b>Number of reports</b>	<b>%</b>
Emotional, neglect and physical	226	62
Emotional, neglect, physical and sexual	123	34
Emotional and physical	8	2
Emotional and neglect	3	1
Emotional physical and sexual	2	1
Emotional	1	(0)
Emotional, neglect and sexual	1	(0)
<b>Total reports</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**9.194** Emotional abuse was reported in combination with all three of the other abuse types in 123 instances. Three hundred and fifty nine (359) reports (95%) of emotional abuse were combined with physical abuse and 126 reports (35%) combined emotional abuse with sexual abuse.

**9.195** Table 42 below details the distribution of emotional abuse reports according to the witnesses' discharge period.

**Table 42: Number of Emotional Abuse Reports by Decade of Witnesses' Discharge – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

<b>Decade of discharge</b>	<b>Number of emotional abuse reports</b>	<b>%</b>
Pre-1960s	123	34
1960-69	168	46
1970-79	66	18
1980-89	7	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>364</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

<sup>12</sup> A number of witnesses were admitted to more than one School, and made reports of abuse in more than one School, therefore the number of reports are greater than the number of witnesses.

<sup>13</sup> In order to maintain confidentiality further details regarding the numbers of abuse reports in these Schools cannot be specified.

**9.196** It is of note that 20% of the emotional abuse reports were made by witnesses who were discharged after 1970, which was similar to those of physical abuse and neglect .

### **Description of emotional abuse**

**9.197** The main forms of emotional abuse identified by witnesses included: humiliation and ridicule, deprivation of contact with siblings and family, rejection, loss of identity, lack of affection, threat of harm and deliberate exposure to frightening situations. Other forms of emotional abuse included a punitive emphasis on religion, public humiliation and personal ridicule, denigration of family of origin, isolation, criticism and verbal abuse, and the unreasonable imposition of responsibility. There is some unavoidable overlap between the different forms of emotional abuse and between emotional abuse and other types of abuse, particularly physical and sexual abuse.

### **Personal ridicule and public humiliation**

**9.198** The most consistently reported form of emotional abuse described by female witnesses was humiliation and ridicule. One hundred and ninety seven (197) witnesses described being humiliated and ridiculed by a variety of means including name calling, being humiliated about personal hygiene, being subject to constant criticism, being made to publicly beg forgiveness for alleged misconduct, being made to stand or kneel to eat meals at a penance table, having attention called to physical disabilities or impairments, being forced to stand naked in front of others and having soiled underwear exhibited for ridicule.

**9.199** The most frequently cited occasion for public humiliation was in the management of bed-wetting. Witnesses who wet their bed described having to carry wet mattresses and walk with wet sheets over their head and shoulders through the School and across the yards to drying rooms, the laundries, or while sitting in the refectories. In three Schools it was reported that witnesses had to drape wet sheets on their shoulders in classrooms shared with local children. Eight (8) witnesses reported that the Resident Manager of a particular School forced those who wet their beds to wear their wet sheet or pants on their head or shoulders as they walked as far as the School gate. Others reported being forced to stand in the refectory with the wet sheet on their back while they ate breakfast or while watching others eat.

**9.200** Witnesses also reported being humiliated regarding their dress and general appearance. For example, a witness reported being punished by being forced to wear a dress made from a flour sack, which was removed in advance of an inspector's visit. Others described having to wear ragged clothes to school in the company of children from the town and being teased about their poor attire. Another witness who needed glasses and had been recommended by the doctor to sit in front of the class reported that the Sister ridiculed her in front of the class saying '*we would not like to look at this ugly girl all day, would we girls?*' Witnesses reported being mocked by staff about their personal appearance and humiliated by having attention drawn to adolescent changes:

*One time my sister brought me a bra. Sr ...X... made me stand up in the hall in front of the whole school and made me take it off and said "who do you think you are?"*

**9.201** Twenty three (23) witnesses reported enforced public nakedness as a cause of distress and humiliation. They described being beaten naked in front of others, being made to stand in line without any clothes and being bathed with others. Witnesses described the humiliation of being beaten on their bare buttocks and being forced to remove their skirts and pants, or pull up their nightdresses, having to bend over a chair or a desk or being held down on a bed or across a table to be beaten. The humiliation and shame of being observed while being physically abused in this manner was commented on by witnesses:

*You got blamed even if you didn't do it. She ...(Sr X)... took my knickers down once ... (in front of co-residents)... "let this be a lesson to you all" she said, she put me across her knee. I would have been about 8, and she beat me and beat me with a whip, a whip type stick until I cried.*

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*I'll never forget that beating, all the girls watching. The worst thing was not the beating but your naked bottom being seen by all the girls, it was so embarrassing.*

- 9.202** Fifty four (54) witnesses reported being called derogatory names and being subjected to derisory comments. Others reported being treated with hostility and told they were not liked by anybody. The classrooms and dormitories were the most frequently cited locations of such ridicule, which focussed on academic difficulties, their parent's impoverished circumstances, their personal appearance and hygiene.

*The emphasis was on making you submit, cower, creep, crawl, we were beaten if we were sad, "take that glum look off your face" and if you were happy, "why are you smiling? I'll take you off your high horse".*

- 9.203** Name-calling by lay and religious staff was reported as a common occurrence and included: 'devil's handmaid', 'tar babies', 'shawlies', 'Baluba', 'pauper', 'tinker', 'trash', 'dirty stinking trollop', 'illegitimate', 'slut', 'sinners', 'bastards', 'idiot', 'dunce', 'thick', 'liar', 'bandy legs', 'wet the bed', 'Dublin nobodies', and 'street kids'.

- 9.204** One hundred and twenty four (124) witnesses gave accounts of being personally ridiculed, which most commonly involved being ridiculed about soiled bedding and underwear in public by religious staff including Resident Managers. The public demonstration of soiled bedding and clothing was humiliating and a source of great distress. Many witnesses described having their underwear inspected on a regular basis and being punished and publicly ridiculed if they were soiled.

*It's so hard, we had no toilet paper, you would have to stand naked. If your knickers were dirty, as they would be after 2 weeks, you would be beaten, by ...Sr X and Sr Y....*

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*Every week we used have to hold up the gusset of the nicks ... (pants)... and show it off, if it was marked you used to have to stand out in front of the class. I was so terrified ... (that)... I used hold up my clean ones and wear the old ones for weeks.*

- 9.205** Witnesses reported that the humiliation of having their soiled pants displayed in public was compounded during adolescent years as signs of menstruation were treated as a grave transgression. Witnesses also reported being called derogatory names in relation to matters of personal hygiene and being subjected to comments that attracted the derision and criticism of others.

- 9.206** Twenty nine (29) witnesses who attended school with children from the local town, frequently referred to as 'townies', reported being the subject of ridicule and constant criticism in front of their peers. For example, a witness who was a talented musician and was chosen to perform music in public described the confusion associated with being expected to perform well and then being punished for her success.

*Mth ...X... hit me across the face with her hand and said "don't get above your station". You were expected to play ...(musical instrument)... well and you were punished if you played well.*

**9.207** The humiliation of being segregated in the class by religious staff, some of whom were reported to have a dual role as carer and teacher, and of being identified as 'orphans' was described as being the cause of enduring distress and anger by a large number of witnesses. *'Orphans go down to the back of the class'*.

