

Chapter 18

Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and other Out-of-home Settings

18.01 This chapter of the Confidential Committee report presents evidence from witnesses about a range of other settings that were outside the main groupings already covered in this Report. These included residential laundries, hostels, Novitiates, short-term residential services for children and adolescents, and other residential settings. The facilities were generally funded and managed either by the State or by voluntary agencies.

Witnesses

18.02 Twenty five (25) witnesses, 12 male and 13 female, made 26 reports of abuse in relation to 15 facilities, including five Novitiates, four residential laundries, and three hostels over a period of 52 years between 1948 and 2000. Sixteen (16) witnesses were either discharged, or left the settings of their own accord in the 1960s and four in the 1950s. Five (5) witnesses were discharged between 1970 and 2000.

18.03 Eight (8) of the reported facilities were located in Irish cities and seven were in provincial towns or rural areas.

18.04 Sixteen (16) witnesses reported that they had also been admitted to other institutions, including Industrial and Reformatory Schools, hospitals, and Children's Homes, 13 of them reported abuse in the other institutions. Six (6) witnesses reported that they had been in more than one Industrial School.

Social and demographic profile of witnesses

18.05 Family of origin, place of birth and current residence details will be differentiated by gender when there are notable differences, otherwise they are reported collectively. Nine (9) of the witnesses who reported abuse in residential work and other out-of-home settings were born in Dublin and the remaining 16 were from 10 other counties in Ireland.

18.06 At the time of their hearings six witnesses were over the age of 60 years, 15 were between 50 and 60 years and a further two were between 40 and 50 years. Two (2) witnesses were under 30 years of age.

18.07 Table 112 illustrates the marital status of witnesses' parents at the time of their birth, the majority of whom were reported to be married:

Table 112: Marital Status of Witnesses' Parents at Time of Birth – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Marital status of parents	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Married	11	8	19
Single	0	4	4
Separated	1	0	1
Co-habiting	0	1	1
Totals	12	13	25

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

18.08 Seventeen (17) witnesses reported the occupational status of their parents at the time of admission to out-of-home placement as unskilled. Four (4) witnesses reported their parents as occupied in managerial, clerical or skilled manual positions. Information is not available regarding the occupational status of the remaining four witnesses parents.¹

18.09 All 25 witnesses said they had siblings, 11 of whom had brothers or sisters in Industrial or Reformatory Schools and two others had siblings in Children's Homes.

Circumstances of admission

18.10 Witnesses gave accounts of a range of social circumstances prior to their admission, including being in the care of their parents or in out-of-home care. The average age of admission to the institutions was 14 years. Three (3) witnesses were admitted under 14 years of age.

I was being abused by my step-father. When I approached my mother, she went to the priest and the nuns and it was decided that I was the one to be sent off.... I was put into the laundry, I was only 10. The people there were horrified, they would say "what are you doing here, sure you're only a child?" The nun said "it's best you don't talk about this, your family will be disgraced". I was to forget about it...(sexual abuse)... and it wasn't to be discussed.... I came down with my case, it was tied with twine, and I was put into a laundry van. My mother said "why is she going in a laundry van? She is definitely going to get educated?" They told her I would get an education.

18.11 The typical length of stay in these institutions was relatively brief, compared with admissions to Industrial and Reformatory Schools and other facilities. The average length of admission was two years. Five (5) witnesses reported they were resident for less than one year. Witnesses reported being aged between 14 and 22 years on leaving the residential facility as shown. It should be noted that the accounts of abuse included in this report occurred when the witnesses were less than 18 years of age, in accordance with the provisions of the Acts.

- Seven (7) witnesses were 15 years or under.
- Four (4) witnesses were 16 years.
- Seven (7) witnesses were between 17 and 18 years.
- Seven (7) witnesses were between 19 and 22 years.

18.12 Ten (10) witnesses, one male and nine female, said they had been transferred from Industrial Schools to these settings and others had subsequent admissions to Industrial or Reformatory Schools. Two (2) other witnesses were transferred from a hospital and a Children's Home.

¹ 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, insofar as it was known.

18.13 Three (3) female witnesses said they were transferred to residential laundries from Industrial Schools following confrontations with religious staff whom they challenged about abuse of themselves or of their co-residents. Another female witness stated that she was transferred to a laundry at 13 years to work. She stated that she was told by the Sister in charge that she was being sent to work in order to compensate the Order as her mother had been unable to meet the required payments for her keep in the Industrial School.

18.14 Nine (9) witnesses reported being placed in residential settings from their family home by or with the support and consent of their parents or other family members. Five (5) male witnesses stated that they entered Novitiates with their parents' support in circumstances of financial hardship. They said that they learned about the opportunity of a religious life and receiving an education when members of particular religious Orders visited their primary schools to recruit boys to join their community. Four (4) female witnesses stated that they were placed in residential laundries or other work settings with the knowledge or support of parents or relatives in the context of poverty, death of a parent and personal or family crisis including familial abuse. Two (2) of these witnesses stated that they or their relatives were told, prior to admission, that they would receive an education that never materialised as they were involved from the outset in full-time work within the institution.

