

Chapter 14

Children's Homes

14.01 This section of the Report presents the evidence provided to the Confidential Committee by witnesses in relation to their experiences of abuse in Children's Homes in Ireland over a period of 73 years between 1919 and 1992. The majority of Children's Homes, previously known as orphanages and approved schools, were managed by Catholic religious communities or Boards of Trustees affiliated to Protestant churches. In latter decades a number of Children's Homes were managed and funded by State agencies. The Homes were generally privately managed and were, in earlier decades, not subject to the same statutory inspections as the Industrial Schools. Placement of a child in a Children's Home could be made directly by their parent, or guardian, on a voluntary basis. Such placements occurred most frequently in the context of a family crisis and were paid for by private means. Other sources of funding included private endowments and charitable benevolent funds. A child could also be placed in a Children's Home by order of the court under the Children Act, 1908 following an application by officers¹ of the local health authority or the regional Health Board, and in particular circumstances by the Garda Síochána.²

Witnesses

14.02 Sixty one (61) witnesses, 38 male and 23 female, gave evidence to the Committee about their experiences of abuse in 19 Children's Homes. Witnesses gave evidence in relation to 16 mixed gender Homes, and three Homes for boys. Nine (9) mixed gender Homes were the subject of reports by both male and female witnesses. Four (4) witnesses each made reports of abuse in relation to two Homes.

14.03 Witnesses who reported abuse in Children's Homes gave evidence in relation to their experiences in residential care across all decades as follows:

- Thirty (30) witnesses were discharged prior to 1960.
- Sixteen (16) witnesses were discharged in the 1960s.
- Eleven (11) witnesses were discharged in the 1970s.
- Four (4) witnesses were discharged in the 1980s and 1990s.

14.04 Twelve (12) of the Children's Homes were located in Irish cities and the other seven were located in provincial and rural areas.

14.05 In addition to the reports of abuse outlined in this chapter, seven witnesses also gave evidence of abuse in other out-of-home care placements. Those included Industrial Schools, foster care,³

¹ Officers – Children's officers were employed by local health authorities prior to 1970 and were increasingly replaced by social workers thereafter.

² Children Act, 1908 section 64.

³ Foster care – previously known in Ireland as 'boarding out', also referred to as 'at nurse', is a form of out-of-home care that allows for a child to be placed in a family environment rather than an institution.

hospitals, special needs services⁴, primary and second-level schools, and residential work and other settings, details of which are reported in the relevant sections of this Report.

Social and demographic profile of witnesses

14.06 On the basis of the information provided by witnesses at their hearings it is understood that their pathways of entry into Children’s Homes varied depending on their age, gender, family circumstances, and the context of their admission. The following section outlines the pre-admission social and family circumstances of the 61 witnesses who gave evidence to the Committee, and was provided by them on the basis of what was known to them from their own family history and from official records.

Age at time of hearing

14.07 As indicated in Table 66, 22 of the witnesses were over 60 years of age at the time of their hearing and three witnesses were under 40 years, with the majority of witnesses reporting abuse in Children’s Homes being in their 50s and 60s, as follows:

Table 66: Age Range of Witnesses at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Age range	Males	Females	Total witnesses
20–29 years	2	0	2
30–39 years	0	1	1
40–49 years	12	2	14
50–59 years	10	12	22
60–69 years	11	8	19
70 + years	3	0	3
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

Place of birth

14.08 Forty three (43) of the 61 witnesses who gave evidence about abuse in Children’s Homes reported that they were born in Dublin. Sixteen (16) witnesses were born in 11 other Irish counties, and two were born outside the State.

Parental marital status

14.09 More than half of the witnesses reported that they were born into two-parent households, including those where parents were subsequently widowed or separated, as Table 67 illustrates:

Table 67: Marital Status of Witnesses’ Parents at Time of Birth – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Marital status of parents	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Married	17	10	27
Single	9	7	16
Separated	4	4	8
Widowed	1	1	2
Co-habiting	2	0	2
Unavailable	5	1	6
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

⁴ Special needs services – includes day and residential schools and facilities designated to meet the educational needs of children with intellectual, physical or sensory impairments. Such services were generally managed by religious congregations and were both publicly and privately funded.

- 14.10** There were some gender differences in the information provided by male and female witnesses in these categories. A slightly higher proportion of female witnesses reported being born to single mothers, while more male witnesses stated that they had no information about their family of origin.

Parental occupational status

- 14.11** Most witnesses provided information regarding their family background and Table 68 indicates the occupational status or estimated skill level of their parents at the time of admission, reported by the witnesses.⁵

Table 68: Occupational Status of Witnesses' Parents – Male and Female Children's Homes

Occupational status	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Professional worker	4	2	6
Managerial and technical	1	0	1
Non-manual	3	2	5
Skilled manual	1	3	4
Semi-skilled	3	0	3
Unskilled	18	12	30
Unavailable	8	4	12
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 14.12** Thirty (30) witnesses reported that their parents were unskilled at the time of their admission, by contrast with 12 witnesses who reported their parents were professional, managerial or non-manual workers. Generally, witnesses admitted to the Children's Homes from other institutional settings were unable to report any detailed information about their parents' occupational status. Many of those witnesses had been in out-of-home care since infancy.

Current country of residence

- 14.13** Many of the 61 witnesses who gave evidence about their experiences of abuse in Children's Homes were residing outside Ireland at the time of their hearing, as shown in Table 69:

Table 69: Country of Residence of Witnesses at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Children's Homes

Country of residence	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Ireland	28	11	39
UK	6	11	17
USA/Canada	3	0	3
Australia/New Zealand	1	0	1
Mainland Europe	0	1	1
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 14.14** As illustrated in the above table there was a notable difference between the numbers of male and female witnesses living in Ireland and in the UK. Female witnesses' country of residence was equally divided between Ireland and the UK, with almost half of the witnesses living in each country at the time of their hearing, whereas the majority of male witnesses were resident in Ireland.

⁵ The categorisation is based on Census 2002, Volume 6 Occupations, Appendix 2, Definitions – Labour Force. In two-parent households the father's occupation was recorded and in other instances the occupational status of the sole parent was recorded, in so far as it was known.

Siblings in care

- 14.15** Fifty five (55) witnesses reported having a total of 224 siblings. Six (6) witnesses reported that they were lone children. Thirty eight (38) witnesses, 23 male and 15 female, reported having 111 siblings in out-of-home care.
- 14.16** Witnesses gave accounts of out-of-home care being provided for their siblings in a range of settings including Industrial Schools, foster care, special needs services, and Children's Homes.

Circumstances of admission

- 14.17** There were some differences in the admission circumstances of the 61 witnesses to Children's Homes compared with those admitted to Industrial or Reformatory Schools. Most witnesses stated that they were admitted to the Homes on a voluntary basis without the involvement of court proceedings. A small number of witnesses informed the Committee that they believed they were placed in Children's Homes on an order of the court under the Children Act, 1908 following an application by the local health authority or the Health Board.
- 14.18** Thirty nine (39) witnesses, 24 male and 15 female, reported that their first admission to a Children's Home was directly from their family home. Many of the witnesses reported that members of their extended family had been involved in their care and that they were admitted in the context of parental illness, death, marital separation or abandonment. Five (5) of the 39 witnesses stated that they were admitted from the homes of extended family members. Three (3) female witnesses reported that their fathers, who were either widowed or had sole custody, were encouraged by local clergy to place their daughters in out-of-home care. They gave accounts of learning from family members that it was perceived to be inappropriate at the time for lone fathers to rear female children.
- 14.19** Fifteen (15) witnesses, eight male and seven female, reported that the Children's Homes were their second or third placements having previously been in other settings, including hostels, county homes, foster care, and mother and baby homes. Three (3) of these witnesses reported spending up to four years in mother and baby homes along with their mothers and a further four witnesses stated that they were placed in mother and baby homes without their mothers. Some witnesses believed their working mothers had contributed financially for the care provided in the mother and baby homes. Others commented that due to a lack of family or State support their mothers had no alternative but to place them in out-of-home care. Four (4) of the witnesses reported being transferred to Children's Homes following a brief placement in Industrial Schools where they were initially admitted on court orders under the Children Act, 1908 or the School Attendance Acts, 1926 to 1967.
- 14.20** Seven (7) witnesses provided no information or reported that they had no knowledge of their family circumstances prior to their admission to out-of-home care. A number of these witnesses believed they were abandoned as infants.

Age on first admission to out-of-home care

- 14.21** Among the witnesses reporting abuse in Children's Homes the age of entry to out-of-home care varied. Fifteen (15) witnesses reported being admitted to Homes before their second birthday, seven of whom reported being in out-of-home care, generally in mother and baby homes. A further 25 witnesses reported being admitted by the age of six years. Table 70 illustrates the age range of witnesses on first admission:

Table 70: Age on First Admission to Out-of-home Care – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Age of entry to care	Males	Females	Total witnesses
0–5 years	23	17	40
6–10 years	13	4	17
11–15 years	2	2	4
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.22 Witnesses admitted at a later age were generally placed in out-of-home care as a result of parental illness, separation or death.

Length of stay in out-of-home care

14.23 The length of time witnesses reported being in out-of-home care ranged from one to 18 years, as shown in Table 71:

Table 71: Length of Stay in Out-of-home Care – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Length of stay in care	Males	Females	Total witnesses
0–5 years	4	2	6
6–10 years	14	8	22
11–15 years	18	10	28
16–18 years	2	3	5
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.24 The average length of stay was 11 years for female witnesses and seven and a half years for male witnesses. Fifty five (55) witnesses spent more than six years in out-of-home care. A number of witnesses reported being transferred to other institutions and did not spend the entire period of their residential care in Children’s Homes.

14.25 The following table displays the age at discharge of witnesses who reported abuse in Children’s Homes:

Table 72: Age when Discharged from Out-of-home Care – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Age when discharged	Males	Females	Total witnesses
<10 years	1	1	2
10–13 years	11	5	16
14–16 years	19	9	28
17+ years	7	8	15
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.26 Fourteen (14) witnesses, 12 male and two female, reported being transferred from Children’s Homes to Industrial Schools. Nine (9) of those were transferred prior to the 1960s. The majority of these witnesses, who were discharged when they were aged between 14 and 16 years, had spent over nine years in out-of-home care. In general, male witnesses were transferred from Children’s Homes to senior Industrial Schools at 10 years of age.

14.27 A small number of witnesses who remained in Children’s Homes after 17 years of age reported being assisted with education and training. Others described being supported by the staff and

continued to reside in the Homes until they were settled in accommodation and employment, during the 1980s and 1990s.

Everyday life in children's homes

- 14.28** This section presents the information provided by 61 witnesses regarding aspects of their every day life in Children's Homes, including education, work, health and recreation. The witnesses' descriptions of everyday life in these Homes differed from accounts heard of Industrial Schools in a number of aspects. The physical structure of the Homes was generally smaller, there were fewer residents, and, with few exceptions, admission was on a voluntary basis. Further, in a number of Children's Homes witnesses reported being encouraged and supported to attend second-level education and more often commented that professionally trained lay childcare workers were employed since the 1970s.⁶

Education

- 14.29** Witnesses reported that, prior to the 1970s, classroom education was generally provided within the Children's Homes and in boarding schools located on the same site. Witnesses also reported attending primary, secondary and vocational schools in the local community. Those who attended off-site schools reported that they valued the opportunity to mix with pupils from the local community and the contact it provided with the outside world.
- 14.30** With the exception of one female witness, all the witnesses gave accounts of attending primary school and the majority attained their Primary Certificate.⁷
- 14.31** Twenty three (23) witnesses, 14 male and nine female, reported that they received second-level education, 10 of whom succeeded in attaining their Intermediate/Junior, Leaving or Group Certificates. Others obtained secretarial and technical qualifications with the support of religious and lay staff from the Homes.