*Sr ...X... gave us orphans a dog's life. It was a living nightmare. She called us the scum of the earth, she refused to teach the orphans ...described being excluded from a school pageant....*

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*We were kept separate from the townies, they were warned we could steal. We had a special entrance and were not allowed mix with them.*

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*We sat together, we knew we were different, we were told we were different. Sr ...X... said "don't forget where you come from". ... You were the scum of the earth.... "Get back to the orphanage where you belong."*

**9.208** Witnesses described being targeted for personal ridicule in many ways, including being made to stand in the classroom wearing a hat with 'dunce' written on it or with signs around their necks with 'liar' and 'stupid' written on them.

**9.209** There were accounts from five Schools of witnesses being required to kneel down, kiss the floor and beg the Sisters' forgiveness for perceived transgressions. This punishment was reported to be carried out in front of the assembled residents.

**9.210** A witness who had been sexually abused within her family described the Resident Manager of the School where she was placed when she was 10 years old telling her co-residents that she was 'morally dirty' and that they were not to speak to her or play with her.

### **Exposure to fearful situations**

**9.211** One hundred and forty-three (143) witnesses described regular, and at times constant, exposure to frightening situations. In the words of one witness: *'It was pure fear, you would wake up every day and wonder "what's going to happen to me today?"*. Witnesses described a pervasive fear of being hit and never knowing what might happen next and being constantly apprehensive about the next episode of abuse.

*Always screaming, wailing, you would be hearing it as you would be going through the corridor, you would hear the screaming, and you would say "Jesus Christ who is getting beaten today?"*

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*You lived in appalling fear, the most appalling fear, you would be terrified. You did not know at what time you would get a beating. I couldn't explain to you the fear, it was terrible. There was this nun ... she was a very, very wicked woman.... She beat you whenever she felt like it.*

**9.212** In particular witnesses described hearing the screams of girls locked in cupboards and isolated rooms, having to watch young babies being beaten and being themselves locked outside in yards, sheds or in animal houses. For some witnesses the environment of fear was reinforced by death threats against them and/or their siblings particularly in the context of disclosing abuse. Witnesses described the Schools as places with many locked doors and staff who walked around carrying large bunches of keys. The threat of being locked away in isolation in a cupboard, under the stairs or in a room was a daily reality.

*There was this girl ...named co-resident... she used wet the bed.... Sometimes the girls would have to put her up on the table in the dining room, and they would put this big nappy on her in front of all the girls. She ...lay care staff... said she would make an example of her, it was terrible, all the little ones would be crying. At night time we would be told to take her ...named co-resident... out to where the coal was. ... It was a very small space with no light and we would have to lock her in. She would just go in like a dog, she was so beaten down, and she was left there all night ...crying.... I almost get sick now when I think of it, that I sometimes turned that key and locked her in ...crying.... It was hard, in your head you were screaming “stop, leave her alone”, you were in such fear ...crying.... She would just pick you out of the line and you had to do it, you’d be beaten, you literally lived in fear for you life.*

- 9.213** Fifty one (51) witnesses reported being subjected to the explicit and implicit threat of being ‘sent away’. They reported knowing that co-residents were sent to other more restrictive institutions, including psychiatric hospitals, laundries and Reformatory Schools, often behind a veil of secrecy.

*If you did anything wrong you would be told the black van will come for you, you lived in fear of being sent away in the black van. Sr ...X... would threaten you if you didn’t go to school or whatever, the black van would come for you. I don’t know ... where they all went, they all went missing. I know one girl is up there in ...named psychiatric hospital.... I went to see her myself, she is there to this day. Sr ...X... said she was mad in the head, and all she used to do was sit in a corner and play the tin whistle. She was sent away in the black van, and then you would say “where is ...named co-resident... gone?” You would be told “she is gone away in the black van”. ... If you did something, like steal the nun’s fresh bread, you would be after doing something you shouldn’t have done or one time a girl set fire to a bin. They were sent away in the black van.*



*You saw the same atrocities being committed and you could do nothing about it, you tried to do something about it but you were afraid of what would happen to you. I worried in case I would not get out of that place alive, there was a point when I thought “be careful”. There were some girls and you didn’t know what’s happened to them.*

- 9.214** A small number of witnesses reported that co-residents who had been ill or who were injured following a severe beating were also among those who disappeared and it was not known whether they had been hospitalised or had died. The fear of being sent away was reinforced by the overnight disappearance of co-residents who were discharged without having the opportunity to say goodbye to their sisters, friends and co-residents. Witnesses described older siblings ‘disappearing’ in this manner and not realising what had happened to them until years later. One witness described her own departure:

*They told you very quietly you were going, just going now! I got a brown case. You kinda didn’t want to go ...crying.... You couldn’t say goodbye to your friends. Sr ...X... wrote to the family ...(work placement)... and told them not to let me pal with other girls from the School...(also placed locally).*

- 9.215** The particular fear associated with these threats of being sent away was the belief that those who were transferred to other institutions were then never released. ‘We suffered the fear of being sent to ...laundry... that was the fear that hung over you. ... I saw many a girl go there, I can name them ...named co-residents.... We never saw them again.’ One witness reported that a co-resident was accused of stealing a small amount of money from a local member of the clergy, as a result of which she was subsequently sent to a psychiatric hospital.

*There was a room, it was my nightmare that room, I was never sent there. She ...(Sr X)... would send them there, some girls, the ones who fought back, and you would hear*

*them screaming, the screams! And you would never see them again, they would be sent away. I was terrified my sister would be sent to a laundry because some of them girls were.*

**9.216** In addition to the fear of being sent away many witnesses believed they could be retained in the School indefinitely. This belief was partially reinforced by the fact that in many Schools there were former residents who had stayed on in the institution and became part of the staff group. Those regarded as orphans, who had no contact with their own family, described being particularly fearful of this outcome.

**9.217** Witnesses also described as frightening the experience of being given responsibility for the care of babies and young children without appropriate assistance and supervision. Witnesses described the distress experienced by being made to provide care for their younger siblings and being held responsible for their conduct and behaviour, as one witness remarked *'I was only a child myself*. They described feeling guilty when their 'charges' or younger siblings were punished. The allocation of age-inappropriate tasks such as fire-lighting, ironing, the operation of laundry equipment, and kitchen work were all reported as imposing a risk to safety and unreasonable expectations on a child.

**9.218** Witnesses described a variety of fear inducing situations that were specific to certain staff, for example several witnesses reported being terrorised by staff who dressed up as ghosts and other figures for the purpose of frightening young residents. Others reported that staff had pet animals that they used in an intimidating manner with residents who were frightened of them.

*Sr ...X ... she used set the farm dogs on us, you were petrified, wherever you hid the dogs would sniff you out, you would have to climb the fence to get away from them.*

### **Denigration of family of origin**

**9.219** One hundred and seven (107) witnesses reported that their mothers, fathers or entire families were openly denigrated by both religious and lay care staff in the Schools. In most instances the denigration took the form of verbal abuse and criticism of a witness' mother, parents or family in the course of being berated or physically abused for some misdemeanour. *'They would make me feel I was a nobody. They would say "you are ruined, you are ruined like your mother", Sr ...X... and Sr ...Y... they never stopped.'* Forty (40) witnesses reported that their single mothers were the subject of specific denigration by religious staff. Witnesses stated that the severity of a beating or other physical punishment was regularly associated with remarks about the child's mother. This was particularly so for witnesses who were non-marital children and had been in institutional care since birth. They recalled being told as they were beaten that it was for *'the sins of your mother'* and that they would *'end up in the gutter like your mother'*.