Me Dad died and we were that poor me mam went off to England to get a living, you couldn't get a living around there...(local area) I was with an aunt, we were at school but you had to buy everything and there wasn't the money. I was working in the fields, trying to help out, that's what I was mostly doing. A priest came by and he said I wasn't doing good at school and he said he would find me a good place. He rang my mother up in England and she was delighted, you know, a convent ...crying... she was grateful. My mother agreed to it, she said the nuns were so holy, they done good in there, I would get a good education and be well looked after.

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My mother and father would have wanted the best for me. I was happy as Larry, I'd be down the fields playing football. I'd have my lessons done because they said I was bright.... There was a lot expected of me.... The Brothers came around to the school, 4 of them came round, and sure when I seen the pitches,...(pictures of facilities in Novitiates)... the hurling and football I thought this was great. ... The only one in the school that was picked ... (selected to join Noviciate)... was myself. My mother and father were very poor, they sold a sow and a litter of bonbhs to kit me out.... I was reminded in the school that they were short of money and that really and truly I should be very grateful I was there. I was told that by Br ...X.... Going back that time to have someone... (in the family)... in the religious was a big thing. I was 13.

Record of abuse

18.15 Twelve (12) male and 13 female witnesses gave evidence of 26 reports of abuse in 15 institutional settings. One witness reported abuse in two institutions in this category. Witnesses reported all four types of abuse: physical and sexual abuse, neglect and emotional abuse, as defined by the Act. Thirteen (13) witnesses, five male and eight female, also reported abuse in Industrial and Reformatory Schools, in Children's Homes and hospital. Witness accounts of abuse were descriptions of single incidents of abuse or multiple episodes of abuse experienced over a period of time.

18.16 The number of witness reports of abuse in different residential facilities varied as follows:

- Five (5) residential facilities were the subject of two to five reports, totalling 16 reports.
- Ten (10) residential facilities were each the subject of single reports.

18.17 The most frequently reported abuse types were physical, sexual and emotional abuse, as follows:

- Fourteen (14) witnesses reported physical abuse.
- Fourteen (14) witnesses reported emotional abuse.
- Ten (10) witnesses reported sexual abuse.
- Eight (8) witnesses reported neglect.

18.18 Fourteen (14) witness reports referred to more than one type of abuse and to combinations of abuse, as shown in the following table:

Table 113: Abuse Types and Combinations – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Abuse types and combinations	Number of reports
Sexual	5
Physical, emotional and neglect	4
Physical	4
Emotional	3
Physical and sexual	2
Physical and emotional	2
Sexual and emotional	2
Neglect and emotional	2
Physical, sexual, neglect and emotional	1
Physical and neglect	1
Total	26

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

18.19 Twelve (12) witness reports were of single abuse types, either sexual, physical or emotional, and all other witnesses reported combinations of abuse types.

Physical abuse

The wilful, reckless or negligent infliction of physical injury on, or failure to prevent such injury to, the child.²

18.20 This section of the chapter presents evidence heard by the Committee regarding witnesses' experience of being physically abused and the lack of protection from physical harm while in these residential settings. The nature of physical abuse reported included being beaten with implements, punched, kicked, and subjected to bodily assaults.

18.21 The Committee heard evidence from 14 witnesses of physical abuse they experienced in seven institutions.

- Three (3) institutions were the subject of multiple reports, totalling 10 reports.
- Four (4) institutions were each the subject of single reports.

² Section 1(1)(a).

Description of physical abuse

18.22 Witnesses reported that factors precipitating physical abuse included attempts at resisting sexual abuse, disclosing abuse to parents, breaking the rule of silence, protecting co-residents from punishment, and general lack of control exercised by staff. Witnesses were beaten with sticks, hurleys, batons, keys and leather straps and stated that they were punched, kicked, forced to stand while taking meals, forced to kneel for long periods, locked out overnight, and having their hair cut off. The physical abuse occurred within different areas of the institutions' buildings including refectories, dormitories, bathrooms, yards and workrooms.

18.23 Five (5) male witnesses from one institution reported being severely beaten in an out-of-control manner. Two (2) witnesses described severe and unpredictable beatings all over the body. One witness reported being '*thrashed with a leather*', and another reported that '*they beat the lard out of me*'.

That night I got beaten up by the new staff... (lay staff member)... that came on.... He dragged me out of the bed and he started beating with this baton and he was kinda saying "you better not escape out of here" and he start whipping me across the legs, dragging me out of the bed, pulled me around the floor. He banged the side of me teeth off the bed and ... (I)... got a few wallops across the face. I got a right beating. He kept beating me, I don't know what kind of anger got into him, I couldn't understand the anger that came into him.... One of the lads roared "leave him alone".... I told ...lay ancillary worker ... the next morning, she asked me "what's wrong?" I had a cut lip, me teeth was chipped, my tooth was loose.

18.24 Two (2) institutions were each the subject of two reports of physical abuse. One male witness described an incident of violence when his attempts to avoid sexual abuse were stopped by a '*clattering around the face with open hands*' and having his head held in the toilet bowl.