Food

- 14.32** The diet in the period prior to the 1970s was typically described as porridge for breakfast with either tea or cocoa, potatoes with meat and vegetables for the midday meal, and bread and tea for the evening meal. A number of witnesses who were admitted in the 1960s and remained in Homes throughout the 1970s reported improvements in the quality and availability of a more nourishing and varied diet during that period.

Health and medical care

- 14.33** The Committee heard evidence from witnesses of the health care provided to them in Children's Homes, with improvements in the availability and range of services in more recent decades. Thirty eight (38) witnesses reported receiving some type of medical attention including attendance by a doctor or a nurse, treatment in the infirmary, and immunisation. Sixteen (16) witnesses described being attended by a family doctor. Accounts were heard of infirmaries or sick bays being available in 10 Homes. Eighteen (18) witnesses reported attending hospital for illnesses including: scarlet fever, appendicitis, diphtheria, and rheumatic fever. Six (6) other witnesses reported attendance at outpatient clinics or hospital casualty departments for various reasons including the investigation of physical illness, treatment for accidental and non-accidental injuries, and assessment at child and adolescent mental health services.

⁶ Formal child care training was first established in Ireland in the 1970s.

⁷ Primary Certificate – examination certificate awarded at the end of primary school education, it was abolished in 1967.

Work

- 14.34** Forty (40) witnesses reported being involved in some form of work while resident in the Children's Homes. The majority of these accounts related to the period prior to the 1970s. Witnesses described performing domestic tasks such as cleaning, polishing and working in the convent, and in a small number of instances serving meals to visiting priests. Other witnesses reported working for what they believed was the commercial gain of religious congregations including work in laundries, on farms, and in homes for the elderly.
- 14.35** Witnesses from a small number of the Children's Homes gave accounts of undertaking domestic chores in fee-paying boarding schools attached to the convents; some commented on the apparent inequality of their circumstances by contrast with pupils in those schools.
- 14.36** Six (6) female witnesses reported providing care for infants and younger residents in the Children's Homes. Some witnesses described these responsibilities as inappropriate for their age due to their lack of emotional maturity, the inadequacy of their own care, and the lack of supervision or support provided by staff.

Play and recreation

- 14.37** Fifty four (54) witnesses commented on the various opportunities provided for play and recreation. Activities included outings to the sea, cinema, and the availability of television, books and toys. Other types of recreation included Irish dancing, Sunday walks and participation in Gaelic games. Many witnesses reported being encouraged by staff to participate in sport and other recreational activities.
- 14.38** Greater availability of equipment and games, and the opportunity to be involved in activities in the local community were reported by witnesses discharged in the 1980s and 1990s. Witnesses commented that such activities outside the Homes facilitated reintegration on discharge and gave them a sense of connection with the community outside the institution.

Religion

- 14.39** Witnesses commented that religion was an important aspect of everyday life and 44 witnesses reported religious practices that included attendance at daily Mass, reciting the Rosary, and attending Sunday Church.

...Named Children's Home... was modelled on religious life, a very strict regime. The silence was constant except for very short periods, you could speak only if spoken to.

Official visitors and inspections

- 14.40** Twelve (12) witnesses, reported visits by adults from outside the institutions including benefactors, the Cigire in the classroom, and others whose identity was not always clear to witnesses. One witness recalled the visit of prospective foster parents who walked up and down a line of residents for the purpose of selecting a child for fostering. Many reported that preparations were made for these visits, which included cleaning the institutions, residents being provided with special clothing and toys, and improvements in food for the duration of the visit. Others commented that the residents were never spoken to during these visits.

There was a big flap every now and again when visitors came, some of them were charity people. ... Children in the lower grades were given the toys that were on shelves or on windows and which they didn't know how to handle and were afraid to do anything with in case of punishment later.

Preparation for discharge

14.41 Witnesses commonly reported that they were not adequately prepared for discharge and that the transition to independent living was often difficult. Witnesses, who had been in institutions since early childhood, described feeling abandoned, displaced and lost on leaving the Children's Homes. Other witnesses for whom family contact had been maintained by visits and holidays throughout their admission generally reported continued family contact following their discharge.

14.42 The Committee heard evidence of ongoing difficulties from those witnesses whose siblings had been placed in different institutions or for whom family contact had been restricted or not supported. Witnesses' evidence of loss of contact with siblings during admission and the subsequent difficulties reconnecting with family members when they were discharged is described later in this chapter. One male witness discharged in the 1980s gave an account of his discharge experience:

I was given a bus ticket and told to get the bus, my family lived in ...named town... many miles away. I did not return home as I was not wanted. There was no follow-up by the service. I spent many years drifting.

14.43 Witnesses reported being discharged from Children's Homes to a variety of settings. Nineteen (19) witnesses reported that arrangements were made for them to work in live-in positions with families, or to be placed in hostels where some follow-up was provided. Others reported that they were encouraged to continue their education and were supported in applying for occupational training when they were discharged. Eight (8) witnesses, five male and three female, were discharged to their extended family.

Record of abuse

14.44 The Committee heard 65 reports of abuse from 61 witnesses, 38 male and 23 female, in relation to 19 Children's Homes over the period 1919 to 1992.⁸ Four (4) male witnesses each reported abuse in two Children's Homes. Reports of abuse by a witness may be either descriptions of a single incident of abuse or multiple experiences of abuse over a period of time. The Committee heard multiple abuse reports in relation to nine of the 19 homes reported:

- Six (6) Homes were each the subject of between four and 10 reports, totalling 63 reports (47 male and 16 female).
- Three (3) Homes were each the subject of either two or three reports, totalling 31 reports (18 male and 13 female).
- Ten (10) Homes were each the subject of single reports, five male and five female.

14.45 Witnesses reported all four types of abuse: physical and sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse alone and in combination, as follows:

- Fifty seven (57) witnesses reported physical abuse.
- Forty two (42) witnesses reported emotional abuse.
- Forty one (41) witnesses reported neglect.
- Twenty nine (29) witnesses reported sexual abuse.

14.46 Table 73 outlines the combinations and frequency of abuse types, as reported by witnesses:

⁸ Note – a number of witnesses were admitted to more than one Children's Home, and made reports of abuse in more than one Children's Home, therefore, the number of reports are greater than the number of witnesses.

Table 73: Abuse Types and Combinations – Male and Female Children’s Home

Abuse types and combinations	Number of reports
Physical, emotional and neglect	16
Physical, sexual, emotional and neglect	15
Physical and emotional	7
Physical and neglect	6
Physical, sexual and emotional	5
Physical, sexual and neglect	5
Physical and sexual	4
Physical	3
Sexual and emotional	1
Sexual	1
Emotional	1
Neglect	1
Total	65

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.47 Fifty (50) witnesses reported that abuse was a regular occurrence either witnessed or experienced on a daily basis. As indicated above, the most frequently reported combination of abuse types by both male and female witnesses were physical and emotional abuse with neglect. The Committee heard 30 witness reports of sexual abuse in combination with other types of abuse.

Physical abuse

The wilful, reckless or negligent infliction of physical injury on, or failure to prevent such injury to, the child.⁹

14.48 This section describes witness reports of incidents of physical abuse, non-accidental injury, and lack of protection from harm. The reports included detailed and disturbing accounts of assaults experienced. The forms of physical abuse included beating, punching, kicking, assault with implements and being immersed in water.

14.49 Fifty seven (57) witnesses, 36 male and 21 female, who gave evidence to the Committee reported physical abuse in 19 Children’s Homes. Witnesses made 61 reports of physical abuse over a 70-year period. The number of witness reports of physical abuse in different Homes varied as follows:

- Two (2) Children’s Homes were collectively the subject of 24 reports.
- Seven (7) Children’s Homes were the subject of between two and five reports, totalling 27 reports.
- Ten (10) Children’s Homes were the subject of single reports.

Description of physical abuse

14.50 Witnesses reported being physically abused for many reasons or for no reason that they could understand. Many gave accounts of being constantly fearful of physical punishment. Behaviours precipitating abuse included bed-wetting, disclosing abuse, underachieving in the classroom,

⁹ Section 1(1)(a)

failure to meet expected standards of personal care and care of their clothing, running away, breaking the rule of silence, taking food, and other perceived misconduct.

- 14.51** Witnesses from four Children's Homes gave accounts of a harsh environment where explosive episodes of physical abuse were experienced or witnessed, with no understanding of why they were happening. Some witnesses reported being beaten in association with sexual abuse.
- 14.52** Nine (9) witnesses from a small number of Homes described being beaten in the presence of staff and co-residents, when they were either partially undressed or stripped naked.
- 14.53** Witness reports of physical abuse included being punched, kicked, hit with knuckles, hair pulled and cut, being force fed, and lifted by the ears and hair. The Committee also heard reports of witnesses being forced to kneel for long periods, being beaten on the feet, backs of the hands, fingertips and legs. They also described their heads being hit off radiators, wedged in a door or submerged under water. The witnesses reported being beaten with various implements including leathers, sticks, strips of rubber, brushes, hurleys, badminton racquets, rulers, whips and bunches of keys. A small number of witnesses reported being forced to eat quantities of mustard, having their mouths and other body parts, including genitalia, scrubbed with nailbrushes, and being held under a cold tap.

On a Saturday morning we used to do work around the orphanage, clean up, sweep up floors, that sort of thing.... We had to clean up around old fashioned urinals, pick up papers out of the shore, that was my job. I was only 8, 9, or 10 at the time.... One day he (named religious staff)... was not happy with the result of what I had done, that resulted in another frenzied attack of kicking.... He punched me, straight in with the fist and when you're down the boot came out then. You're a kid, you're in a ball trying to protect yourself the best possible way.

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Sr ...X... beat me at night, before I would go to sleep, to stop me from wetting the bed. When that didn't work she beat me before I would go to school, this continued over all the years in the orphanage, she made me an example. It went on 'til I was 13 ...(years old)... everyday. I learned not to cry, she would hit me more if I did cry. Before she beat me I would have to carry my sheets across through the house to the laundry, she would bend me over a bath or over the rocking horse and on bare skin she would beat me with whatever was handy, cane, strap or brush. The final straw was Sr ...X... came into the bathroom and said "by the time I have finished with you ...(witness's surname)... the devil will be out of you". She had the bath ready, she had this nailbrush, she scrubbed my private area with it so much I was so sore, then she decided to put my head underwater ...(saying)... "you will be clean after this". I had to fight for breath I couldn't breathe, it seemed like an endless time, as if she wasn't going to stop, I was frozen.

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He ... (named male religious staff)... would lift boys by forelocks and try to punch boys where bruising would not show.