*And in the month of November we used to have to pray for our mothers and fathers who died, we had to pray for them to get out of purgatory but the orphan girls, they were treated worse. They would be told "your mother is burning in hell, you will be punished for the sins of your mother, you workhouse girls". Then one girl, she was a bit older than me, she was from the workhouse, I remember her being told by the nuns "your mother will never get out, she will be in hell, because of what she did".*

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*I had ear infections and was told I did not deserve any treatment. Sr ...X... told me I was a spawn of the devil and I didn't deserve any treatment. "You are the spawn of the devil, every decent person who meets you will know you are the spawn of the devil."*

**9.220** Witnesses described being told their mothers were *'sinners'* or *'filthy prostitutes'* and that they were in the School as a result of their mother's sins. Hearing it said that their mothers were

sinner was a cause of great distress to many witnesses, who described feeling responsible for the fact that their mothers were 'so bad'.

*If you stepped out of line she ...(Sr X)... was always insulting my mother and my father, she'd say "your mother is a woman of the streets", and every night I used be in turmoil in bed and worried about my mother on the streets. I didn't know what she meant.... We were considered the dregs of society.... My mother was a different religion. We were made to feel so dirty and so low.*

- 9.221** Twenty (20) witnesses described being told that their parents had rejected and did not want them, usually in the context of being punished and in conjunction with being criticised. Witnesses described this form of abuse as particularly disturbing.

*One day, this nun said "if you had a wish what would you wish for?" And I said, without hesitation, it just came out, "I want to find my mother". "What?" she said "your mother gave you away, she wouldn't have anything to do with you" she shouted. I ran out and ran to this huge big hallway. I remember sitting there and saying "what have I done, why doesn't my mother want me?" I was so upset.... I cried myself to sleep. You had nobody ... to talk to.*



*She ...(Sr X)... would tell us to get dressed up, that our mother was coming up, and we'd all go up and she'd come along laughing and say "what are you smiling at? Your mother is not coming, she doesn't want you, she doesn't love you, she has another family". She'd show us a photograph of our mother with a family she was working for in the town, she'd say "your mother doesn't want you".*

- 9.222** Seventeen (17) witnesses reported that their mothers' ethnicity and religion were denigrated by religious staff. Witnesses of mixed race reported being referred to by derogatory names relating to their skin colour and, along with their mothers, being subjected to racial slurs.

*I used to pal with ...named co-resident.... Sr ...X... used put her into a bath because she was coloured, she used to tell her there was a smell off her. No money would ever, ever, ever compensate her for what she suffered.*

- 9.223** One witness reported that derogatory comments were initiated by the Sister in charge and taken up by other staff and girls. Her mother was described as 'a useless English Protestant' and when the witness was in trouble it was ascribed to her 'Protestant blood'. Another witness reported being constantly taunted by the Sister in charge about the fact that her mother had left her and her sibling and returned to England:

*You lot are being kept by us, cleaning for you, feeding you, caring for you, educating you while your mother ... is in England enjoying herself and does not even bother to write to you.*

- 9.224** A small number of witnesses further reported that their parents were humiliated when they came to visit, either by being shown into what was described as 'the beggars' parlour' or being made to wait outside while their child was called. 'The nuns told me my mother was a prostitute.... They wouldn't let her in the gate.'

- 9.225** Seven (7) witnesses reported being verbally and otherwise denigrated because they were members of the Travelling community. They described being told that they came from the roadside and other residents were actively encouraged to jeer at them.

## Deprivation of contact with siblings and family

**9.226** As reported elsewhere, a large number of witnesses commented on the fragmentation of their families as a result of the deprivation of contact with their siblings and relatives. This separation and loss of contact led to difficulties reintegrating with their family after they were discharged and was reported by many witnesses to be a cause of distress and anger for them, both at the time and in their subsequent lives.

**9.227** Fifty five (55) witnesses reported that their parents and relatives were either forbidden or discouraged from visiting them, 28 gave accounts that family members were turned away when they arrived at the School. Witnesses who were marked from physical abuse were often not allowed visitors. Others reported that their parents were sent away if deemed to be intoxicated or otherwise unsuitable to be seen. Deprivation of family visits was reported as a routine punishment for alleged misconduct in a number of Schools.

*I was in there for all the 40s. There was terrible cruelty ...(cruelty)... terrible cruelty. I was writing a letter to my aunt, to tell her of the beatings. They found the note.... She ...(Sr X)... put me across that bed and gave me a terrible beating . ... I never recovered from that beating. I had to take down my clothes and take off my knickers. Oh, that beating ...distressed.... That hurt me very much. I got over the physical, but I often wondered why did they beat me like that? That was hard for me ...crying.... I had to live with that, it affected me terrible. I was not let go on holiday to my aunt that year ...crying....*

**9.228** Following her mother's death, one witness reported that she and her siblings were placed in the local Industrial School despite, what she believed, was her father's wish that they remain at home. He did odd jobs in the School for the Sisters and the witness reported not being allowed to speak to him while he was there. She described watching him through a window as he was working and hoping he would look up to see her.

**9.229** Eighty three (83) witnesses reported that knowledge about their brothers and sisters was withheld or denied by those in charge of the School. The Committee heard evidence that prior to the 1970s, with few exceptions, no attempt was made to maintain contact between siblings in separate institutions or to keep witnesses informed of their siblings' whereabouts following admission or transfer to different institutions. Some witnesses reported that they never saw their brothers or sisters again after they had left the Court on the day they were placed in the Industrial School. Others reported that information about brothers and sisters who were placed in the same institution was also withheld. Witnesses reported being denied contact with brothers who were in nearby institutions and in a number of Schools the existence of siblings was not acknowledged.

*He ...(witness's brother)... came over every Sunday. She ...(Sr X)... didn't like that. She used to try and find work for me so that I wouldn't see him. I remember one Sunday the others asked me to get the ball, I climbed up on the scullery roof. She tied me to the stairs for this and when my brother came she sent him down to embarrass him to see his sister tied up. She then sent him up and made him wait and wait, in the end she let me up to see him when she knew he was gone. I was bitter about that.*

**9.230** Some older siblings reported knowing that they had family in the School but that through the arrangement of facilities, with older children separated from younger ones, they lost contact with their own siblings. 'They separated the brothers and the sisters, if something came up that they had to tell us then you would meet them, you would be lined up.' Other witnesses said that the practice of referring to residents by their allocated number contributed to loss of contact with their own brothers and sisters as their family name was not used. Alternately witnesses who

were admitted to a School at a very young age frequently had no memory of older siblings who may have been with them and then left the School.

**9.231** The Committee heard three witness accounts of twins being separated. In one instance twins who had been together throughout their lives were separated by the removal of one twin to another School. The separation was instigated by misbehaviour and the Resident Manager's belief that one twin would be 'better off' without the other. The emotional consequences of this trauma were reported to have been enduring.

**9.232** Thirty five (35) witnesses reported being either given misleading information or denied any information about their parents. One witness was not aware that she had living parents and learned of their existence when told by a Sister that her Confirmation photo would be sent to them. This Sister was reported by another witness to have refused her mother permission to visit and refused to give the witness parcels from home. The Committee heard 47 accounts of letters and parcels being withheld by those in charge of various Schools.