18.25 Seven (7) female witness reports related to continuous hard physical work in residential laundries, which was generally unpaid. Two (2) witnesses said that the regime was '*like a prison*', that doors were locked all the time and exercise was taken in an enclosed yard. Working conditions were harsh and included standing for long hours, constantly washing laundry in cold water, and using heavy irons for many hours. One witness described working hard, standing in silence and being made to stand for meals and kneel to beg forgiveness if she spoke. Another witness stated that she was punched and hit as a threat not to disclose details of her everyday life working in the laundry to her family. Three (3) witnesses gave the following accounts of physical abuse:

Every morning we were up at 5 o'clock in the summer and 6 o'clock in the winter. We slaved all day.... They starved and worked us to death while they lived in luxury. The nuns were all very hard and nasty, they used to shave our hair off ...distressed... we had to suffer in silence. I hope no one has to suffer like us. We had nowhere to run or no one would believe you.... I often burned myself...(while working, ironing) ... but got no sympathy ...distressed.... One time I had a terrible arm, it didn't heal up, I had burned it and the dye of the uniform ran into it, and that was the first time I saw a doctor....

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You couldn't laugh or talk in there 'cos you were just battered. A nice nun in the convent talked to us, Sr ...X... got to hear about it and she just battered us, on the back of the hands, anywhere, and if she got the curtain rail that would go across you. It didn't matter what she had in her hand. She was like a Hitler ...crying.... My whole childhood was gone in that place.

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We were beaten regular, I have got a mark still on my back. Mth ...X... was the evil cow, and then there was the helpers that would hold you down while she was battering you and they would cut lumps ... out of your hair.... I was 11 ... years old. I was battered with a big belt both by the nun and helpers....

Injuries

- 18.26** Three (3) male witnesses reported that they had sustained physical injuries as a result of assault. One witness stated that his hand was caught in a door as he attempted to escape being sexually abused. Two (2) witnesses from another institution were punched and severely beaten, sustaining injuries to their noses, faces and backs. One witness reported that the assault on him stopped when co-residents intervened to protect him.

Reported abusers

- 18.27** Witnesses reported being physically abused by staff in the institutions and by older co-residents. It is possible that there is some overlap between those identified by name and those who were not named but identified by their role or function within the institution.
- 18.28** Three (3) religious staff, one male and two female, were named as perpetrators of physical abuse. Four religious staff, two male and two female, were not named but identified by witnesses as authority figures. One male lay care staff was identified by name and five other lay staff were identified by position, including a Resident Manager. The Committee heard two witness accounts of abuse by older co-residents one of whom commented that he believed the physical assault was instigated by the Resident Manager.

Sexual abuse

The use of the child by a person for sexual arousal or sexual gratification of that person or another person.³

- 18.29** This section presents the evidence of sexual abuse heard by the Committee from witnesses in residential training, work and other out-of-home facilities. The majority of reports were of contact sexual abuse, including rape and associated physical violence. Witnesses' evidence described both single incidents of sexual abuse and chronic abuse over an extended period. Some witnesses provided detailed accounts of the abuse they experienced. Other accounts were limited to clarifying the acute or chronic nature of the abuse and whether it was contact or non-contact abuse.
- 18.30** Ten (10) witnesses, eight male and two female, made 10 reports of being sexually abused in eight residential settings. Five (5) reports from male witnesses relate to abuse in Noviciates and three others relate to aftercare hostels and other residential facilities. One female witness reported being abused in an institution where she was employed as a 'live-in' domestic worker and another gave an account of being abused over an extended period by an older co-resident in a laundry.

Description of sexual abuse

- 18.31** The Committee heard eight witness reports of sexual abuse, including inappropriate fondling, masturbation, vaginal, oral and anal penetration with objects, oral/genital contact and rape. Witnesses reported that the abuse was associated with physical violence in circumstances such as when attempting to escape the abuser, as a threat against disclosure and as a component of the sexual assault. Two (2) witnesses described non-contact sexual abuse in the form of

³ Section 1(1)(b).

inappropriate questioning about sexual relationships and being watched while attending to personal hygiene.

- 18.32** Witnesses were sexually abused in a range of locations including, classrooms, recreation rooms, dormitory cubicles, toilets, sacristies, bedrooms, offices of religious and lay staff, and other locations outside the institution such as sports fields and sheds.
- 18.33** Five (5) witnesses described isolated incidents of abuse that happened in an opportunistic fashion over short periods of time. Five (5) other witnesses gave accounts of being abused over a period of up to three years, including the following:

We were living in a big dormitory, a kind of cubicle thing...he ... (named religious staff)... came down to me in the middle of the night and started talking to me, maybe once a week or twice a weekHe showed a bit of friendship to me, I remember getting ...(a gift) ... from him, I was delighted at the time.... I think I was going out of my mind, I couldn't correlate religion and sex...

- 18.34** Four (4) male witnesses reported being raped; in addition there were three reports of oral, vaginal and anal penetration with objects. Two (2) of the witnesses reported being repeatedly raped over a period up to two years by religious superiors who were involved in pastoral, educational and sporting activities. Two (2) other witnesses reported being raped by a visiting professional and by a lay staff member in a position of authority.
- 18.35** Witnesses stated that physical violence, intimidation and threats were used in order to force and restrain them while sexual abuse was perpetrated. Two (2) male witnesses stated that the force used in sexual abuse caused bleeding and injury. Another male witness reported that his sexual abuse by two religious staff was accompanied by violence and inducements. He stated that in order to avoid persistent sexual abuse he was constantly vigilant and careful not to be caught alone with the abuser. He described placing himself with others in the most public position possible in order to protect himself.
- 18.36** Four (4) other male witnesses described contact sexual abuse including forced masturbation by the abuser, fondling of genitalia, and digital penetration.