- 14.54** Both male and female witnesses reported being physically abused in various locations including classrooms, dormitories, refectories, bathrooms, recreation halls, work and play areas, grounds of the Homes, and in the homes of 'holiday' families. A small number of witnesses from one Children's Home reported being abused by being isolated, physically punished, and threatened not to disclose that they were abused in the infirmary. One witnesses commented '*because of the general fear you were afraid to go to the ...infirmary...*'

14.55 The majority of the 24 witness reports from two Homes were of severe abuse including being hit on the bare buttocks, being submerged and held under water, and being instructed to hit other residents. Ten (10) male witnesses from one of these Children's Homes commented that physical beatings were severe, unpredictable and unprovoked. Six (6) of the 10 witnesses reported sustaining injuries to their hands, feet and heads. Two (2) witnesses described their experiences in the following words:

It just continued on and on a daily basis, just random attacks on different individuals. There doesn't seem to be any logical reason for the attacks, unprovoked, if he ... (named male religious Resident Manager)... felt like laying into somebody he would just do it. It was constant. You might be queuing up for food and it would be a dig ... (punch)... put into some guy, a wiggling ... (pulling by the ear)... pull somebody out. ... It was just random attacks, there was no control on it, for no apparent reason, a constant barrage of abuse, mentally abuse you and physically abuse you.

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She ... (Sr X)... pulled my pants down and beat me around the kitchen, when she was finished she sent me out to face the other lads with my trousers down. Still she was not finished, I was sent to wax and polish the refectory, as I finished she opened the door and in came one of the older boys. He told me she sent him in to beat me. I kept moving around the tables pleading and in the end he didn't hit me. I spent the night locked in there.

Bed-wetting and soiling

14.56 Twenty one (21) witnesses, 13 male and eight female, reported being physically punished for bed-wetting or soiling. The Committee heard many reports of physical punishment combined with critical and humiliating comments in relation to bed-wetting. Witnesses stated they were beaten on the hands or on the bare buttocks, and in two Homes the residents were beaten partially naked. Witnesses also described having their faces pushed into wet and soiled sheets, locked outside in sheds or in dark cupboards, and having their heads immersed in water. Two (2) male witnesses stated that they were held under water by the genitalia in baths as a punishment for bed-wetting. Female witnesses reported being made to stand in cold baths. The following is a witness's account of punishment for bed-wetting:

From the word go I witnessed terrible, terrible physical abuse. On my first morning I woke up and I seen ... named male religious staff... and he had a young guy, probably about my own age, 6 or 7, this young guy had wet the bed and...named male religious staff... had him by one arm and one leg, he looked like a spider monkey. He had a sink filled with cold water and he was dumping him up and down in it, the kid was gone off his head screaming. I had never seen this before in my life, I could not give expression to it, frozen disbelief, I couldn't react, I couldn't speak

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I was punished for bed-wetting. I had to sit with my hands on top of my head and... (be)... beaten on the toes with a stick or put across the bed in a nightshirt and beaten on the bare bottom.

Classroom education

14.57 Twenty one (21) witnesses, 14 male and seven female, described being physically abused in the classroom. Many of the witnesses described the classroom as a place of fear, particularly associated with a small number of named abusers. Witnesses reported being punished for reasons such as left-handedness, resisting sexual fondling, lack of fluency in Irish, and speech or writing difficulties. One witness who was left handed described his hand being tied to the side of the desk at study time and then being beaten for any mistakes he made. Another witness who was left- handed described her abuse:

Sr ...X... beat me regularly for being left-handed, saying "no convent girl is going to be left-handed, left-handed people are for the devil". Sr ...Y... stuck sewing needles in the back of my hand for sewing with my left hand. I was beaten on the palms, back of hands, with the leather strap, ruler, bamboo stick, my hands were beaten so badly they bled. When my hands were bleeding I was isolated in the infirmary until they healed. She ... (Sr X)... got me to wet my hands before she hit me sometimes. In school I was made stand on the desk, if my hands were bleeding I was slapped on the backs of my legs. I was so bad one day all the class cried with me, I used to blank out the pain.

Other circumstances of physical abuse

14.58 Twenty nine (29) witnesses from 10 Children's Homes reported harsh and often unpredictable physical punishment for various other reasons. The circumstances precipitating abuse included neglect of one's personal care and clothing, not eating the food provided, answering back, the disclosure of sexual abuse and 'breaking the silence rule'. In one Home witnesses reported that following inspection of their shoes and clothing residents were beaten if the items were soiled, damaged or lost and that losing a stud from one's boots led to being beaten on the soles of the feet. Others reported that breaking the rule of sleeping with their arms crossed, fainting or falling asleep in the chapel or not responding promptly while praying led to being hit with a cane by staff.

14.59 Two (2) witnesses from two Homes reported being sent by care staff to stand waiting for punishment by lay staff in authority for 'anything that was considered rebellious' such as talking in the dormitory or 'answering back'. In both instances the witnesses described that the perpetrators of the beatings had a reputation for severe physical abuse. One witness described anticipating the abuse and demonstrated efforts to protect himself from the assaults:

Once you were standing in this big long corridor there would be 2 or 3 ... (co-residents) ... you are not thinking of them, you are just thinking of yourself, which way were you going to do ... demonstrating protecting face with arms ... so you protected yourself with your arm like that but then you got it round the edges The worst part was ... you were told at night time they would say "go in to the ... (room) ... wait for me" ... that was the worst part. You knew you were going to get a beating, waiting for the beating you knew what it was going to be like ...(a severe beating) ...

14.60 Five (5) witnesses from two Homes reported that there was an atmosphere of bullying and intimidation by older residents. They described being physically and verbally abused, and in some instances they believed this occurred with the knowledge and consent of staff in authority. Two (2) witnesses from one Home believed that older residents were encouraged by the lay resident manager to physically punish younger residents and that they were then rewarded with treats such as extra cigarettes and outings to the cinema:

There was a lot of bullying there, not the kids of your own age, there would be the odd scuffle you'd understand that, you know. The boys older than us would beat us up a lot, they would give fearsome beatings. I often ended up with black eyes and face busted to the side, bruises all over me body from kickings.... ... If you complained about it the head people would turn around and say to you, "oh you got that for arguing with a young fellow your own age", so where do you go from that? They never got disciplined. Actually the main man of the place, who used to run the place, used to use the older boys to do his punishment for him, that's kinda how he run the place.... The orders were coming from him, we used to get 4 or 5 cigarettes, he'd give them 20 or 30, he was paying them for what they were doing, they would get extra pocket money.

Injuries

- 14.61** Twenty one (21) witnesses, 15 male and six female, from 10 Children’s Homes reported that they sustained injuries from physical abuse. The types of injuries reported included four mouth and facial injuries, three broken bones, and three head injuries which rendered witnesses unconscious. Many witnesses described being left marked and bleeding. One male witness reported being unconscious following a severe beating by two female lay staff and woke up to find a splint on his arm. Another witness gave an account of bruising to his genitalia following a beating.
- 14.62** Six (6) witnesses, four male and two female, reported receiving medical attention following incidents of physical abuse, and three witnesses reporting attending hospital for treatment of injuries. Two (2) male witnesses who reported being severely physically assaulted in one Children’s Home described attending hospital on three different occasions with injuries to their head and stomach.
- 14.63** Two (2) witnesses from two different Homes reported that following severe beatings by male religious and lay care staff two co-residents were never seen again.

Reported abusers

- 14.64** Fifty seven (57) witnesses reported that they were physically abused by 67 perpetrators, including religious and lay staff, co-residents and other adults who had access to the Homes. Fifty four (54) reported abusers were identified by name and the 13 who were not named were described by their position or function within the Home. It is possible that there is some overlap between those identified by name and those who were not named. Table 74 lists the position held and number of reported abusers:

Table 74: Position and Number of Reported Physical Abusers – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Position of reported physical abusers	Males	Females
Religious		
- Authority figure including Resident Manager	8	8
- Care staff	1	13
- Teacher	4	4
- Ancillary worker	0	1
- External priest	1	0
Lay		
- Authority figure including Resident Manager	2	1
- Care staff	4	8
- Teacher	3	1
- Ancillary worker	1	0
Weekend or holiday placement carer	1	0
Ex-resident	0	1
Co-resident	3	2
Total	28	39

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 14.65** Twenty six (26) of the female perpetrators of physical abuse were reported to be religious Sisters and 14 were religious Brothers or priests.
- 14.66** Sixteen (16) religious staff reported to be physically abusive were understood to be in positions of authority in the Children's Homes and were given various titles by witnesses including: Resident Manager, Officer in Charge, Brother in Charge, Reverend Mother or as the Head of the orphanage.
- 14.67** Lay care staff, including residential house-parents, were reported to be involved in the everyday living activities in the Homes, and ancillary workers were generally involved in building, maintenance or farm work. One lay care worker described by a witness as '*the cruelest person*' was reported by two witnesses as constantly beating residents for no reason. Other lay staff reported as physically abusive were teachers, including three school Principals.
- 14.68** A witness reported being beaten by the Resident Manager on both hands with a cane until he was unable to lift his hands. The Resident Manager was also described as regularly hitting children's heads off the wall.
- 14.69** The Committee heard evidence regarding three Children's Homes of consistent and severe physical abuse by a small number of named abusers. One male religious staff member was identified by seven witnesses as a perpetrator of severe physical abuse. He was described by witnesses as '*brutal*' and '*vicious*'. One witness reported '*He'd beat the living daylights out of you, especially if you had no one to tell.*
- Physical abuse was constant and worst at night... (named religious staff X),...slept in the dormitory and used to beat boys for misbehaviour, he used a leather strap and also a strip of rubber.... He was particularly vicious and appeared to gain pleasure from beating boys. I was beaten severely by...named religious staff Y... when I was returned each time after running away following a beating, he would have helpers for the beatings. I saw one boy stand up to... named religious staff Y. I never saw him ... (co-resident)... again. ... Named religious staff Y... beat boys with a leather strap with pieces of lead at the end ... (he also) ... beat boys with a hurling stick and another... unnamed male religious staff ... used catch the boys behind the door in a head lock and beat them with his fist.*
- 14.70** Eight (8) female religious and lay staff in one Children's Home were identified by many witnesses as physically abusive. A number of these staff members were described as particularly harsh in their punishment of residents and some were reported to have immersed residents who wet the bed in cold baths and held them underwater.
- 14.71** Five (5) witnesses, three male and two female, gave accounts of being physically abused by co-residents. Witnesses from one Home reported that older residents took charge of the residents at playtime with, they believed, the consent of staff. This was described as '*lookout time*' and was reported to be the likely time for sexual and physical abuse.

Sexual abuse

The use of the child by a person for sexual arousal or sexual gratification of that person or another person.¹⁰

- 14.72** This section presents witness evidence of sexual abuse ranging from contact sexual abuse including molestation, vaginal and anal penetration to non-contact sexual abuse such as voyeurism. Some witnesses provided detailed and disturbing accounts of the sexual abuse they

¹⁰ Section 1(1)(b)

experienced, other accounts were sufficient to clarify the nature and extent of the reported abuse.

14.73 Twenty nine (29) witnesses, 20 male and nine female, reported being sexually abused in 15 Children's Homes. More than half of the male and over one third of the female witnesses who reported abuse in Children's Homes reported sexual abuse. Two (2) male witnesses each reported sexual abuse in two Homes.

14.74 Witnesses made a total of 31 reports of sexual abuse. The frequency of sexual abuse reported by witnesses varied between Children's Homes as follows:

- Five (5) Homes were each the subject of between three and five reports, totalling 21 reports.
- Two (2) Homes were each the subject of two reports, totalling four reports.
- Eight (8) Homes were each the subject of a single report.

14.75 Sexual abuse was reported in combination with physical and emotional abuse and neglect in 30 witness reports.

14.76 The Committee heard accounts from some witnesses of sexual abuse as an acute episode of assault while others described chronic abuse involving molestation and penetration over a number of years. A number of witnesses described coercive methods used by adults to physically force witnesses to yield to abuse.