*We ...(witness and co-resident)... were supposed to be sisters, we were told we were sisters up 'til 11, and then they told us we weren't and then they split us up.... It was terrible, terrible sad because you thought you had a sister and then you discovered you hadn't, you were cut away from her.... I didn't know that my brother and 2 sisters were taken away from my mother and sent to ...named Schools.... I got all that ...(official records)... back about a month ago.... On the files it says my mother wrote to the convent and asked them could she take me back, and some TD, I don't know what his name is, said "no" and then he said "yes she can go home to the mother". Then the nuns said "no it wouldn't be good, the mother would make her go out to work and take the money off her". I always thought my mother didn't want me, she had married ... and wrote to the convent.... It had an awful effect on me, that she didn't want me, but she had tried to get me home to her.... When I read them papers it threw a different light on it, she did try. It was the nuns that were stopping it. The communication went back to when I was about 12 or something, she wanted me back, I have the files.*

**9.233** In addition to the reported trauma associated with loss of contact with parents, relatives and siblings, a small number of witnesses also reported the distress of being removed from weekend and 'holiday' families where they had developed strong attachments. Other witnesses recalled being told they were getting 'too close' to the family and their placements were terminated.

*I had one really, really lovely experience with ...named 'foster' family.... They wanted to adopt me ...crying... they were lovely, I loved them so much. I would have been educated and been part of a family ...crying... but they weren't allowed.... I had to go to another family, most of them were awful.*

### **Deprivation of affection**

**9.234** The Committee heard 119 witness reports of emotional abuse in the form of deprivation of affection. Witnesses reported a constant and basic absence of affection and approval during their time in the Schools and that this loss had a lasting impact. Lack of affection was described as the absence of a kind word, praise or encouragement, any gesture or demonstration of affection or the acknowledgement of pain and upset. The lack of an attachment figure and secure relationship left many witnesses feeling disconnected and insecure. Witnesses who were in Schools from a young age reported this absence with particular emphasis. 'You wouldn't know what love or sympathy looked like.'

*It takes me a long time to trust people.... I know I suffered in my head when I was there, I had a lot of anxiety. ... There was never any contact ... no hug or anything like that.... I don't ever remember any contact with anyone as a small child.*

**9.235** Several witnesses described being deprived of objects that they were attached to at the time of their admission, including, pictures, dolls and soft toys. This deprivation extended to pets that some witnesses became attached to while they were residents of the Schools.

*We were not allowed animals.... I was an animal lover, there were wild cats and kittens going around starving, I used to sneak them into the dormitory. I had a kitten. She, this nun, called me one night, I won't mention her name, if I do it will make me feel sick. ... She said "you see that kitten you have there" ... she got me out of my bed by the hair, and brought me down, they had one of those Aga stoves she said "that cat you have there" ... I can still see the stove that you put coal in the top, she said take "that top off". I had to go up on my knees, she said "take the top off", I had to do what I was told. What I had to do next was the killer ...distressed.... I had to put the cat in there and put the lid on it ... and the screams.... Then she...Sister... said "go back to your bed". The next morning ... she got me out of my bed and she made me rake that fire out ... and I had to pick that up ...crying... and she said "never again bring a cat into this dormitory" ... That's the worst thing that ever happened to me in ...named School... I think I was about 12 at the time.*

**9.236** The majority of witnesses reported that religious and lay staff actively discouraged commonly used forms of affection, including hugs and words of comfort or approval both between residents and from older girls towards the younger residents in their care. A number of witnesses described the pleasure they obtained from looking after babies and young children for the opportunity it provided to both give and receive affection. They reported that although affectionate attachments were not condoned, they were discreetly maintained. Witnesses recalled not understanding why they were punished for demonstrating their affection to co-residents and friends.

*Sometimes if the baby cried they would lift it up by its feet and wallop it. You couldn't have a pet, you were not allowed to show loving towards any little baby. When you were minding ...(babies)... you were not allowed pick it up if it was crying.... You'd have to pick them up and put them on pots, the bigger girls would show you. I remember being put on the pot myself by the older girls.*

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*We were standing in a line for Confession, we were 3 in a line about 20 of us, and you know the way your pal wants to be your partner ...(linking arms)... you want to be hers, you know, like friends. Mth ...X... came along, she just dragged me out of the line by the head and brought me into the store room. She took a big scissors and she ...crying... cut my whole head in pieces, she cut the hair in lumps. She left me there on my knees the whole day, when I would hear her coming, I would be on me hunkers and I would start kneeling. I was kneeling from 12 o'clock until 6 o'clock that evening.*

### **Witnessing the abuse of others**

**9.237** One hundred and six (106) witnesses reported that observing other residents being beaten or otherwise abused was a most disturbing experience that endured in their memory. The public nature of physical abuse, as previously described, led to many residents being routinely exposed to the trauma of watching and hearing their co-residents being abused.

*I saw her once, this girl was in it ...(bed).... Mth ...X... came up with that cane and pulled out the bedclothes ...crying... she walloped her ...crying... in front of all of us, she walloped her until she was tired ...crying.... That poor girl she suffered, they were very hard on her, the ...lay care staff members... who worked there, punishments were severe.*

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*We witnessed it ...(sexual abuse of co-residents by external clergy).... But we couldn't do nothing. He used put his hand up and down her skirt. One of the girls, she was abused terrible by him, she spent years in a mental hospital, she was one of the gullible ones.*

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*We used to have a cook. She was very slow, she couldn't talk right, he ...(external priest)... used go to her room at night-times ...(and sexually abuse her).... We used to hear her cry, her room was beside our bathrooms. All the girls, we didn't know exactly what he was doing to her, we used hear her cry, she was an old woman but slow, she cried all the time in the kitchen.*

**9.238** Having to observe others being punished was regarded as being a deliberate strategy to deter residents from whatever behaviour was being sanctioned. Witnesses described the particularly harsh treatment to which returned absconders were subjected as an example of punishments being used as a deterrent. Some witnesses reported that watching others being beaten was worse than being beaten oneself, particularly when the resident being beaten was a younger resident or one's sibling.

**9.239** Twenty seven (27) witnesses reported watching their own brother or sister being beaten, including at times being forced to assist by restraining their hand or limb while they were being hit. Other witnesses, who were themselves immature, had responsibility for caring for younger co-residents, including siblings, described the distress they experienced when their 'charges' were beaten.

*Some of the kids ...(charges)... used wet the bed they used to have to clean their own bed up and they would be hit. They used to have to clean the faeces and everything, that was not fair, that's ...(soiling)... a nerves thing. I used to feel sorry for them. I remember a nun beating a child up because he wet his nappy or something, she slapped him with her hand over and over. I said "you shouldn't beat him".*

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*I was like a mother hen to them, I loved them and was afraid of anything happening to them. I'd hug them and mind them, I can't do it now ...(to own children).... My mind was full up of watching my 2 sisters ...(being beaten).... I was never able to say to my children I ...(love you)....*

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*The girl who was in charge of you ...(older girl)... would have to wait by you while you were being beaten, and then they would take you away and clean you up, and stay with you until you were OK..*

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*My sister ... was making her Holy Communion, I was 5 and she was 7 at the time ...crying.... I was waiting for her to come down with her dress on.... You know the way you were not supposed to eat before Holy Communion? I was waiting and the next thing she was tumbling over the banister, because she ate a sweet. She was thrown over the banister, by Sr ...X.... They were saying, "she ate a sweet, she ate a sweet", that was totally against the rules you know. I could hear the nun screaming at her, she hit her and she put her over the banister there was kind of a long stairs. I saw blood, I saw her on the floor, that's my first memory of ...witness's sister... and I don't remember anything after that, all I remember is her lying there. I just wanted to see her in her dress. I still have nightmares of that.*

**9.240** Many witnesses reported that they preferred to be beaten themselves than watch others being beaten. They reported that they intervened with staff when possible if a younger or more vulnerable child or sibling was being beaten. The Committee heard three accounts from witnesses who were transferred to more restrictive institutions following such altercations with staff.