Br ...X... he escorted me to the dressing room. He closed and bolted the door. He started by rubbing my knee first. He then started fondling my private parts. He then masturbated me and made me masturbate him. ... I felt so bad, ashamed.

- 18.37** One female witness gave an account of being sexually abused over a three-year period by an older female co-resident who was otherwise kind to her. The witness described being isolated from her peers and being threatened that she would be sent away if she ever told anyone about the abuse. Another female witness was sexually abused by masturbation and fondling by a priest in the institution where she worked.

Reported abusers

- 18.38** The Committee heard evidence from 10 witnesses of being sexually abused by 12 staff and others, including an older resident. Eleven (11) of the abusers were male, five of whom were identified by name. Others were identified by their reported position or status in relation to the institution, as outlined in the following table:

Table 114: Position and Number of Reported Sexual Abusers – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Position of reported physical abusers	Males	Females
Religious		
- Authority figure	5	0
- Teacher	2	0
- External priest	1	0
Lay		
- Resident Manager	1	0
Visiting professional	1	0
Co-resident	1	1
Total	11	1

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 18.39** Four (4) witnesses gave accounts of rape and violent assault by four named abusers, of whom three were religious Brothers, in addition to a visiting lay professional. Six (6) male religious in positions of authority, two of whom were priests, were reported by witnesses to have abused them by masturbation, fondling and voyeurism. The lay individuals reported by witnesses as perpetrators of rape were identified as a Resident Manager, and a visiting professional. Two (2) witness accounts were heard of sexual abuse by co-residents.

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.⁴

- 18.40** The witness reports refer to neglect of education, health, welfare and safety and the lack of protection from harm. Witnesses reported that these experiences had an impact on their physical and emotional health and welfare, both at the time and in later life.

Description of neglect

- 18.41** The main areas of neglect reported by witnesses from these residential settings were lack of safety and protection from abuse, neglect of developmental and health needs, including neglect of education, inadequate supervision of everyday care, age inappropriate work, and lack of adequate food. Witnesses also said that there was a lack of preparation for transition to independent living following discharge.
- 18.42** Eight (8) witnesses, two male and six female, made reports of neglect in relation to seven institutions. One institution was the subject of two reports and the remaining six institutions were each the subject of single reports.
- 18.43** Five (5) witnesses reported that food was inadequate and insufficient, three of whom described being constantly hungry or 'starving'.

You got bread and dripping. You could not eat it, but it was left there and after 3 days of no food you'd eat it.

⁴ Section 1(1)(c) as amended by section 3 of the 2005 Act.

18.44 Three (3) witnesses stated that their health was neglected. One witness reported that when he was ill his requests for medical attention were ignored and he subsequently required emergency surgery. Two (2) female witnesses reported neglect of other aspects of their healthcare, including no treatment for injuries and burns.

18.45 Four (4) female witnesses reported that their education, social development and emotional well-being were neglected as they were constantly forced to work without pay for long hours, with limited time for education or recreation. The lack of safety, adequate food and a supportive educational environment was frequently commented by witnesses. The following witness accounts refer to areas of neglect already mentioned:

They called it education, you learned Irish and religion, but none of us could pick it up. There you were, standing up by the wall and you'd get battered again. How could you learn? It was the house of horrors, everyone screaming at night, how can you learn? You were terrified, absolutely terrified. You were "a dope" and "a dunce" and ... (they said)... your mother was no good. ... Then you would go up to the convent and you would be washing their pots, scrubbing the floors. It was like manna there, ...(they had)... the best of everything, their food, ... and you would be starving. I got ...(ill)... I was locked in a room for 3 days. She ...(religious Sister)... would throw you food on the floor like you were a dog...



The first day I was shown the laundry and the next day I was put in it... I did starching, I did priests' cloaks, you know the long white things they wear? I did collars, you had to keep ironing them until they become real stiff. There was a little wooden thing you could stand on.... There was a little bit of relief that you got a night's sleep ... but you knew it was wrong that I wasn't going to school.

18.46 Two (2) male witness reports in relation to one institution described a bleak atmosphere where there was no daily routine. They commented that there was no structure, education or activity programme for residents who were generally unsupervised for long periods. They reported being abused by both staff and co-residents due to the lack of supervision by the Resident Manager.

18.47 Witnesses reported that the transition to independent living was difficult due to the isolation from the outside world and lack of preparation for discharge. Four (4) witnesses stated that they were provided with no life skills and no aftercare on leaving the residential institution. A number described being vulnerable to further abuse in circumstances where they had no support, they were confused and unsettled in work and in their accommodation. Witnesses also gave accounts of being neglected and abandoned in some instances by both their family and the institution.

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.⁵

18.48 This section describes witness evidence of abuse by emotional deprivation, exposure to constant fear and a lack of safety and protection. Emotional abuse refers to both actions and inactions by religious and lay staff who had responsibility for the care and safety of residents and was described as constant and pervasive. Witnesses believed this abuse contributed to difficulties in their social, emotional and physical functioning at the time and was identified by them as negatively affecting their psychological well-being at the time and in their later life.

⁵ Section 1(1)(d) as amended by section 3 the 2005 Act.