Description of sexual abuse

14.77 The forms of sexual abuse reported by witnesses included inappropriate fondling, masturbation, oral/genital contact and rape. Witnesses reported the chronic and coercive nature of the sexual abuse they experienced, giving accounts of being forced to comply with sexual molestation in return for money, alcohol, shelter or affection. Witnesses reported that sexual abuse was perpetrated in both public and private areas of the Homes and outside the institutions. Many witnesses reported that sexual abuse occurred in circumstances of restricted access and in isolated situations including the homes of volunteers, basements, boiler rooms, recreation rooms, bathrooms, sacristies, confessionals, garden sheds, and the sleeping quarters of staff members. A small number of witnesses described how people who abused them forced their compliance by means of threats and actual violence. Male witnesses consistently reported that when abused by a person in a position of authority they felt defenceless and powerless to either physically resist or disclose the abuse because of the threat of physical retaliation. The following is the account of one witness:

... I don't want to go into any great detail ... if you went into ... (recreation room) ... there was a lock on the door and there was nothing you could do. Using a very mild word I would have to say, the very first time he ... (lay care staff) ... raped me ... distressed and cryingHe did threaten me but ... crying ... you just feel like at that age anyway, with the experience ... of not being believed, it was just dismissed ... even if you went to the guards, who would believe you? ... People were very ignorant at that stage....

14.78 Of the 29 witnesses who reported sexual abuse in Homes, 19 gave accounts of molestation including masturbation, fondling and oral/genital contact:

I have memories of her ...(named female religious staff) ... being on top of me and touching me, I think I was about 3 or 4, she used to say I was her special. She used bring me off with her friend ... a woman friend in the car for a treat. They would stop for a picnic, and they would be touching me, mostly just touching with my clothes half on

and half off. She told me when I was about 10 I was no longer special because I ... had 2 figures in my age. I don't know whether she moved on to someone younger....

•

At the age of 9 or 10 years when delivering the priest's breakfast I was made to stand beside him while he rubbed his hand up and down my leg, later he put his hand inside my pants, I had to stand while he did this waiting for him to tell me to take the covers off the food dishes and dismiss me. I would cry afterwards, a nun saw me cry one day and asked me what was wrong, I told her I didn't like the priest and was not going into the parlour again and if made to do so I would run away. The nun gave me tea and toast in the kitchen. I do not remember seeing the priest again.

- 14.79** Ten (10) witnesses, seven male and three female, reported being raped while resident in a Children's Home. They gave accounts of these assaults being perpetrated by staff, peers and others associated with the Homes. In some instances witnesses reported being coerced, threatened and subjected to physical violence in association with being raped. One witness reported multiple episodes of anal rape causing injury. Others stated that they were repeatedly raped over a number of months and believed the assaults stopped when the perpetrator began to abuse a younger resident.

It happened a good few times maybe every week or every 10 days, sometimes it would be twice a week, it all depends you know. It just kept going until I was released after a year. Other kids would say ... "it was your turn tonight", I would not know what they mean like the first 2 weeks I was in there, I would not have a clue what they were talking about. There were little boys, the beds were beside each other there and they would be over at your bed talking and afraid... (saying)... "I hope it's not me tonight". Janey, there was nothing you could do for them, on the other hand you were afraid yourself. You knew what they were saying was correct and the same time you would be hoping it wouldn't be you yourself.... It was the younger fellas that got called out.

- 14.80** A female witness reported being sent by a religious Sister to Confession having been accused of stealing money and sweets. She recounted that the priest, having heard her Confession, undressed her and vaginally and anally raped her, 'and threatened me never to say ... (anything)... when I went back to the orphanage'. Another witness reported that the visiting chaplain raped and otherwise sexually and physically abused her in the sacristy, confessional, convent grounds, and in the boiler room on many occasions over a period of four years.

- 14.81** A small number of witnesses reported that the violence associated with sexual abuse was so severe that they were helpless and unable to protect themselves.

X...(named volunteer worker)... came with another man every Sunday morning after breakfast. On the first week he selected me for some sort of pretext for punishment, he took off his belt ...and beat me... from head to foot in front of all the others. Then he shut me in a cupboard for half an hour before sending me to the dormitory where he gave me another beating before raping me. This was repeated every Sunday for 12 weeks, and then he moved on to another boy. They came every Sunday for the 3 years I was there.

- 14.82** Nine (9) male witnesses from a small number of Homes reported that religious staff, visiting the dormitory at night, sexually fondled them in their beds. Others described being taken from their dormitory and raped by male lay staff. Witnesses also reported that molestation and inappropriate sexual contact took place in public locations such as cinemas, classrooms and external social venues.

At the Christmas party for boys provided by ...(named voluntary organisation)... I was taken to the toilet by a volunteer called ...X.... He masturbated me and gave me 2/6.

•

He ... (named lay Resident Manager)... would ... distressed... well he used to come to the dormitory, you know, come to your bed at night. He'd say "come out here...". You'd get out of bed and you would only have a pair of underpants and a vest on you. He would take you out to ... (external building)... and he would start abusing you in different ways, sexual ways. He would make you take off your clothes and do things to you that he shouldn't be doing ... (witness reported anal penetration, masturbation, fondling and use of violence)... I said I would run away. I tried to stop him, he would beat you very severely with a strap. One time I remember next day I was very sore, I couldn't walk or nothing, I had to stay in bed, he said I was sick or something.

Reported abusers

14.83 A total of 43 perpetrators, 34 male and nine female, were identified in evidence to the Committee as having sexually abused 29 witnesses. Men and women described as abusers included named and unnamed religious and lay staff, adult male volunteer workers and visitors, external priests and Brothers, older residents, and others. Thirty one (31) of the reported abusers were identified by name. Witnesses identified another 12 abusers by their position or function either in the Home or in association with the Home. It is possible that there is some overlap between those identified by name and those who were not named. The following Table lists the positions held and the number of reported sexual abusers:

Table 75: Position and Number of Reported Sexual Abusers – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Position of reported sexual abusers	Males	Females
Religious		
- Authority figure including Resident Manager	3	2
>- Care staff	2	3
- Teacher	1	0
- Ancillary worker	1	0
- External priest or Brother	4	0
Lay		
- Authority figure including Resident Manager	1	0
- Housemaster	2	0
- Care staff	1	2
- Ancillary worker	2	0
Family member	1	0
‘Foster’ or ‘holiday’ placement carer	2	0
Volunteer workers and visitors	8	1
General public	1	0
Ex-resident	2	0
Co-resident	3	1
Total	34	9

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.84 Eleven (11) of the reported abusers were religious Brothers or priests and five were religious Sisters. Male volunteer workers were reported to visit the Children’s Homes with the consent and cooperation of staff and management. Five (5) witnesses from one Children’s Home reported nine individuals, including five volunteer workers, as sexually abusive. Among those

reported as abusive was a religious Resident Manager of the Home, who was also reported by a number of witnesses as physically abusive.

- 14.85** Nine (9) witnesses reported sexual abuse by both religious and lay care staff. Five (5) religious staff in positions of authority were reported as abusers, including one religious Resident Manager who was the subject of three witnesses' reports of sexual abuse. One lay care worker was reported by two witnesses to have sexually abused them, progressing from molestation to anal penetration.

My second key worker ... named lay care worker... started to abuse me from an early age. He first brought me to the ... named place... room where younger boys were only allowed go accompanied by a staff member. He locked the door and raped me, he abused me in the dormitory where other boys slept, in disused rooms and in a ...named place... where staff could take boys for treats. The abuse happened about 3 times a week, whenever he was on duty, over a year and half.

- 14.86** Three (3) witnesses, one male and two female, reported being abused by female religious staff. The male witness described being aggressively fondled and forced to fondle his abuser. He reported that he was threatened that he would go to hell if he disclosed that he was being abused. A female witness described being beaten and then fondled by a female religious in a position of authority within the Home. Another female witness reported being taken out of the Home by a religious Sister and her female friend who sexually molested her.

- 14.87** Witnesses described the practice in three Children's Homes of male volunteer workers visiting the Homes. They believed these men assisted the Resident Managers or those in charge by providing help with homework, recreational activities and transport. Some were reported to be constant visitors at weekends and were welcomed by residents because they provided opportunities for contact outside the Home, taking residents to the cinema, swimming and on other outings. Other volunteer workers were reported to be involved on an occasional basis providing children's parties, holidays and weekends away from the institution. Two (2) volunteer workers were reported to provide accommodation and support during the witnesses' transition to independent living.

- 14.88** The Committee heard evidence from nine witnesses, eight male and one female, of being sexually abused by eight male volunteer workers, seven of whom were named. One volunteer worker was the subject of two reports of sexual abuse. Witnesses described the male abusers as providing inducements such as outings from the Home, and promises of accommodation and employment following discharge.

Two men who were regular visitors to the Home fondled me, they did it to other boys, we all learned to avoid them. One of these men, a constant nightly visitor to help with homework, took me home. He offered me a roof over my head when I left, I had nowhere else to go, there followed sexual abuse ... (rape)... over years....

•

There was a visitor... (named volunteer worker) ... who used to come and take you out every 3 or 4 weeks, 3 or 4 boys, they...(lay Resident Managers).. would pick you out, all delighted to have an outing. He would make us all one by one pee in a milk bottle and then fondle us and would afterwards give us a sweet each and tell us we were good boys...

•

(Named volunteer worker) ... a visitor who took boys out at weekends. We would have to share his bed, then he would masturbate me and try to get me to masturbate him back.

- 14.89** Seven (7) witnesses, five male and two female, reported being sexually abused by older co-residents and ex-residents. The abuse described included rape and masturbation. Ex-residents were reported to return to one Children's Home where they had unsupervised access overnight to all areas of the Home.
- 14.90** Three (3) female witnesses reported being sexually abused by external priests. Two (2) of the witnesses reported being raped by two named priests when they went to Confession. One witness reported that the abuse continued over a number of years following her discharge from the Home. One male witness was sexually abused by a visiting Brother when he was supervising residents in the absence of the regular staff.
- 14.91** Two (2) female witnesses reported being sexually abused while in placements arranged by authority figures from the Children's Homes. One reported abuser was described as a '*foster father*' and the other was a male adult in the witness's work placement. Both witnesses reported that they disclosed their experience of abuse to the staff in the Homes and one was punished and made to return to the placement and the other witness's complaints were ignored.
- 14.92** Two (2) female witnesses reported being abused by lay ancillary staff who were employed in the environs of the Homes.

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.¹¹

- 14.93** This section presents witness reports of neglect of their care, welfare and education. Descriptions of neglect refer to all aspects of the physical, social and emotional care and welfare of the witnesses that had implications for their physical, psychological and social development.
- 14.94** The Committee heard 43 reports of neglect from 41 witnesses, 20 male and 21 female, in relation to 17 Children's Homes. Two (2) witnesses each made reports of neglect in relation to two Homes. Reports included neglect in combination with physical, sexual and emotional abuse. Two (2) of the 17 Children's Homes were the subject of both male and female reports.
- 14.95** As with the other abuse types the frequency of neglect reports by witnesses varied in relation to individual Children's Homes, as follows:
- Two (2) Children's Homes were collectively the subject of 15 reports.
 - Three (3) Children's Homes were each the subject of four reports, totalling 12 reports.
 - Four (4) Children's Homes were each the subject of two reports, totalling eight reports.
 - Eight (8) Children's Homes were the subject of a single report.