### Isolation

**9.241** Eighty two (82) witnesses gave accounts of being isolated, ostracised and segregated from their peers. They reported being locked up by religious and lay staff under stairs, in broom cupboards, fridges, washing machines, coal sheds, toilets, furnace rooms, outhouses and in sheds with animals, as punishment for various behaviours. There were many reports of some of these locations being infested with mice and rats.

*The cubby hole ... was the worst, if you were bold or wet the bed they put you in there, in the dark on your knees and you daren't come out. Sr ...X... said before she put me in "mind you don't get eaten by the rats". There were brushes in there and polish, I can't forget that smell. There was someone in there daily.... A lot of my punishment was because I wasn't eating.*

**9.242** Witnesses also reported being separated from their co-residents for periods of time in bathrooms, on corridors and staircases and alone in dormitories. Reports of isolation included being confined in these places in the dark, which exacerbated the distress experienced. Witnesses described hearing the Sister turning the key in the locks of doors and cupboards and walking away. Seven (7) witnesses reported that they were forgotten about and were rescued by others in response to their screams. Four (4) witnesses from one School reported being made to spend the night in an outside shed with the pigs. Another witness reported being locked into an outside toilet by religious staff and that her cries were heard by a man passing on the street who came in and drew attention to the fact she was there. She was released by one of the Sisters who berated her for being silly enough to lock herself in to the toilet and causing everyone to worry about her.

**9.243** In addition to reports of being physically isolated, a number of witnesses reported being ostracised by co-residents on instruction from religious staff. Witnesses reported being made to sit apart from co-residents in the classroom and refectory and being ostracised in the playground:

*The priest was told that I was bold and that no one was to talk to me, they were all told not to talk to me.... There was no one to talk to, no one knew what you were feeling, there was no one to say "you're alright". You would be mortified, the whole School would know, you would be called out for robbing ...(food)... or talking. The others would be told not to talk to you, it sounds silly now but it was the fear ...(of being ostracised).... It was all you had, the cha cha ...(chit chat)... with the others, and then they would be afraid to talk to you. It was awful, you would be isolated, it was awful.*

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*When it came to Sunday they used go out for a walk, I was locked in there ... (small room)... as a punishment. There was no toilet, no chair to sit on, no running water, if you needed to go to the bathroom you couldn't.*

### Deprivation of identity

**9.244** Forty one (41) witnesses reported being deprived of their individual identity in various ways, including being called by a name other than their own, by an allocated number, or by their surname. Witnesses reported being told when they were admitted to the School that they would be called by another name because there was already a resident with their name or because

their name was not a recognised saint's name. 'Sr ...X... called me ...Y...(not own name).... My name wasn't saintly, so she gave me a different name.'

*Reverend Mother never called me my own name, I was ...X.... She said because I reminded her of a girl who had been there and had left there. I was supposed to be the living picture of her, so my name was changed from ...X... to ...Y.... She called me her name.*



*I was always called orphan, the "orphans" this and the "orphans" that. I was never called my name, I never knew when my birthday was. One time ...on birthday... Sr ...X... called me and said to me "now you see it, now you don't." She dangled this, a bracelet, in front of me and said it was my birthday. I didn't know, she took it back.*

**9.245** The use of a number to identify residents was regularly reported prior to the mid-1960s. The allocated number was put on the residents' clothes and was reported by some witnesses to be the most frequently used form of identification. 'I was called by ...number.... It took away who I was, I was never called anything else.'

**9.246** Witnesses also reported being punished for certain personal attributes and characteristics, for example being left-handed or having red hair, which they stated were referred to as 'signs of the devil' by some Sisters. Witnesses said that at times they were punished simply for the way they looked, and for what was perceived as vanity by religious staff.

*I was hit for ... having red curly hair, for nothing ... you were not allowed have curly hair, you had to have straight hair like Our Lady. Another girl ... she was battered for having curly hair. I was beaten mercilessly for that, Sr ...X... was a monster, she beat me for it. ... She'd drag you into the office and take her long cane and just beat you and beat you, she was monster in her heart, she beat me black and blue. She had a bamboo cane 4 foot long, she beat me into pulp. She'd be frothing at the mouth anywhere she could get me, she wouldn't stop. She'd say "you curled your hair last night" and when I'd say "yes, I curled it" she'd stop. I can still hear the cane swooshing, she would hit you anywhere she could get a lash at you, face, head, hands, back ... because I had curly hair. She would call me before I'd go to school, she had castor oil, she would press it into my head, to make it ...(hair)... straight, my face would be swollen from the beatings, the oil would be running down your face. ... You couldn't have curly hair.*

**9.247** Witnesses reported that not being told they had brothers and sisters in the same or adjacent Schools, in addition to the lack of family contact, contributed to a sense of having no real identity and of being 'nobody'. This feeling was compounded by being called by number rather than their name and having no sense of being part of a family network.

**9.248** Many witnesses who had no family contact reported never knowing basic facts about their own history such as their correct birth name, when their birthday was and where they were born. Birthdays were reported to have been rarely acknowledged for residents in the Schools before the 1970s and many witnesses reported being discharged without any information or record regarding their date or place of birth. They reported being forced by circumstances in later years to search out the necessary records in order to register their marriage, to apply for a passport and for other reasons.

*It took me years of writing before I found out my own background ... after years and years of searching and negative responses. I have found out my own family ... it was 25 years of looking. My names are wrong on the paperwork, my mother had registered me under ...family name.... I have been writing various letters to different departments, even to Government Departments to find out my own family. I learned last year that the nuns in ...named School... knew that I was not ...allocated family name.... I was ...actual*

family name.... *We all went in ...(to the Schools)... for different reasons, I know there was poverty in Ireland.... When I found the records, from the Courts through the Freedom of Information, I have been dealing with ...Government Department... for years and they never told me about my records being wrong, even though they had the information, they just did not tell me. I found out my mother had been paying for me and had contact, then I was moved to ...School some distance away and contact was lost....*

### **Punitive aspects of religion**

**9.249** Fifty three (53) witnesses reported that punitive aspects of religious conviction were emphasised at considerable emotional cost to them as young people, while they were isolated from all forms of reassurance and affection. Puberty, menstruation and adolescence provided the context for abuse reported by witnesses around religious themes. Fear of the devil, hell, eternal damnation and being told that they were innately 'bad' and 'sinners' were described as powerful means of emotional abuse. For example, a witness reported that a nun burnt her with a hot poker so that she would 'know what the fires of hell were like'.

**9.250** As previously remarked, witnesses who were left-handed or had red hair reported being persecuted by certain nuns in a small number of Schools. There were reports of witnesses being stigmatised and being told they were 'the hand of the devil', that they were evil and would burn in hell because they were left-handed. Others reported that their red hair was the subject of criticism and contempt, that it was cut short and at times kept covered.