Description of emotional abuse

18.49 The emotional abuse reported by 13 witnesses, four male and nine female, included deprivation of contact with a child and other family members, loss of personal identity, social isolation, constant fear, deprivation of liberty, public humiliation, loss of affection and secure relationships. The Committee heard evidence of verbal abuse including ridicule, public criticism and denigration.

18.50 Ten (10) institutions were the subject of 14 reports of emotional abuse by 13 witnesses, as follows:

- Three (3) institutions were collectively the subject of seven reports.
- Seven (7) institutions were each the subject of single reports.

Public humiliation and personal denigration

18.51 Ten (10) witnesses, three male and seven female, reported that they were emotionally abused by being publicly humiliated and/or demeaned in the following manner: by removal of items of clothing in public signifying 'disgrace', having to make public confessions, and being ridiculed in public for bedwetting. '*There would be a big placard stuck on your back "wet the bed" stuck on it, and there would be a placard out in the yard, a prison yard, and your name would be stuck on that.*'

18.52 A witness reported that she was ridiculed and shamed for three days as a punishment for breaking crockery. Others described public ridicule for breaking the rule of silence. Another witness described having to make a public Confession each month in front of his peers as punishment for disrupting a class and a female witness gave the following account of her humiliation:

Down in the laundry you slaved all day. Most of the day was strict silence.... Sr X... would sit on the throne and God help you if you broke your silence. She would report you to Mth ...Y... and you would have to stand when you went in for your food, your chair was taken away and you ate off the floor.... After 3 days you would have to kneel in front of Mth ...Y... and you would have to say these words, I will never forget them: "I beg almighty God's pardon, Our Lady's pardon. Pardon, my companions, pardon for the bad example I have shown". I would then take a bow and ask her could I have my seat back.

18.53 Both male and female witnesses commented on the difficulties they experienced when they were leaving the institutions. A male witness stated that there was 'a label of shame' attached to those leaving Novitiates and that the remaining residents were told that those who left had their 'lives destructed' and subsequently lived in poverty.

Fear

18.54 Nine (9) witnesses were constantly fearful in anticipation of episodes of further abuse. Three (3) male witnesses from one institution commented that they were vigilant in an environment of threat that was unpredictable and disorganised, where they felt trapped and powerless.

It was a big ... (building) There was one big room with nothing in it at the time, there was nothing for the lads.. The ...lay authority figure... wielded the baton, he would say "tell me who done it or yous are all getting it".... It was bleak, no pictures, no TV, nothing. He got me with a bunch of keys and he paralyzed me ...distressed... he got me there ...(demonstrated being punched)... with the bunch of keys.... I later got lashed, he beat me all over... (on the)...legs, back.

- 18.55** The fear of being sent to a more severe environment as punishment was a constant threat for a number of witnesses who had previously been transferred and for others who were aware such transfers were possible.

It was clear you were there for the rest of your life. The problem was there was a fear hanging over you because if you went to a Sister to ask for a job outside you could get sent to a worse place. There was a worse place ... that was known about...

- 18.56** One witness also described having to care for babies, including a terminally ill infant, without support, supervision or training. She regarded these expectations as abusive.

Loss of liberty and identity

- 18.57** Six (6) female witnesses who were placed in residential laundries reported that the loss of liberty, social isolation and the deprivation of identity had a traumatic impact on them. Friendships were discouraged or forbidden, communication was severely limited by the rule of silence and doors were constantly locked. Two (2) witnesses stated that restrictions on their liberty contributed to a feeling of being treated like a prisoner. They described their punishment for breaking the rule of silence as having their head shaved and being made to take meals separately from their peers.

When I got there they... (religious staff)... took all your clothes off ...crying.... Cut all your hair off and bandaged you ... (breasts)... up so that you wouldn't look like a girl, because your body was sin and belonged to the devil.



I was locked up in the...laundry, 6 years I was there. I was told I wasn't capable of holding down a job. I was put in the middle of older and middle aged women, I cried for weeks and weeks on end, I was a nobody...I was 16.... I was locked away, working 6 days a week in the laundry and in the kitchen on Sunday.... I was never beaten there or name- called.... It was like a prison, the very same as a prison, I done nothing... (wrong)...

- 18.58** Two (2) female witnesses commented that when they were admitted to different institutions at 15 years of age they were 'given' a name and that their own name was no longer used.

On the day of admission ... the nun said to me "from today on your name is ...X... (not own name)... don't tell anyone where you came from or who you are".

- 18.59** One witness reported that, having been observed talking with boys, she was not allowed out of the institution for two years except under supervision to attend healthcare appointments.

Loss of affection and attachment

- 18.60** The lack of affection and opportunity for attachment was reported by six witnesses who commented on living a suppressed life without adequate and safe care, closeness or demonstration of affection. Witnesses reported feeling disconnected from their family and in some instances were forbidden to establish friendships with co-residents. The lack of positive regard or words of approval was frequently commented on.

- 18.61** Three (3) female witnesses reported that many of their older co-residents who had given birth were constantly denigrated. The 'constant warning against men' and the loss of opportunity for age-appropriate social development had a negative impact on their ability to establish relationships later.