Description of neglect

- 14.96** The most consistently reported area of neglect by witnesses in Children's Homes was the neglect of and inadequate provision for their education. Witnesses also described neglect of their safety and welfare and a failure to provide protection from harm. Reports regarding

¹¹ Section (1)(1)(c) as amended by section 3 of the 2005 Act

inadequate food, clothing and neglect of their health were more commonly reported by witnesses discharged prior to the 1970s.

Education

- 14.97** Thirty five (35) witnesses, 23 male and 12 female, reported that their education was neglected. Ten (10) witnesses reported being removed from the classroom to work in or on behalf of the Home and that they were denied any further opportunity to avail of formal schooling 'I worked out on the farm picking potatoes and carrots – there was no education there'. A witness who reported that she was sent to an external second-level school and was later abruptly withdrawn by the religious Sister stated the following:

I loved school, I really, really loved school ... I got as far as ..., I prepared for my Intermediate. I got good reports and everything before that and then the nun suddenly said "you're not going to stay on in school anymore. Your mother's not sending any money for books" and they took me out and sent me to work in ... named hospital ... as a cleaner. I was so distraught, that killed me....

- 14.98** Others reported that due to their fear of abuse in the classroom they were unable to learn and that they were denied the opportunity to acquire an education.

- 14.99** Thirteen (13) witnesses reported that they left the Children's Home with no education or literacy skills. A small number of witnesses reported that their particular learning difficulties were not assessed and that no educational assistance was available to them. They also reported being either ridiculed or ignored as a result of their learning difficulties.

I received no education at all. I was seen as retarded because I had ... medical condition.... I cannot now read or write. Silence was the daily code, you were never allowed speak to others. I spent most of the time working hard from an early age. I had no friends and no outside contact with anyone.

- 14.100** Four (4) witnesses who attended class in the local community reported being singled out for ridicule by teachers and pupils. One witness reported 'We were put at the back of the class and ignored. Nobody played with us. We were told we need have no aspirations above cleaning'.

Supervision

- 14.101** The neglect of safety and welfare, inconsistent staffing and poor supervision were a frequent focus of witness reports. Twenty eight (28) witnesses, 13 male and 15 female, reported being abused in the absence of supervision by staff. A number of female witnesses reported being cared for at night by older residents, and others reported that they themselves were forced to provide care for infants, without access to or the supervision of adult staff. Six (6) of the witnesses who reported sexual and physical abuse in Children's Homes stated that the absence of supervision and the lack of consistent staff attention made them vulnerable to abuse. One male witness reported 'the inadequate supervision of older boys allowed rapes to take place. I was raped on 2 occasions by older boys'. Another describing the difficulty of not being believed or protected by staff commented 'They changed. It was always changing, a new staff could come today and tomorrow he would be gone ...

- 14.102** Witnesses from three Homes commented on both the lack of supervision of volunteer workers and other visitors, and the unsupervised access of ex-residents to the Home. In the absence of critical overseeing of staff, visitors and co-residents, witnesses reported they were abused both within the Home and on outings. A male witness reported 'the most serious neglect was to be sent out at weekends to ...X..., a volunteer, without any supervision or follow-up, where I was sexually abused'.

Food

- 14.103** Twenty five (25) witnesses, 12 male and 13 female, reported that the quality and quantity of food was inadequate and that they were at times so hungry that they took food from kitchens, farms attached to the Homes, and waste bins. The majority of these reports were made by witnesses discharged prior to 1970. Witnesses who worked in the kitchen described the staff diet as superior to their own. *'The staff bins were the best, they had the best scraps'*. In addition to reports of insufficient food, witnesses from a small number of Homes also reported being deprived of meals as a punishment for breaking rules including being late for meals.

Personal care and healthcare

- 14.104** Eighteen (18) witnesses, nine male and nine female, reported the lack of adequate hygiene facilities to maintain their personal care. Witnesses reported inadequate provision of appropriate clothing and toiletries and having to share baths with co-residents. Four (4) witnesses reported the poor provision of appropriate sanitary wear and some commented on the lack of education with regard to sexual matters. Four (4) other witnesses from one Home gave accounts of Jeyes Fluid being used in baths that were either too hot or too cold.

- 14.105** Thirteen (13) witnesses, six male and seven female, commented that when they were ill or injured they did not receive adequate medical attention. One female witness described being left unattended in the infirmary with an injury to her hand. A male witness stated that his nose was broken and he was unconscious following an assault by a member of religious staff, he commented that he was removed from the classroom by the Resident Manager but that he received no attention for his injuries. Witnesses from three Children's Homes reported that staff from both within the institution and from external agencies neglected to investigate the cause of their injuries. They reported attending hospitals, doctors and clinics where they were rarely spoken to directly about how they received the injuries with which they were presenting.

You got injuries that would mend themselves. I went to the doctor he would not hear tell of it, he'd say "you'll be ok after a few days".

Discharge and aftercare

- 14.106** Many witnesses commented on the lack of preparation or planning for discharge and reported that their transition to independent living was traumatic. Witnesses who had no family contact during their time in the Children's Homes or who had been reared entirely in institutional settings reported feeling bewildered when discharged. A female witness described her experience on leaving: *'I didn't know how to behave in a household ... I hated it. I didn't know how to behave in somebody's home.'*
- 14.107** Twelve (12) witnesses, five male and seven female, reported that the absence of supervision or follow-up while in their aftercare placements exposed them to risk and abuse. Others reported being discharged without any accommodation arrangements and having to sleep rough. Three (3) witnesses reported being placed in employment by the Children's Homes where they received no payment for their work.

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.¹²

¹² Section 1(1)(d) as amended by section 3 of the 2005 Act

14.108 This section presents witness evidence of emotional abuse by deprivation of family contact, loss of identity, lack of opportunities for secure relationships, affection, and approval. Witnesses described an environment of pervasive fear and a lack of safety and protection. These losses impaired the social, emotional and physical functioning and development of witnesses and were identified by them as generally disturbing, both at the time and in the subsequent course of their lives. Emotional abuse refers to both actions and inactions by religious and lay staff and others who had responsibility for the care and safety of residents.

14.109 Forty two (42) witnesses, 22 male and 20 female, made 45 reports of emotional abuse regarding 16 Children's Homes. There was some variation in the number of reports made in relation to each Home:

- Three (3) Children's Homes were the subject of two to five reports, totalling 20 reports.
- Three (3) Children's Homes were each the subject of four reports, totalling 12 reports.
- Three (3) Children's Homes were each the subject of two reports, totalling six reports.
- Seven (7) Children's Homes were each the subject of a single report.

Description of emotional abuse

14.110 Witnesses from a number of Homes reported that they experienced sustained abuse when exposed to ridicule, rejection, criticism and blame that left them feeling confused, vigilant and anxiously anticipating the next episode of physical or verbal abuse. All except one report of emotional abuse was combined with reports of physical abuse, sexual abuse and/or neglect.

Exposure to fearful situations

14.111 Thirty five (35) witnesses, 21 male and 14 female, reported being fearful and feeling under a constant threat of abuse. Twenty nine (29) of these reports referred to six Homes where accounts were heard of a pervasive fear of physical and sexual abuse: *'You were all tensed up all the time. It was the beatings ... thinking of the beating. It was the waiting instead of getting it done there and then, the waiting, it was agony'*. Witnesses commented on the long-term negative impact of growing up in an environment dominated by fear, trying to please others, avoid condemnation and witnessing others being abused.

14.112 Witnesses consistently reported that the lack of protection from harm and the risk of punishment if they discussed or disclosed their abuse compounded their fear. Four (4) witnesses gave accounts of being threatened, isolated and removed from contact with their peers for disclosing abuse to external agencies and to staff. Witnesses who had no family contact and were considered to be orphans believed that they were more vulnerable to abuse. *'Fear was a constant companion. You awoke in fear and went to bed in fear'*.

14.113 Four (4) witnesses reported being fearful when they were removed from day-to-day activities in the Homes and were subjected to sexual abuse. They described being isolated from staff and peers, being taken to external venues by volunteer workers or being locked in isolated rooms where they were sexually abused.

14.114 Witnesses stated that they were put outside overnight or locked in small rooms or cupboards without food or light. One witness reported that *'a very cruel nun'* locked her in a cupboard and threatened that she would not be allowed out until arrangements were made for her transfer to an Industrial School.

Personal and family denigration

- 14.115** Twenty eight (28) witnesses, 18 male and 10 female, reported being exposed to constant criticism, hostility, personal ridicule, verbal abuse, and the denigration of their families. Witnesses reported that they were ridiculed about their family circumstances of poverty, parental alcohol abuse and the marital status of their parents. Lone mothers were reported to be the subject of particular denigration: *'I was told my mother was a prostitute and that I belonged in the gutter.'*

Me and my brother were told by staff not to play with other children who had families because we were bastards who should have been drowned when we were born. Our mother visited once a year, we were told not to say anything to her or we would get it ...(abuse)... worse.



Before Sr ...X... beat me I would have to carry my sheets across through the house in public to the laundry. She would say "the devil is inside you, ...(you)... can't go to Mass until you have a bath". She mocked me because I was an orphan and I was not allowed opportunities like other children.

- 14.116** Eight (8) witnesses, five male and three female, discharged from Homes in all decades, described various forms of emotional abuse associated with bed-wetting and personal hygiene. They described being made to carry their wet and soiled sheets in public, being called derogatory names, and having their faces forcibly rubbed into wet sheets. Other punishments for bed-wetting reported by a small number of witnesses was the humiliation of having their heads shaved and being forced to stand in front of religious statues for long periods. Four (4) witnesses described being humiliated by the practice of staff commenting on their soiled underwear in front of co-residents.

We were punished if our pants were soiled although often there was no sanitary towels, there was no preparation for periods, and you were told it...(menstruation)... was the Virgin Mary's gift.

Deprivation of affection

- 14.117** Twenty seven (27) witnesses, 12 male and 15 female, reported an overall absence of affection or any kindness towards them; they commented on the lack of awareness or understanding of their need for affection and stability as children. *'There was no understanding of our needs. You had nobody to turn to, you were on your own.'*
- 14.118** A number of witnesses who had no contact with any family member and had been reared in institutional care reported that they had no experience of any demonstration of affection and were deprived of any emotional bond. The absence of the opportunity to form a secure attachment was reported to contribute to a sense of disconnection in relationships, both at the time and in adult life. In these circumstances witnesses commented that special attention, demonstrations of affection or treats occasionally available from staff and others, including volunteer workers, made them vulnerable to abuse. In the course of their hearings many expressed distress and unresolved anger that their emotional needs as children were not met.
- 14.119** The lack of emotional support or comfort in dealing with the death of a parent or sibling was described by a small number of witnesses. One witness reported that on returning from his father's funeral he was told to *'stop snivelling ... he is dead. Now you have no one to go to with your tales'*.

Witnessing the abuse of others

14.120 Nineteen (19) witnesses, 17 male and two female, described their experience of fear, distress and shame when they were forced to observe co-residents being severely beaten. Eleven (11) of the witnesses reported witnessing severe physical abuse of their co-residents in four Children's Homes. One witness named four other residents whom he witnessed being severely beaten and commented that they were '*subjected to extremes of brutality*'. Another witness commented: '*... Named male religious staff... was particularly vicious to boys without parents, the orphans*'.

14.121 Four (4) witnesses from one Children's Home, which was the subject of reports of physical and sexual abuse, identified the same religious staff member as the person who abused their co-residents. Witnesses described unresolved anger and upset about what they observed and a number were distressed in the process of recounting what had happened to their childhood peers.