*She ...(Sr X)... told me I was the devil's child ...(because of red hair)... and put me into this room ...(furnace room).... She said "you are the devil's child, see those flames, you are like the devil". I thought it was the devil, and she left me there for ages. It was dark, and I definitely thought I was going to die. It was the most frightening thing I ever saw ...crying....*



*The worst thing was my period.... When she'd ...(Sister)... beat me, she'd say "I'll knock the devil out of you if it's the last thing I do, your mother is a whore, she is a prostitute". When I got my period I thought this was it, it was the devil coming out. When I got my period, I had to queue, my knickers were all stained and wet. Well, what she ...(Sister)... did, she took me down to a room, where the younger kids were, all the girls were sitting there she lifted my dress up and said "you see this, this is the devil coming out of her, this is what happens when you are like ...surname of witness...". Those kids would not play with me. The following time it happened, I was so afraid, I hated it so much that I robbed knickers from someone else and flushed my own down the toilet.*

### **Bullying**

**9.251** Ninety six (96) witnesses reported being bullied by older girls who were co-residents in the Schools. There was a tradition described in the majority of Schools of the 'older girls' being in charge and, at times, having premature responsibility for the care of co-residents. These older girls were often reported to be about 15 years old and soon to be discharged. They were often believed to be favourites of the Sisters and known to have special privileges in some Schools. These particular residents were described as having the freedom to bully younger residents without fear of reprimand. Some were also described as kind and often had favourites of their own. They were described as left in charge of groups of children at different times, including: Sundays, evenings, night and play times, without any supervision by staff.

*The older girls, along with the teachers from outside the school were put in charge of that ...(dormitories)... and life became unbearable. The older girls had to do the laundry and because I wet the bed every night, when the nuns were gone into pray, we were flogged. We were beaten with sticks, legs of chairs, twigs, planks, anything, by the older*

*girls and the teachers ...(lay care staff)... who had to supervise the dormitories, they didn't teach in classrooms, we had lovely teachers there. We were beaten, called all sorts of names, had the hair pulled out of our heads.... We were threatened when we screamed with pain, with bars of soap stuck in our mouths and towels tied around our mouths so that the nuns couldn't hear us screaming whilst they were praying. ... The older girls would count up to 20 and if you weren't in bed you got beaten, and they would count to 20 again and if you weren't asleep they would beat you again. I would do anything to avoid these punishments and they used to say "I will let you off the flogging if I can have your 2 slices of bread and dripping".... The older girls were sort of bullies, they used to have dresses of their own, they would wash them and you used to have to dry them under your sheet with the heat of your body and have them dry by morning and you got beaten if they weren't dry in the morning. There was no heating in the dormitory we used to have to heat their beds and then get into your own cold one.*

## **Knowledge of abuse**

**9.252** Knowledge of the abuse experienced by residents in Schools was reported as established by various means. Witnesses reported disclosing abuse to their parents, relatives, and people in authority both within the institution and outside, including to Gardaí. A number stated that their parents made written complaints to the Department of Education about the neglect and abuse of their children. Witnesses also commented that awareness of abuse arose from direct observation of abuse as it occurred generally in the presence of staff, co-residents and others. A number of accounts were heard by the Committee that witnesses were treated by external medical and nursing staff for injuries resulting from abuse. The outcome of abuse disclosure ranged from disbelief to investigation, witnesses being punished, perpetrators being moved and being protected from further harm.

### ***Abuse observed by others***

**9.253** Three hundred and sixty nine (369) witnesses reported that staff and co-residents observed the abuse in the Schools, although not all incidents of abuse were directly observed. Relatives as well as staff and co-residents were considered to be aware of abuse by the observable injuries incurred by residents as a result of being beaten or assaulted. A number of witnesses described staff members, relatives and external professionals being visibly shocked by the injuries and deprivations to which residents were subjected. They reported that, in some instances, protective action was taken as a result.

*Mth ...X... she never liked me. ... She threw the jug of hot water over me over my face. I started screaming ... and this nun, Sr ...Y..., she was very nice, she was a lovely person, came along and she took me by the hand up to the infirmary and Sr ...Y... looked after me. She put something cool and white on my face, she took care of me, she was a nurse.*

**9.254** Several witnesses reported overhearing nursing and medical staff discussing both their injuries and their neglected circumstances when they attended hospital for treatment. A witness recalled that a nurse in casualty treating her injury following a beating did not believe her when she said that she had fallen out of a tree. The witness was accompanied by one of the Sisters. She had been threatened and was afraid to tell the hospital staff that she had been beaten.

**9.255** Witnesses reported that the abuse they experienced and the injuries that they sustained were observed by others within the Schools on a daily basis. The following is a breakdown of those who witnesses reported as having observed the abuse

- Care staff 160 reports
- Authority figures 146 reports

- Ancillary workers 91 reports
- Resident Managers 48 reports
- Teaching staff 48 reports.

**9.256** Those described as care staff and authority figures were religious and lay staff including care staff and ancillary workers in what witnesses understood to be positions of authority. Those referred to as Resident Managers refer to officers in charge and Reverend Mothers, understood by witnesses to be responsible for the management of the Schools.

**9.257** The failure of staff to intervene when a resident was being abused was most often ascribed by witnesses to the culture of the School that allowed abuse to be an accepted part of life. This failure on the part of both religious and lay staff to exercise their authority and fulfil a duty of care and protection to the residents in their charge contributed to enduring anger, described by a number of witnesses. Two (2) witnesses reported that Sisters in charge of their School observed the sexually inappropriate behaviour of a local parish priest and advised them that this priest's company should be avoided; the priest said Mass in the School and involved himself in the activities of the residents on a regular basis.

### ***Disclosing abuse***

**9.258** One hundred and fifteen (115) witnesses (30%) reported that they told someone, either a parent, relative, staff member, other adult or co-resident about being physically or sexually abused while they were resident in the Schools. These reports relate to 27 Schools identified to the Committee. The following table shows those to whom witnesses reported disclosing abuse during their admission. It indicates the number of reports made to each of the identified groups by the 115 witnesses.

**Table 43: To Whom Abuse Disclosed while Resident – Female Industrial and Reformatory Schools**

<b>To whom disclosed while resident</b>	<b>Number of reports</b>
<b>Parents and relatives</b>	50
<b>Religious</b>	
- Staff	32
- Resident Manager	10
- Non-staff	1
<b>Lay</b>	
- Staff	18
<b>External professionals</b>	
- Medical staff	7
- Garda Síochána	7
- Social worker	2
<b>Co-residents</b>	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>148</b>

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

**9.259** As indicated, while the largest number of witness reports of disclosure were to parents and relatives, the Committee heard 61 reports of abuse being disclosed to the combined categories

of religious and lay staff. In addition to the above information 21 witnesses reported telling co-residents about their abuse. One gave the following account of what happened following her disclosure:

*My uncle came in one day. I told him I was beaten, he complained to the authorities and they contacted Sr ...X.... She came into the class one day and that was my first public beating. She took my clothes off except for my knickers and my shoes and my socks. She said "can anyone see marks on this child?" and everyone said "no", and then I got my first public beating. That became my punishment, a public beating ... with a stick.*

**9.260** Fourteen (14) witnesses gave accounts of the authorities in the School being spoken to and challenged about the abuse following disclosure to parents and relatives. As a result they were subsequently punished either by being beaten, denied family visits or ostracised from their peer group. Six (6) other witnesses gave reports of written complaints about the abuse being made by relatives, four of whom were granted early release from the School. The Committee heard accounts of other parents threatening legal action, including reports to the Gardaí or other authorities. In two instances parents did not return witnesses from weekend or holiday leave and no further action was taken. The Committee heard isolated accounts of parents being berated, placated and denigrated by religious staff whom they confronted with allegations of abuse.