Deprivation of family contact

- 18.62** Eight (8) witnesses reported being deprived of contact with their families or relatives. Four (4) male witnesses stated that when they were in Novitiates they were not allowed contact with their own family members. The deprivation extended to a restriction on mail and the exclusion of their parents from any involvement in decisions regarding their health, welfare or education. A witness commented that he was '*firmly dissuaded from an ongoing relationship with my parents*'. Another male witness commented that it was forbidden to have pens and paper and another remarked that contact with parents was referred to as '*scandalous*'. Others described the restrictions placed on communication:

Your letters were read... (by religious staff)... going out and coming in.... One time I wrote a letter ...(saying) ... "I have a very bad headache today" ... I got the letter back...(and was told by religious staff)... "don't be bothering your mother".... It was fierce unhappiness, you couldn't tell anyone... The pressure not to leave was fierce heavy...



Once a month you would be made write a letter. They would be standing over you, everyone wrote the same, you couldn't tell ... (what was happening).... You were in there and under them and that was it, your family wasn't let near you....

- 18.63** A female witness reported that her child, who had been in the same institution with her as an infant was later placed in foster care. The witness stated that she was not consulted about the placement and that the arrangements were made without her consent or knowledge.

Knowledge of abuse

- 18.64** The pervasive and public nature of abuse in some institutions, the fact that it was on occasion administered by more than one person raised awareness among staff and residents. Witnesses believed that the structure of the work and the daily routine of some institutions were known to many, both internally and externally. Witnesses gave accounts of being verbally abused themselves in front of others and of observing others being humiliated, threatened and physically punished. Witnesses also gave accounts of disclosing the abuse they experienced both within and outside the institutions. The investigation and response to disclosures of abuse varied.
- 18.65** One witness reported that co-residents were aware of his abuse and intervened to stop a lay staff member physically assault him. Two (2) witnesses, who were abused by more than one person simultaneously, believed that the lay Resident Manager instigated staff and residents to abuse co-residents physically.

Disclosure of abuse and outcome

- 18.66** Nine (9) witnesses, three male and six female, reported that they disclosed the abuse both within and outside the institution. Three (3) female witnesses reported telling family members, others told co-residents. Two (2) female witnesses were punished by staff when they spoke about sexual and physical abuse. Another witness stated that she was believed and removed from the institution when she informed a family member of her abuse. A female witness reported that she was physically abused and threatened by a religious Sister in the presence of her mother as she attempted to talk about what happened to her:

I said I will have to tell her ... (witness's mother)... about me not getting educated, that's when I got a few little thumps. She ... (religious Sister)... punched me into the stomach first, and stamped on my toes and said "don't tell your mother you are not getting education, your night classes are starting soon". I wanted to be able to read and write ...

(Witness reported receiving no further education).... *She says "if you say anything to your mother your life will be made unbearable".... I was 10 ... (years old)....*

18.67 Four (4) witnesses reported that their disclosures initially led to further punishment and thereafter in three instances it also led to some protective action. Two (2) witnesses were transferred and protected by religious staff members. In one instance the witness believed a report was made to external authorities.

18.68 Two (2) male witnesses gave accounts of being raped in circumstances of disclosure. One witness described confiding in a religious Superior that he was sexually abused prior to entering the Novitiate, he reported that he was subsequently raped by this Brother. Another witness stated that he was sexually assaulted by a Resident Manager who was investigating a prior physical assault by another staff member:

He ... (lay Resident Manager)... took me into another room and asked me what was going on ... (inquiring about physical assault by other staff).... I was roaring and crying. All of a sudden he slipped his hand down the back of me trousers ...witness described digital penetration.... He hurt me and after that I was bleeding. He hurt me he did, I didn't know what was going on. It was the man in charge who done that....

18.69 A witness reported that she was not believed and no action was taken when she told an external professional that she was deprived of her freedom and age-appropriate socialisation in the institution.

Positive experiences

18.70 Fifteen (15) witnesses reported that aspects of their experiences in these out-of-home placements were positive, and they had some good memories of their time in institutional care. Five (5) witnesses reported that the general routine including educational, recreational and social activities was positive and enjoyable.

18.71 Two (2) witnesses reported that kind nuns supported them, provided occasional treats, and facilitated excursions outside the institutions. Two (2) male witnesses commented that, notwithstanding the sexual abuse they experienced, they also had positive encounters with their abusers. Other witnesses valued the opportunity for friendships with co-residents while in the institutions.

18.72 Many witnesses reported that visits from their parents and contact with family were valuable and sustained them while they were in the institutions. Others commented that any contact with the outside world was appreciated.

18.73 Four (4) witnesses reported that the institutions provided them with respite and protection from the physical or sexual abuse they had experienced prior to their admission while in the care of their families.

Current circumstances

18.74 The Act enabled the Committee to hear both evidence of child abuse and the continuing effects on those who suffered abuse. In the course of their hearings witnesses provided information about their social circumstances, relationships, and the enduring effects of their abusive experiences on their psychological, emotional and physical health. This section contains some unavoidable overlap with the details of 13 witnesses who also reported abuse in other institutions.

18.75 Ten (10) witnesses reported that they returned to their family home when they left the residential facility. A number of the witnesses described difficulties reintegrating with their family and left home within a short period. Four (4) of the 10 witnesses stated that they were sexually or physically abused by family members when they returned home.

18.76 Two (2) witnesses gave accounts of being placed in work situations by religious staff and seven others were transferred to Industrial or Reformatory Schools or residential laundries. Others described periods of homelessness and early involvement in criminal activity on leaving the institution.