Named male religious staff...would lose his temper and beat boys viciously, I was hit by him, but I watched severe violence to older boys. In particular I saw ...named co-resident... so severely beaten until he was unable to stand up, he beat him as one man would do to another and not as a man to a boy. He punched him under the chin, about the face and body, and left him in a heap.

Looking back as an adult I did receive abuse, some terrible attacks, but I think psychologically I'd be left more with what I witnessed than what I received. When I was on the receiving end, you just kept your head down, you put yourself into a ball, you didn't see what was happening to you. Somehow the mind switches off, somehow you can accept it, you just put your head down and stay going and pick yourself up. Personally what I witnessed left more of a scar than what I received.

Deprivation of family contact and loss of identity

14.122 Ten (10) witnesses reported being deprived of contact with their family members, including five who reported being separated from siblings placed in the same Children's Homes. Others described being deprived of visits from parents and family members as a punishment for the breach of a rule or, they believed, to prevent them revealing an injury or disclosing abuse. Witnesses also reported being forbidden to speak to their older siblings in the same institution.

14.123 The loss of identity was compounded for witnesses by separation from their siblings. Other witnesses described the loss and disadvantage they experienced both at the time and in their later lives, due to the lack of information provided about their family, their birth and the circumstances of their admission.

14.124 One witness gave an account of a visit from her mother to advise of her imminent plan to emigrate: as it was not a scheduled visiting day the nun in charge did not allow use of the parlour and terminated the visit. Another witness reported that the religious Resident Manager was believed '*not to like women and tried to actively discourage my relationship with my sister. He took much the same line with my mother and this was hard.... I knew she ... (mother)... cared for me*'.

14.125 Others reported that letters were opened and that '*the nuns dictated letters to parents, you could never tell anyone how unhappy you were*'.

14.126 Five (5) witnesses reported that the consistent use of a number rather than their own name deprived them of their individual identity. One witness commented that she did not know the names of other children who were her daily companions '*only their number*'. A female witness

reported having her name changed when she was admitted, as she did not have a saint's name. Another witness described being physically and verbally abused:

Sr ...X... used every opportunity to demean me by calling me by my number, prodding me with her large crucifix on her Rosary beads, beating me with a strap for infringements of discipline. She blamed me for the death of a classmate ... for failing to swallow the host at Holy Communion and ... (then)... vomiting, saying "even God doesn't want you".

- 14.127** A number of witnesses who had no information about their family or were unaware of their family history commented on the difficulties this created in adult life when they attempted to trace their family of origin. One witness reported that his surname had been changed from his original family name while in out-of-home care. Another witness described inventing a fictitious family history to avoid revealing that he had spent his childhood in an institution. A further witness reported that he was unable 'to face returning' to Ireland, in spite of a wish to trace his family, because of the ongoing impact of his childhood experience of abuse.

Knowledge of abuse

- 14.128** Witnesses stated that staff and co-residents were aware of the physical and emotional abuse inflicted on residents due to the fact that it frequently occurred in public and on a daily basis. Witnesses also reported disclosing abuse to their parents, relatives and people in authority, both within the institution and outside, including to Gardaí and other professionals. The investigation and outcome of abuse disclosures varied as outlined below.

Abuse observed by others

- 14.129** The Committee heard evidence from 58 witnesses, 36 males and 22 females, that the abuse they experienced was observed by many people including lay and religious staff, teaching staff in schools outside the Homes, and other residents. A number of witnesses believed that there was knowledge and awareness of abuse as a result of the presence of the following adults and co-residents during the abuse episodes:

- Other residents 48 reports
- Care staff 21 reports
- Authority figures 13 reports
- Ancillary staff 8 reports
- Teaching staff 3 reports.

- 14.130** Thirteen (13) witnesses reported that abusive behaviour was a way of life in the Children's Homes and that they believed staff and residents were powerless to do anything to stop it. Witnesses believed that staff members were afraid of losing their jobs, and co-residents were afraid of being abused or punished themselves if they spoke out against the abuse they observed and experienced.

No one in the hospital ever asked what happened to you, the nurses knew from our appearance, we were skinny, they'd say "ah, they are from the orphanage down the road", no one ever asked.... Other people knew about it, doctors knew about it, nurses knew about it, lay teachers knew about it, other ...male religious staff... knew about it, nobody was prepared to stand up and say, "stop you can't do that to a child".... It was complete fear, sheer bully-boy tactics that stopped people, adults were in fear of ...(named male religious staff)... probably. A lay teacher had a job and said "if I report this my job is gone, my income is gone, where am I going to seek work?".

Disclosing abuse

14.131 Eighteen (18) witnesses, 12 male and six female, stated that they disclosed details of their physical and sexual abuse to others during their time in Children's Homes. Five (5) male and four female witnesses specifically reported disclosing sexual abuse. Witnesses reported disclosing abuse to adults both within and external to the Homes and in some instances to more than one person:

- Nine (9) witnesses disclosed their abuse to an authority figure in the Children's Home, including a Resident Manager.
- Six (6) witnesses disclosed abuse to a parent.
- Three (3) witnesses disclosed abuse to teachers, Gardaí, staff and siblings.

Following discharge there was an inquiry in the parlour where I was interviewed by a group of men, ...named male religious staff... had told me to be very careful about what I would say happened to me, he threatened me. I told them I had fallen over a wall. ... I was in constant fear....

14.132 Two (2) male witnesses reported receiving medical attention for injuries and commented that they had been threatened not to tell anyone how their injury occurred. *'I had been warned by ... named male religious staff... to say I had fallen down the stairs'*. One of these male witnesses stated that as an older boy he attended the casualty department with junior residents who were injured following beatings by members of lay and religious staff. He reported being warned not to comment on the circumstances in which the injuries occurred:

Nobody said anything, everybody kept themselves to themselves.... You would be told to go back to your bedroom and keep your mouth shut. You couldn't do very much anyway, you would be that sore the next day after all the beatings ... (associated with sexual assault)...

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I remember I got a good cut across the head there, I had to go to hospital. When ever ...named male religious staff... had gone beyond his limit and he knew what he had done required medical attention you ...(resident)... were put in charge of an older guy ...(co-resident)... to go to the hospital.

Outcome of disclosure

14.133 Witnesses reported a range of responses to their disclosures of abuse including: being protected from further abuse, punished, ignored or not believed. Eight (8) witnesses reported that they were physically punished and threatened following their disclosures of abuse. Seven (7) other witnesses gave accounts of the abuse continuing, with no immediate action being taken.

There was a little fellow there called ...named co-resident..., he hung himself since. We did run away one time because of the abuse was going on towards us. We ran to a Garda station in ...named town... and we reported it but there was nothing done about it. We told them what was going on and the kind of abuse that was going on, I knew what was going on was wrong. I remember well one of the guards ...(Gardaí)... picking up the phone and phoning ...named Children's Home.... We were brought back to the place ...(by the Gardaí).... We went through hell then when we went back, we got more punishment we were put to bed on the spot... An older fellow would say "come on and have a game of football", you did not know what was going to happen and 2 or 3 of them would kick you around the field or kick you around the yard and say "if ever you go forward and do that again ...(disclose abuse)... you won't get out of here alive...". That was one of the reasons you didn't tell anyone, that was part of the reason why we ran away from there, there was no one to talk to, my parents didn't come and visit me,

no phone calls, no letters. If you went forward and said "I'm after get... (getting)... beaten up", they would say "you are telling tales". They wouldn't want to hear tell of it and that word would be passed on to the head person who was running the place and then you would be in serious trouble....

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I was regularly raped and forced to have oral sex by the chaplain and when I told an old nun what he was doing to me I was punished. She called me the devil's daughter....

- 14.134** A witness who reported sexual abuse was discharged to the care of his mother and described a subsequent visit from staff of the Children's Home to his mother's home:

Three weeks after discharge I was visited at home by ...named male religious staff ... and 2 other men who were not introduced. He threatened me, as I had told another ex-resident about the sexual abuse ... perpetrated by named male religious staff..., that I was spreading rumours and said to me "you could go to jail, and never see your mother again. I am in a position to get you locked up and the key thrown away".

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I was left in the infirmary for a long time on my own for telling my father about the ill-treatment, no one was allowed see me there. Sr ...X... pretended to my father that I was sick.

- 14.135** Five (5) witnesses reported it was their belief that following their disclosure the offender was reprimanded or removed. A number of witnesses commented that while they were not aware of any action being taken at the time of their disclosures they later realised that their abusers were no longer working in the Homes. A male witness who reported that his abuse continued for some time after his disclosure stated:

I went to a person after a few months after it...(abuse)... continued and it...(disclosure)... wasn't listened to ... The person I went to was in a very strong position of power in ...named Children's Home ...he said "no I don't believe you and anyway keep quiet" From that moment on I kept it to myself ... the abuse continued after that for a while and then the Health Board came in ... they spoke to the management. No-one spoke to me, he... (named lay care worker)... was fired ... After he left things improved for me. I always thought in my head someone would come and ask questions but it never happened...

- 14.136** Three (3) witnesses reported that their parents confronted the Resident Managers with the accusations of abuse following disclosures by them. Two (2) of these witnesses gave accounts of being beaten by staff following their disclosures and in the third instance the abuse ceased and the witness was protected from further abuse.

- 14.137** In one instance a male witness reported that a female lay ancillary worker who had physically abused him was herself stripped and beaten in front of all the residents by a staff member in authority. This ancillary worker was believed to be a former resident of the Home.

Response to abuse

- 14.138** Witnesses in a number of Children's Homes in the period prior to the 1970s reported that where abuse was a feature of everyday life they accepted physical punishment as normal. Other witnesses from a small number of Homes and throughout all decades reported experiencing and witnessing severe, unpredictable and unprovoked violence, which they described as both traumatic at the time and as having had an enduring impact on their lives. Witnesses reported a range of responses to such abuse and often reported more than one response:

- Fifty two (52) witnesses, 27 male and 25 female, reported that they did not know what to do, felt defenceless and withdrew into themselves.
- Thirty six (36) witnesses, 20 male and 16 female, reported that their predominant response to abuse was fear for their own safety and the safety of co-residents.
- Nineteen (19) witnesses, 12 male and seven female, reported that they began bed-wetting in response to constant abuse.
- Eight (8) witnesses, six male and two female, reported running away from the Homes to avoid abuse.
- Three (3) witnesses, one male and two female, reported that they attempted to harm themselves.

14.139 A witness who reported persistent sexual abuse over a number of years stated that his abusive experience led to bed-wetting, and his attempts to discuss his abuse with staff were ignored: *'We all started wetting the bed, no staff ever asked 'why are you wetting the bed, what's wrong with you?'*

Positive experiences

- 14.140** Forty nine (49) witnesses, 29 male and 20 female, reported having had positive experiences and some good memories of their time in Children's Homes. Fifteen (15) witnesses described the kindness of particular religious staff, the absence of punishment, and protection from beatings as positive experiences. Staff were also reported to have demonstrated kindness by providing extra food. Seven (7) witnesses commented on the kindness of two named female religious staff from one Children's Home. *'She ... (Sr X)... was elderly and always told me to smile when I was down, I still do it and it works.'*
- 14.141** Twelve (12) witnesses reported that various lay staff were kind and attempted to care and provide for their needs by protecting them from abuse and other harm.
- 14.142** For some witnesses the sense of security and attention they experienced while in the infirmaries or in hospital was a positive experience. Three (3) witnesses commented on the kindness of the nun in charge of one infirmary: *'I enjoyed going to the infirmary and the attention I got there'*.
- 14.143** Twelve (12) witnesses described any contact with family members, including visits or holidays at home and visits from parents, siblings and grandparents as their abiding good memory of their time in the Homes. Nine (9) other witnesses reported that ongoing family contact both protected them from abuse and enabled them to reintegrate more readily with their families when they were discharged.
- 14.144** Nine (9) witnesses described the positive value of the education they received, including their success in State examinations. Others described good memories of attending school outside the institutions, supportive teachers, friendship with pupils from the local community, and interaction with people from the local towns.
- 14.145** Six (6) witnesses reported that their involvement with Gaelic games or Irish dancing was beneficial and enjoyable. Others valued the opportunity of learning to play musical instruments.
- 14.146** Five (5) witnesses appreciated the value of visiting 'holiday' families or 'godparents' and working for local families. They stated that contact with families outside the Homes enabled them to experience family life and commented that relationships established through those placements had sustained them as children and in adult life. Others commented on the help they received while in their work placements from both lay and religious staff. A female witness reported she

benefited from support she received from a religious Sister: ‘... there was one nun there who let me type in the evenings ... she was very helpful ... she was so, so nice, she was kind’.