**9.261** Many witnesses reported being deterred from disclosing abuse for reasons including: threats of harm to themselves, their siblings or family, general fear and fear of further punishment, threats of being transferred to a more restrictive institution, the authority of an older person, bullying and the anticipated disbelief of others. 'I couldn't tell anyone, no one believed you, you were told to shut up.' Forty nine (49) witnesses reported being told not to tell anyone about the abuse they experienced and were threatened with further abuse, or on occasion death, if they did.

*I remember her ...(mother)... saying "are they good to you?" Sr ...X... was outside the door and she came in and said "you have to go Mrs ...Y...". I knew not to say ...(anything about being hit)... you would be beheaded, you would be afraid of your life to say what was happening to you.*

**9.262** Witnesses frequently described the prevailing climate of secrecy and denial in the Schools that acted as a further deterrent. A witness who had been sexually abused reported that she had never disclosed her abuse, in the belief that she would be sent to a laundry, as a co-resident had been. Witnesses who were sexually abused also reported that the threat of condemnation, being blamed for the abuse and the associated humiliation and shame were powerful disincentives to disclose abuse.

**9.263** Witnesses discharged in more recent years reported that there were more opportunities to talk to external professionals and other adults about what was happening in the Schools, although they were not always believed and the subsequent interventions did not always have positive outcomes. Two (2) witnesses who were discharged by the mid-1980s said that their abuse was addressed by social workers. In one instance, following written representation by her grandmother, the witness was eventually moved to a different School by a social worker, where she reported she was happy. Another witness said that despite intervention by their social worker the abuse continued:

*I saw many social workers over the years, they were no help. The first one arranged to meet us in groups every 2 weeks, the first time we spoke about what was happening it went back to the nuns, something was said to them by the social worker and we got a beating. Subsequently we were seen with the nun present. I have seen the social work record, they took what nuns said as gospel, everything was from their perspective.*

## Outcome of disclosure

**9.264** Witnesses reported different responses to their disclosures of abuse including being ignored, punished, disbelieved or protected. Positive action was also reported as taken by Residents Managers and others who investigated reports of abuse and in a number of instances dismissed or transferred staff who were found to have been abusive.

- Sixty eight (68) witnesses reported that their complaint received no response, that abuse was seen as part of the culture of the institution, was concealed, and continued.
- Thirty six (36) witnesses reported being beaten for disclosing that they were being physically or sexually abused.
- Thirty four (34) witnesses reported that their disclosures were dealt with in a positive manner and the abuse ceased.

**9.265** The 36 witnesses who reported being punished for disclosing abuse described various means by which their disclosures were dealt with. In certain instances protective action was taken in addition to being punished, while in the majority of instances reported to the Committee punishment was the only known outcome of disclosure.

*I told another girl ...(about sexual abuse)... she told the nuns, 4 of them beat me, they said I had to go to Confession. I had to say it so loud so that she would hear me confess my sin, then she knew that I had confessed and they ...(four nuns)... said a chant over me. They decided a time and place to beat the devil out of you, they didn't do it straight away, they made you wait. I always remember her saying ... "you're a filthy Communist", it was the time Kennedy ...(US President)... died. The priest didn't give me any penance.*

**9.266** Other witnesses reported being removed or sent home following disclosure of abuse without any acknowledgement of what had occurred.

*I tried to escape once to tell the police what was going on. They locked all the shutters, they locked me up and told me "I'll tell your mam to come and get you". I wasn't allowed eat with the kids for 3 weeks. I wasn't allowed talk to the other girls. Then they made arrangements for me to go to my mam. They brought me to the airport. ... Sr ...X... and Sr ...Y... and she said "you mustn't say anything about the School".*

**9.267** A small number of witnesses reported that when they disclosed abuse by a religious person they were warned against identifying the abuser and forced to name another person. One witness reported that following a beating by a nun, who 'always had a cane hanging out of her', her hands were so swollen that she was unable to play the piano. The witness told her music teacher who was a member of the religious staff about the beating and the nun replied: "She ...Sr X... didn't, don't ever say that. It was one of the older girls wasn't it?" I was not let resume practice until I said it was an older girl.

**9.268** Positive outcomes of disclosure fell into two main categories: removal or admonishment of the reported abuser and protection of the witness from further abuse. 'She ...(Sr X)... was taken out of there, then the beating stopped.'

*There was a Sister there and she caught me eating the butter, I was so hungry. She caught my head and she banged it and banged it off the churn, and I remember putting my hand up and there was blood. The next thing I know was I woke up in bed and all the nuns were coming to see me and bringing me fruit, an apple and an orange, that I had never seen before. After that I got an easier time, and that nun was sent away. I never saw her again.*

**9.269** Eighteen (18) of the 38 witnesses who reported telling their parents that they were being abused and 17 other witnesses who reported abuse to authority figures within the Schools reported that their disclosures instigated positive and protective responses including the dismissal of abusive staff. Witnesses reported that disclosures of abuse to parents was more often believed, but that parental intervention did not always lead to a cessation of abuse.

*I did not get out of the bed for nearly 3 months ...(following severe beating)... and when I did I found it very hard to walk. The Reverend Mother came up to me after about 2 months and she said "...X... I know who did this." I said "I'm not going to tell". She said "I'll say the name and then we'll see about it, you don't have to tell." ... Sr ...Y...was gone out of the home after that, she was gone ... for a certain period ... she disappeared.*

**9.270** Following their disclosures of abuse 10 witnesses reported being protected from further abuse either by being moved to a different area in the School away from the reported abuser, being transferred from the School to a safe environment or being discharged. Two (2) other witnesses reported that less severe beatings from religious staff followed an intervention from their parents. One witness, who told a hospital nurse about being abused, had her hospital admission extended over the Christmas period.

*There was a change with a new Reverend Mother, she took a liking to me and I was like a pet, she took me in the parlour and gave me cake, it ...(sexual abuse)... all stopped then.*

**9.271** Four (4) female witnesses from one School made reference to the positive intervention and kindness of a member of the clergy who recognised the difficulties they experienced; he was trusted by the residents and listened to their concerns. The witnesses said that they were not punished as a consequence of confiding in him. In their view he facilitated changes that were appreciated; for example he arranged for residents to participate in recreational activities in the local area and for them to be provided with more fashionable clothes. This member of the clergy was also reported to have helped several witnesses by arranging supportive holiday families and employment placements for them, where they thrived. Witnesses said that his intervention protected them from further abuse.