Relationships

18.77 Eighteen (18) witnesses reported having difficulties establishing stable adult relationships. They described particular difficulties in relation to trust, intimacy and safe partnerships that were free of violence.

I used to be roaring and bawling after I married...it was the first bit of love I was ever shown in my life. I do try to be with people and get in contact with them, but something gets in the way, I can't do it...

18.78 Many witnesses gave accounts of ambivalent, unstable and disrupted relationships characterised by conflict, abuse and unhappiness. Six (6) witnesses gave accounts of marital violence, three of whom reported having histories of criminal convictions. Eleven (11) witnesses reported that they were divorced or had separated from their original partner or spouse and a number of those witnesses were in new relationships at the time of their hearing. Five (5) witnesses reported a happy or stable marriage lasting many years, or a happy second partnership.

Parenting

18.79 Nineteen (19) witnesses reported having children of their own. A number of witnesses commented that relationships with their children who were born later in the witnesses' lives were less conflicted as they had achieved a greater degree of stability in their lives over the years. Many witnesses who reported having their own children described variable parenting relationships over different stages of their children's development.

I did the best with what I had, which wasn't a whole lot ...I feel guilty and I will do till the day I die...It was partly my fault for the kids turning out that way, but I had no role model as a mother I knew no better.... She...(daughter)... blames me for everything that went wrong in her life, she says I was never there for her....The poor kids missed out on so much, I did not know how to hug or kiss or cuddle them...

18.80 Seven (7) witnesses described having difficulties, including being unable to show affection, being harsh, and at times abusive when their children were young. These difficulties were said to have contributed to the subsequent loss of contact with children. Four (4) witnesses reported that they were not involved in rearing their own children. Two (2) of these witnesses had children placed for adoption and two others had children who were reared in out-of-home care.

18.81 Five (5) witnesses reported enjoying stable and happy relationships with their children.

18.82 Four (4) witnesses reported that their children had difficulties related to alcohol or drug addiction, and two others stated that their children were 'in and out' of prison.

They had it terrible with me. One of them is a pure junkie and the other has a problem with the drink, I think he has HIV. His children are in care. I never told them any of me

problems. She ...(his spouse)... used to hide the kids when I'd come in with the drink, I'd be roaring and shouting.

Occupational and employment status

18.83 At the time of their hearing most witnesses were or had been employed for a substantial period of their lives. Table 115 illustrates the employment status of witnesses at the time of their hearing:

Table 115: Witnesses' Employment Status at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Employment status	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Employed	3	3	6
Retired	0	3	3
Disability income	2	2	4
Unemployed	4	1	5
Self-employed	2	1	3
Working at home	1	3	4
Total	12	13	25

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

18.84 Four (4) of the witnesses who were unemployed described a history of alcohol/drug abuse and/or reported that they had served a period in prison. Others reported that they had periods of employment but were unable to settle, had difficulties with authority in the workplace or with peers, and as a result they changed jobs frequently. A number of witnesses reported that they had been successful in their own businesses where they valued their autonomy and had control over their work situation. Others sought work where they were isolated and did not have to mix with colleagues: *'It was after all the staff left, I had a cleaning job everyone was gone and I was on my own, it suited me that way, I didn't mix.'*

18.85 The following table illustrates witnesses' occupational status⁶ at the time of their hearing:

Table 116: Witnesses' Occupational Status at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Occupational status	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Professional	0	1	1
Non-manual	3	2	5
Semi-skilled	1	1	2
Unskilled	5	9	14
Managerial	2	0	2
Skilled manual	1	0	1
Total	12	13	25

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

18.86 More than half the witnesses were categorised as unskilled, a number of them reported that they had received an inadequate education and that their employment opportunities were limited. Nine (9) witnesses reported that they were still working at the time of their hearing.

⁶ 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.

Accommodation

- 18.87** The majority of witnesses reported having stable housing arrangements, including more than half who owned their own homes. The following table outlines witnesses' accommodation type reported by them at the time of their hearing:

Table 117: Accommodation of Witnesses at Time of Hearing – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Accommodation	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Owner Occupiers	5	9	14
Local authority/council housing	1	2	3
Private rented accommodation	1	0	1
Institution	1	0	1
With friends	1	0	1
Unavailable	3	2	5
Total	12	13	25

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 18.88** Four (4) witnesses reported that they had periods of homelessness or had spent periods of time in transient accommodation.

Health

- 18.89** Witnesses provided information about their general health and well-being either directly or in the context of describing other aspects of their lives in the course of their hearing. 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 provided by them at their hearing.

- 18.90** The following table describes the current status of witnesses' physical health:

Table 118: Current Physical Health Status – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Physical health status	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Good	6	5	11
Reasonable	4	4	8
Poor	1	4	5
No record	1	0	1
Total	12	13	25

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

- 18.91** Witnesses whose health was categorised as good described a range of arthritic, bronchial or vascular conditions that were not considered by them to be debilitating. Those witnesses who described reasonable physical health reported having conditions associated with arthritis, circulation and back pain. Five (5) witnesses who described poor physical health reported histories of hypertension and digestive disorders that had a significant impact on their day-to-day lives.

I got lots of complications nervous tummy, that's tension. I'm on tablets for blood pressure and the tension...