14.147 Seven (7) male witnesses who reported sexual abuse in Children’s Homes commented that they appreciated the overall care and education provided to them. Other witnesses, both male and female, commented that they benefited from opportunities to return to the Homes when they were discharged, for aftercare group support. A female witness stated: ‘You would go back to where you were brought up. They had a monthly meeting to see how you were getting on and things ...’

Current circumstances

14.148 Sixty one (61) witnesses gave accounts to the Committee of their current life circumstances and the effects of their childhood abuse experiences on their subsequent lives and relationships. Witnesses provided information about their social circumstances, family relationships, occupation, health, and the ongoing impact of their childhood abuse.

Relationships

14.149 The Committee heard consistent reports from witnesses of their difficulties establishing and maintaining secure, stable relationships in adult life. Many witnesses reported an inability to trust and relate in intimate relationships. They believed these difficulties to be a consequence of childhood abuse, including the deprivation of secure emotional attachments and nurturing relationships. Others described difficulties and differences with their partners in communication, conflict resolution and parenting styles.

14.150 The following table illustrates the status and length of the witnesses’ relationships as they reported at the time of their hearings:

Table 76: Status and Duration of Witnesses’ Relationship at the Time of Hearing 2000-2008 – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Duration	0-19 yrs		20-39 yrs		40-59 yrs		Total Witnesses
	Males	Females	Males	Females	Males	Females	
Status of relationship							
Married	1	1	19	7	2	4	34
Single	1	2	5	0	3	2	13
Separated	2	1	1	0	0	0	4
Co-habiting	2	1	0	0	0	0	3
Divorced	0	1	0	2	0	0	3
Widowed	2	2	0	0	0	0	4
Total	8	8	25	9	5	6	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.151 Forty five (45) witnesses, 27 male and 18 female, were or had been married, 32 of whom had been married for more than 20 years at the time of their hearing. Nineteen (19) of the 45 witnesses, 12 male and seven female, described being happily married. Others described marriage as providing stability and a sense of connection: ‘I married the first person that showed me love’.

14.152 Eight (8) witnesses, six male and two female, reported that they were married before they were 20 years old and had conflictual, ambivalent and, in some instances, violent relationships in the early years of marriage. Another five witnesses, one male and four female, reported being involved in violent relationships where alcohol abuse and issues relating to control contributed to marital difficulties.

14.153 Thirty nine (39) witnesses, 28 male and 11 female, reported that the inability to trust and relate in intimate relationships were key features of their relationships with spouses and partners. Male witnesses more commonly remarked on their inability to communicate, and their tendency to become isolated, alienated and withdrawn within their partnerships, as one witness commented: *'It's hard to be involved, hard to build a bond'*. Three (3) witnesses stated that they had never spoken about the abuse they experienced in Children's Homes to their spouses.

14.154 Nine (9) witnesses, three male and six female, reported being unable to settle and described themselves as unable to remain involved in a long-term, committed relationship.

14.155 Twelve (12) witnesses, eight male and four female, reported being single for various reasons that included being *'unable to trust anyone and form a lasting relationship'*. Three (3) of these witnesses commented on difficulties in sexual relationships. Others stated that *'family life is alien'* and *'I'm not good with relationships'*.

14.156 Seven (7) witnesses, three male and four female, reported being divorced or separated at the time of their hearing and included alcohol abuse, gambling, mental illness, and domestic violence among the issues that contributed to the breakdown in their marriages. Some female witnesses gave accounts of being involved in relationships in the past but had made a deliberate decision to separate and remain on their own.

Parenting

14.157 Many witnesses who had children of their own reported that their parenting relationships differed according to the stages of their children's development, their experience as a parent and their own progress since being discharged from the institutions. A male witness made the following comment:

When my son reached the age I was when I was kicked and beaten I got very upset, it all came back, I got depressed.... I got violent and abusive in the family.... I was suicidal.... I was so affected by what I saw and what was done to me ... it marked me all my life.

14.158 Forty nine (49) witnesses, 29 male and 20 female, reported having children of their own, with family size varying between one and eight children. The average family size was four children. The 49 witnesses reported having 173 children. The majority of witnesses reported that they reared their own children, with the exception of:

- Five (5) witnesses who reported that altogether 19 of their children had spent periods in out-of-home care.
- Three (3) female witnesses who reported that they had placed their first-born child for adoption.
- Two (2) female witnesses who reported that their children were reared by the children's biological fathers.

14.159 Many witnesses considered their inability to parent effectively to be a result of the deprivation and abuse they experienced during their own childhood:

I never really had a childhood, some days I wish I had I find myself playing with my own son now...crying ...I'm over-protective with my kids ... to be honest I can't picture myself without the kids ... I had to make a heart breaking decision to put ... (child) ... into voluntary care ... (the child is) ... going on the same path as myself ... I live for me kids.

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None of my children are living with me, some of them are in care, some of them are with their dad. I see them all... I need to be beside them. I like being near them, I can phone up anytime...

14.160 Twelve (12) witnesses, seven male and five female, gave accounts of being unable to demonstrate feelings of affection to their own children, having grown up in harsh environments without any affectionate bond themselves. One male witness commented ‘*I can’t walk over and just give them a hug, I have big trouble showing affection, I never knew what a hug was*’. Two (2) male witnesses described having particular difficulties showing affection to their sons and ‘*not being available*’ as fathers, which they believe to be the result of their own sexual abuse. A female witness describing the impact on her of institutional care commented:

It was an abnormal sort of growing up ...it was a very cold, soul-less place. I have a granddaughter now and she loves a cuddle and I think of her and I think now “who ever cuddled me when I was little, who ever put their arms around me?”. The nuns... there were so many of us, they probably didn’t have time but there were lay women there, they were just so cruel...

14.161 Witness reports of parenting were characterised by accounts of an inability to demonstrate feelings of love and affection, strenuous efforts to ensure their children were protected from harm, and ambivalent parent–child relationships. Many believed that separation, and the loss of experiences of family life with their own parents and siblings, the lack of a nurturing environment in childhood, combined with the abuse they experienced left them ill-equipped to parent successfully. Others described feelings of enduring sadness regarding the loss of a parent at an early age and being subsequently reared in a Children’s Home without a sense of security or attachment.

I couldn’t deal with my own family, my own children, I didn’t want to know. Childhood was very hard, very, very hard. I love me children, but bonding was very, very hard. I would never do nothing wrong to my children, I would never hurt them in that way.... I would shout or roar at them and would go, and maybe not come back for 7 or 10 days. That would be very damaging to them ... they are in care, they said I was not a proper father towards the children.... I feel angry, very, very angry towards institutions.

14.162 The following table illustrates the nature of the parent–child relationships, as described by 49 witnesses who had children:

Table 77: Relationship with Own Children – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Relationship with children*	Frequency reported by male witnesses	Frequency reported by female witnesses	Total witness reports
Reported normal	10	4	14
Unable to show affection	7	5	12
Overprotective	4	6	10
Harsh	2	4	6
Variable among children	4	3	7
Abusive	2	1	3
No comment	1	1	2
Total number of reports	30	24	54

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

*Witnesses could give more than one answer

14.163 Some witnesses stated that as a result of their own harsh treatment in childhood they made strenuous efforts to protect their children, resulting, at times, in their being overprotective parents. A number of witnesses expressed anger that the emotional abuse they experienced

was having a detrimental impact on the next generation as a consequence of their parenting and relationship difficulties.

- 14.164** Fourteen (14) witnesses, 10 male and four female, reported having generally good parent–child relationships despite encountering some periods of difficulty with one or other of their children. A number of witnesses commented that difficulties arose when their child was the same age as they were at the time they were abused. Many witnesses commented on the support and positive contribution of spouses who assisted them in their parental role and were understanding of the difficulties they encountered.
- 14.165** Seven (7) witnesses reported that their children had significant behavioural and emotional difficulties that required episodes of residential and day treatment in mental health and addiction counselling services. Four (4) witnesses reported the loss of children in tragic circumstances, including suicide and accidents.
- 14.166** Six (6) witnesses reported that the regimented and abusive environments they experienced in Children’s Homes contributed at times to harsh relationships with their own children. Five (5) other witnesses described having been physically abusive to their children. A small number of witnesses reported that contact with their adult children had been lost following episodes of abuse or neglect in their childhoods.
- 14.167** It was frequently remarked by witnesses that the difficulties they experienced as parents and the inability to show love and affection to their own children were overcome in their role as grandparents. Many witnesses reported having mutually rewarding and enjoyable relationships with their grandchildren.

Contact with family since discharge

- 14.168** The practice of separating boys and girls when they were admitted to out-of-home care in the pre-1970s was reported by witnesses to have contributed to the fragmentation of their families. The painful impact of being separated from siblings was experienced both during the witnesses’ time in the institutions and following discharge. Thirty (30) witnesses, 17 male and 13 female, reported feeling disconnected, having little contact with their siblings and other family members since their discharge from the Homes. A number of these witnesses reported feeling rejected by and alienated from their family members, which they believed was the result of separation and lack of contact in their childhood.
- 14.169** Twenty one (21) witnesses, 14 male and seven female, reported that contact with family members was frequently characterised by ambivalence and conflict. Many witnesses described having ongoing and close contact with a number of their siblings and almost no communication with others. Seventeen (17) witnesses gave accounts of receiving help and support from extended family members following their discharge, including grandmothers, aunts and uncles, in the absence of such assistance being available from parents and siblings.
- 14.170** Ten (10) witnesses had no contact with any family members, including four male and two female witnesses who had no information about their families in spite of their attempts to trace relatives.

Occupational and employment status

- 14.171** The majority of witnesses reported a history of full employment since their discharge from the Children’s Homes. Twenty (20) witnesses, 15 male and five female, reported being employed for 30 years or more. A further 13 witnesses, five male and eight female, were employed for 10 years or more. Thirty one (31) witnesses, 17 male and 14 female, reported being in full-time

employment at the time of their hearings. Table 78 illustrates the employment status of witnesses reported at their hearing:

Table 78: Witnesses' Employment Status at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Children's Homes

Employment status	Male	Female	Total witnesses
Employed	8	12	20
Retired	11	2	13
Disability income	2	1	3
Unemployed	8	2	10
Self-employed	6	2	8
Defence Forces	3	0	3
Working at home	0	4	4
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.172 The following table provides a breakdown of the witnesses' reports of their current occupational status at the time of their hearing:

Table 79: Witnesses' Occupational Status at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Children's Homes

Occupational status	Males	Females	Total Witnesses
Professional	0	1	1
Manual and technical	4	2	6
Non-manual	3	5	8
Skilled manual	11	2	13
Semi-skilled	8	3	11
Unskilled	12	8	20
Unavailable	0	2	2
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.173 Twenty (20) witnesses reported being employed in unskilled positions. Most had spent many years of their childhoods in residential facilities and reported that they were ill-equipped for any employment other than domestic positions or unskilled work. A number of these witnesses found employment in institutional settings as cleaners, waiters and porters and in the Defence Forces.