**9.272** Sixteen (16) disclosures made to Resident Managers and external professionals resulted in abusers being either admonished or removed, or the resident being moved. A witness told a local priest that she was being sexually abused in her work placement and was moved from the house the following day and protected from further abuse. In seven instances witnesses reported Gardaí became aware of their abuse and in some instances investigated the reports made to them. Four (4) reported running away after beatings and were returned to the School by Gardaí, who were generally sympathetic. One witness's father went to the Gardaí and she was returned to the School on the understanding that she would not be beaten again. The witness said that she was treated better subsequently. Another witness presented herself to the Gardaí and told them she had been abused; they returned her to the School and were critical of the religious staff for failing to report her absence. A witness from a different School having disclosed abuse reported the following outcome:

*One day I was called to the parlour and Sr ...X (Resident Manager)... was there and there was a Garda there, he had a hat under his arm, he said to me "I don't want you to tell me about anything else just ...Y (ancillary male lay staff)...". You see I had started to tell him about Mr ...Z (holiday family father)... who had ...(also)... abused me. He said "I don't want you to tell me about that, I only want you to tell me about ...Y...". I told him everything that happened. I never saw ...Y... again.*

**9.273** Witnesses stated that they believed lay care staff and ancillary workers in a number of Schools were aware that residents were being abused, and that at times they indicated sympathy and expressions of comfort. However, these lay staff were described by a number of witnesses as powerless to act as their livelihood depended on the goodwill of the religious Sisters. In other instances witnesses believed that abuse was part of the culture of the institution and that residents were powerless to change anything by disclosing mistreatment.

**9.274** Seventeen (17) witnesses reported being severely physically abused when they disclosed that they had been sexually abused by either priests or other members of the clergy, men in families to whom they were sent for weekends, holidays or to work and members of the general public. A witness said that she was told ‘*wash out your dirty mouth*’ when she disclosed being sexually abused by a priest. When a witness disclosed sexual abuse by a ‘holiday’ father she was told ‘*you are making this up about the good people taking you out*’. Witnesses reported being compelled to maintain their silence about abuse they experienced from adults held in high regard by the religious Sisters.

**9.275** There were six reports of witnesses being beaten and punished for other forms of disclosure including telling inspectors that preparations had been made for their visit and sending a letter of complaint regarding abuse to a relative. Other witnesses said they were punished for telling priests that they were abused, one of these disclosures was in Confession. A further witness stated that she was punished for telling the Resident Manager about a religious Sister who had beaten a resident.

**9.276** Following their disclosures of abuse a small number of witnesses reported being ostracised and isolated from both staff and co-residents, three others reported being transferred to a more isolated School.

*Sr ...X... she beat me inhuman, she tore me hair out, a big tuft of hair. I picked the hair up and put it underneath the stage and got out through the window and headed to my father. I said “Dad please help me I can’t take anymore”. ... The policeman come knocking at the door. He ...(witness’s father)... showed the hair to the policeman and the bruises all on my body.... he said “how can anyone do that?” ...The policeman said “you bring her back on your word” to my father ...(who lived nearby).... He brought me back.... When I went back in she Sr ...X... told the girls my father was dirt and he was this and that, none was to speak to me. ... So I was like a hermit, done me chores, went to bed in the dormitory and no one could talk to me.*

### ***Witnesses response to abuse***

**9.277** Witnesses reported a range of personal responses to being abused, often reporting more than one response:

- Two hundred and eighty five (285) witnesses reported fear as their main response to being abused; 251 of those witnesses specifically described staff using their status and authority to intimidate and bully the residents.
- One hundred and ninety three (193) witnesses reported that they did not know what to do and felt powerless to act, with no one to talk to or protect them.
- One hundred and forty six (146) witnesses who reported becoming withdrawn or mute in the context of ongoing abuse stated that they were afraid of telling anyone what was happening to them. Witnesses described ‘*trying to be invisible*’ in order to avoid the attention of anyone who might hit or otherwise abuse them.
- Forty three (43) witnesses reported that they ran away or absconded from the School generally in the context of being severely physically and/or sexually abused. A further

16 witnesses attempted to run away but were either caught or prevented from doing so.

- Seventeen (17) witnesses reported having suicidal thoughts, 12 of whom reported actively harming themselves while they were resident in the Schools. All attempts of reported self-harm followed episodes of physical, sexual or emotional abuse. Most accounts of suicidal thoughts or wishes related to situations where witnesses described themselves as hoping the abuse would end, not being believed and feeling fearful and helpless. Forms of reported self-harm included taking an overdose of tablets, attempted drowning, refusing to eat, ingesting objects and poisonous substances, jumping from heights, and self-harm by mutilation or burns.
- Eight (8) witnesses reported that they developed eating disorders or feigned illness, which in some instances led to hospitalisation.

*One day I thought I would poison myself. ... I sat down one day all on my own ...crying... and I got a bundle of haws and started putting them in my mouth and I said "maybe God will take me" ...crying.... ... It didn't work. In the month of the poor souls I always prayed that someone would come and take me ...(wishing would die)....*

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*Sometimes the window would be open, and I'd say "I'll jump out the window if you touch me again". One time I said "I'm going to drop down to the concrete and kill myself if you touch me". I got 3 weeks of beatings for that.*

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*One day ... I got a beating. I thought I'm going to end up killing myself, I can't take any more, I wanted to kill myself. We went out and walked along by the railway tracks and walked along waiting for the train to come to throw myself under it. If I seen a train ... I'd be ready for a coffin....*

- 9.278** Other responses to abuse described by witnesses included: bed-wetting, self-blame, suppression of anger, crying and becoming withdrawn. *'I went into myself after that ...(severe beating)... sort of gave up, never talked to anyone, went into myself. I stopped talking.'* Many witnesses reported that they had not bed-wet prior to their admission and considered bed-wetting to be a response to being abused.

*I was getting terrible lashings. Sometime it would be 2 nuns, sometimes it would be one, you got the stick, the cane. I did not know why they were lashing me and then I realised it was for wetting the bed.... I had started to wet the bed.... There would be nights I wouldn't sleep for fear I would wet the bed.*

- 9.279** A witness who had experienced consistent abuse in a School reported that she deliberately remained in contact with the staff and residents after she was discharged and continued to visit the School where she had been placed for many years *'to keep an eye on things for the younger kids'*.

- 9.280** Ten (10) witnesses reported that they intervened to protect another resident, sometimes their sister or brother, from being beaten and others described instances of spontaneous assertion in retaliation to being abused, including both physically and verbally challenging their abuser. Assertive responses resulted at times in protection from further beatings and at other times witnesses were punished, isolated or transferred to other institutions. Some witnesses described feeling relief when they stood up for themselves.

*I stood up for myself, I had to fight back or I wouldn't have come out alive.*

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*They put me into a kind of detention room after that ...(confrontation with religious Sister).... For a week I was on my own.... I said to myself maybe it's me causing the trouble. I kinda went in on myself after that.*



*I just rebelled and I tore off her veil and called her a bloody old bitch. She dragged me off by the hair, she said "that's the last of you". She ran off up the corridor and I knew I was in for it then, she always threatened ...(that)... she would get rid of me and she did. She sent me off that night to ...named laundry....*

**9.281** In summary, this chapter has provided an overview of abuse reported to the Committee by 378 female witnesses in relation to Schools over a 74-year period between 1914 and 1988. The reported abuse was differentiated by type and presented accordingly with direct quotes from witnesses, some of whom were recounting their experiences of abuse for the first time. Witnesses also gave accounts of the circumstances in which the abuse occurred and the traumatic impact of their experiences both at the time and as they were recalled. In addition, the information provided about the status and occupations of those who were reported abusers is included with witness accounts of what they believe was known about the abuse they experienced at the time.

**9.282** The following two chapters will provide information on positive memories and experiences in the Schools and the current life circumstances, including the enduring impact of abuse, reported by the 791 male and female witnesses.