14.174 A number of witnesses commented that their lack of education while in the Children's Homes contributed to subsequent difficulties with employment. The table below illustrates the highest education level attended, but not in all instances completed, by both male and female witnesses:

Table 80: Highest Level of Education Attended – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Highest level of education	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Primary	16	9	25
Secondary	14	9	23
Third level	8	4	12
No education	0	1	1
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.175 The 12 witnesses who attended third-level education reported doing so as adults and a number reported having had years of successful employment, including careers in nursing, retailing, and management. One female witness reported that she never attended school.

14.176 Other witnesses described having difficulties with authority, which led to frequent changes of employment and periods of unemployment. A small number of these witnesses later established themselves in successful, long-term self-employed careers.

Accommodation

14.177 Forty seven (47) witnesses reported having stable housing arrangements at the time of their hearing, as shown in the following table:

Table 81: Accommodation of Witnesses at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Accommodation	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Owner occupiers	23	12	35
Local authority/ council housing	5	7	12
Private rented accommodation	4	2	6
With relatives	1	1	2
Sheltered housing	0	1	1
With friends	1	0	1
Hostel	1	0	1
Unavailable	3	0	3
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.178 A number of witnesses described earlier periods of unstable housing with frequent changes of address. Many had lived in temporary accommodation during the initial years following their discharge. Ten (10) witnesses, eight male and two female, reported having been homeless and living in transient accommodation facilities at some time in the past.

Health

14.179 Witnesses provided information to the Committee about their general health and well-being in the course of their hearings. For the purpose of writing this Report the Committee categorised the witnesses’ physical and mental health status as good, reasonable or poor based on their past and current health history. The following table illustrates the physical health status described by witnesses at the time of their hearings:

Table 82: Current Physical Health Status – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Physical health status	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Good	20	7	27
Reasonable	17	15	32
Poor	1	1	2
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.180 Most witnesses reported either good or reasonable physical health. There was a notable gender difference between the 20 male and seven female witnesses who described themselves as being in good physical health. Thirty two (32) witnesses stated that their health was reasonable, notwithstanding treatment currently or in the past for conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular, and thyroid and urinary problems, some of which were age related. Six (6) witnesses stated that they suffered recurrent back pain and four witnesses believed that their current hearing loss, thyroid conditions, and other ailments were linked with neglect of their healthcare as children in the Homes. Witnesses who described poor physical health had generally experienced long-standing ill-health.

14.181 In the course of their hearings witnesses also provided information about their mental health. Witnesses’ mental health status was categorised on the basis of the information they provided regarding their past and current well-being, and their need for psychiatric treatment and counselling services. Table 83 outlines witnesses’ current mental health status:

Table 83: Current Mental Health Status – Male and Female Children’s Homes

Mental health status	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Good	11	8	19
Reasonable	17	9	26
Poor	10	6	16
Total	38	23	61

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

14.182 Nineteen (19) witnesses described their mental health as good. They commented that generally they had been able to resolve the trauma associated with their childhood abuse in spite of occasional sadness. Some of those witnesses reporting that they benefited from counselling and assistance from mental health and other services, particularly in the early years following discharge.

14.183 Twenty six (26) witnesses were categorised as having reasonable mental health. Many of the male witnesses commented that they used alcohol to help them cope with difficult memories. A number stated that they were unable to talk openly to others and found discussion of their past experiences too traumatic and as a result had not used counselling or other services. A male witness commented that he managed to cope with his own depression and suicidal thoughts, stating: *‘I could never go that far... (suicide)... although I often think about it’*. Female witnesses in this group commented that in spite of periodic feelings of anxiety or depression they managed to cope with their difficulties with the assistance of ongoing personal and professional support.

14.184 The 16 witnesses whose mental health was described as poor gave accounts of frequent and lengthy admissions for inpatient psychiatric treatment, repeated episodes of self-harm and suicide attempts. Nine (9) witnesses reported that they had made one or more suicide attempt and three witnesses reported a history of substance abuse. A number of witnesses described enduring many years of depression, alcohol dependency and extreme anxiety. Some

commented that they were dependant on personal support services and required intensive ongoing assistance.

- 14.185** Two (2) witnesses, one male and one female, gave the following accounts of their history and the impact their experience of abuse has had on their adult lives:

You would try to block it out of your mind and get on with life but at night it would come, the nightmares.... Crying in bed at night, thinking back on what happened me, it never goes away Walking along the street... at night time, you always feared someone was going ...(pause) ... coming behind youI always go around with this carving knife in my pocket...cutting my arms was a way of letting the anger out...



I came back to nowhere.... I had nowhere to go. My sister took me in for a while.... I started to get panic attacks, I thought I was dying, I thought I had a brain tumour, the doctor kept on telling me I was alright, it's not physical. ... I was suicidal, they took me into ... a locked ward, I spent ...(many months)... there. I used to just lose control.... I took overdoses.... Then it...(details of abusive experiences)... started coming out and I started getting angry, I wouldn't do anything to anybody when I was angry, only to myself and would start cutting my arms ... it was my way of releasing.... They ... (hospital staff) ... said my problems were so deep in the past...

Effects on adult life

- 14.186** Many of the 38 male and 23 female witnesses described what they believed were the damaging consequences of their experiences of child abuse in Children's Homes. They described difficulties in many areas of their lives including health, family and social relationships and reported that their childhood experiences of abuse had multiple effects on their adult lives, as outlined in Table 84:

Table 84: Reported Effects on Adult Life – Male and Female Witnesses Children’s Homes

Male witnesses		Female witnesses	
Effects on adult life*	Number of reports	Effects on adult life*	Number of reports
Lack of trust	26	Lack of self-worth	20
Angry	19	Lack of trust	16
Counselling required	19	Abuse not easily forgotten	13
Loner	19	Counselling required	13
Suicidal feelings or attempts	19	Feeling different from peers	12
Alcohol abuse	16	Feeling isolated	12
Feeling different from peers	16	Suicidal feelings or attempt	10
Abuse not easily forgotten	14	Loner	8
Feeling isolated	14	Post-traumatic effect	8
Mood instability	14	Unable to show feelings to partner	8
Nightmares	14	Withdrawal	8
Anxious and fearful	13	Angry	7
Aggressive behaviour – verbal	12	Anxious and fearful	7
Lack of self-worth	11	Tearfulness	7
Unable to settle	11	Feelings related to being a victim	7
Feelings related to being a victim	10	Mood instability	7
Unable to show feelings to partner	10	Nightmares	6
Aggressive behaviour – physical	9	Overprotective of children	6
Sleep disturbance	9	Sleep disturbance	6
Unable to show feelings to children	9	Feelings related to being powerless	5
Post-traumatic effect	8	Issues of needing approval	5
Withdrawal	7	Unable to show feelings to children	5
Over harsh with children	6	Alcohol abuse	4
Aggressive behaviour – psychological	5	Find others with similar experiences	4
Tearfulness	5	Issues of self-blame	4
Issues of needing approval	5	Overly compliant behaviour	3
Overprotective of children	5	Sexual problems	3
Sexual problems	5	Aggressive behaviour – verbal	2
Issues of self-blame	4	Fear of failure	2
Feelings related to being powerless	3	Over harsh with children	2
Gender and sexual identity problems	3	Somatic symptoms	2
Thankful for what we have now	3	Aggressive behaviour – physical	1
Fear of failure	2	Aggressive behaviour – psychological	1
Overly compliant behaviour	2	Substance abuse	1
Somatic symptoms	2	Thankful for what we have now	1
Substance abuse	2	Unable to settle	1

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

n = 38 male and 23 female

*Witnesses could report more than one effect and male witnesses reported a wider variety of effects

14.187 The table indicates some gender differences. For instance most of the female witnesses reported issues related to feelings of self-worth compared with less than a third of the male witnesses. Half of the male witnesses reported that they were loners and experienced feelings of unresolved anger, compared with less than a third of the female witnesses.

14.188 Sixteen (16) witnesses described feelings of terror, anger and disconnectedness associated with childhood trauma. Others described the fear and enduring shame that sexual abuse generated in them as children and eight witnesses described ongoing psychological and sexual difficulties associated with their sexual abuse.

I didn't go home.... I just started wandering here and there. I went to ...named place of refuge.... I was 13 or 14. I stayed in hostels. Once I came out of there ...(Children's Home)... I went to hell on the drink, life was really difficult. My life was destroyed, as I get older it gets worse. I ended up in psychiatric hospitals, I used to cut myself up.... I would just get depressed and start thinking of the things that were done to me, it ...(experiences of sexual abuse)...would play on your mind. Then you would think of suicide, I tried it several times, I was sent to the hospital then. I was off drink for several years.... We were sent there ...(Children's Home)... to be corrected not to be abused like that. I still wake up at night, some nights I am afraid to go asleep at night, thinking ...(over 20)... years down the road that someone has just come into the room, thinking I am back at that place again, that this ...(sexual and physical abuse)... is happening all over again. Counselling has helped a good bit, but it can't really bring out what's happened to you, it can't take away what's happened to you.

14.189 Many witnesses commented on their limited potential in employment situations due to the neglect of their education. Others reported having difficulty with authority, never looking for promotion, being constantly vigilant and as one witness remarked in relation to the workplace 'I kept my head down'. A male witness who described continuing difficulties in many areas of his life stated:

Nearly every job I had I lost it over the drink because I couldn't handle it ... (memories of sexual abuse) ... I'd feel more relaxed with the drink otherwise I'd be as nervous as hell... I kind of block it out now, they are bad thoughts ... I just try and get on ... I came ... (to hearing) ... for someone to talk to, you see there is very few people you can talk to. I never tell anybody. I didn't tell her ... (spouse) ... most of it. I just told them ... (children) ... I was in an orphanage.

14.190 As previously reported male and female witnesses stated that their experience of abuse influenced their relationships, particularly as a result of their inability to trust, the sense of shame and the lack of confidence they have endured throughout their lives.

I couldn't really meet people ... I was so used to the orphanage, it was a confined place. It's hard to explain, you get very paranoid and all of a sudden you think someone is going to force you or something like that...

●

I didn't know how to behave with people outside ... I didn't feel good about myself. I had such an inferiority complex and I didn't know how to behave ... when I went to a party I'd sit in a corner ...

14.191 The separation from their parents and siblings and the difficulties encountered when re-establishing contact with their families following discharge was reported as a continued source of distress and anger for a number of witnesses. A female witness commenting on her attempts to re-establish a relationship with her mother stated:

I still wanted to get to know her. I still wanted to understand. I still wanted to be with her ... we just didn't get on ... all the anger came out ... there was never any closeness there, ever ever. It was so sad ...

- 14.192** Many witnesses reported a life-long history of difficulties coping with everyday life and socialisation. The reported difficulties included isolation, withdrawal, feeling different from their peers, and being unable to show affection to their partners and children. Approximately half of the witnesses reported having been assisted through counselling.
- 14.193** This section of the Report has summarised the experiences of the 61 witnesses who reported abuse in Children's Homes over a period of 73 years, the majority of whom were discharged after 1960.