- 18.92** Witnesses described considerable mental health difficulties that in many instances continued to affect their everyday lives. The following table provides an overview of the mental health status described by witnesses:

Table 119: Current Mental Health Status – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Mental health status	Males	Females	Total witnesses
Good	1	3	4
Reasonable	6	4	10
Poor	5	6	11
Total	12	13	25

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

18.93 Four (4) witnesses who described good mental health reported that their early adult lives were marked by *'turmoil'*, including unplanned pregnancies, suicide attempts, and episodes of depression. Those who said they were now living more fulfilled and independent lives stated that among the factors that had contributed to their recovery were receiving counselling, hearing apologies issued by their abusers and having their abuse acknowledged.

18.94 The witnesses whose mental health was categorised by the Committee as reasonable based on the information provided reported suffering occasionally with anxiety, depression and problems related to alcohol abuse. Witnesses also described feelings of sadness and resentment about past abuse that at times led to tearfulness. Many witnesses reported that these concerns continued to negatively effect their lives notwithstanding their attempts to suppress painful memories.

18.95 The 11 witnesses whose mental health was categorised as poor reported a history of depression, repeated suicide attempts, alcohol abuse and repeated hospital admissions. They described high levels of anxiety, sleep disturbance, ongoing suicidal thoughts and attempts. Half of those witnesses reported requiring continued medication. Other aspects of mental health difficulties described were feelings of paranoia, volatility and at times feeling *'tortured'* with flashbacks. The witnesses reported that their experiences of childhood abuse continued to affect their lives, contributing to trauma and ill health that impacted on their family and work relationships.

I was very ill, I was hospitalised...I would be very edgy...the doctor asked me a few questions. He recommended me to go to see the psychiatric unit.... I have been attending counselling since, I am on medication...

18.96 More than half the witnesses who reported abuse in residential work and other settings reported episodes of self-harm and suicidal thoughts; six had attempted to take their own lives.

Effects on adult life

18.97 Nineteen (19) witnesses described ongoing distress and difficulty coping with their personal, family and work lives. They reported that they continued to suffer with a range of problems associated with the trauma of their abuse. One female witness gave an account of a recurring nightmare where she *'is locked there for life'*; her previous experience of being forced to stay in a closed institution was described as having had an enduring effect on her adult life.

18.98 The following table illustrates the effects on their lives described by 12 male and 13 female witnesses. They are not mutually exclusive and were not prioritised by witnesses.

Table 120: Reported Effects on Adult Life – Male and Female Residential Laundries, Novitiates, Hostels and Other Out-of-home Settings

Male witnesses		Female witnesses	
Effects on adult life*	Number of reports	Effects on Adult Life*	Number of reports
Counselling required	9	Lack of trust	9
Alcohol abuse	8	Mood instability	8
Suicidal feelings or attempt	8	Suicidal feelings or attempts	8
Lack of trust	7	Counselling required	7
Aggressive behaviour – physical	6	Nightmares	7
Angry	6	Angry	6
Loner	6	Tearfulness	6
Mood instability	6	Feelings related to being a victim	6
Post-traumatic effect	5	Lack of self-worth	6
Aggressive behaviour – psychological	4	Abuse not easily forgotten	5
Aggressive behaviour – verbal	4	Anxious and fearful	5
Feeling different from peers	4	Feeling isolated	5
Gender and sexual identity problems	4	Loner	4
Nightmares	3	Unable to show feelings to children	4
Sexual problems	3	Unable to show feelings to partner	4
Sleep disturbance	3	Feeling different from peers	3
Abuse not easily forgotten	2	Sleep disturbance	3
Anxious and fearful	2	Unable to settle	3
Fear of failure	3	Withdrawal	3
Feeling isolated	3	Aggressive behaviour – verbal	2
Feelings related to being a victim	2	Alcohol abuse	2
Feelings related to being powerless	2	Feelings related to being powerless	2
Issues of needing approval	3	Issues of self-blame	2
Over harsh with children	2	Over harsh with children	2
Unable to show feelings to partner	2	Overprotective of children	2
Withdrawal	2	Aggressive behaviour – psychological	1
Tearfulness	1	Issues of needing approval	1

Source: Confidential Committee of CICA, 2009

*Witnesses could report more than one effect

18.99 The Committee heard accounts from many witnesses of difficulties settling in employment or relationships following their discharge, which in many instances continued through their later adult lives. They described frequent movement between Ireland and the UK, life-long isolation and loss of family contact.

When I came out I was like a wild cat, I did not know what way to turn.... My life is destroyed. I never go outside the door...



I used to go down with the drink, I kept moving jobs.... All my life I blamed myself, I had the guilt of it....When I realised I was a victim, in counselling, in the last few years up to that I blamed myself....I blame myself for not being that friendly with any of my brothers and sisters....

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Once you have been there ... (abused)... you never get out of their sights. I never come back since the day I left this country....

- 18.100** Witnesses gave accounts of physical or verbal aggression that affected their relationships. Others described enduring feelings of anger and reported that their abusive experiences are not easily forgotten.

When I drank no one could ever hurt me, no one could physically hurt me again. I drank like a fish.... I'd get terrible flashbacks ... (to episodes of sexual abuse with violence)... and then I'd get panic attacks. I had no respect for myself.... I had numerous hospitalizations ...described attempts at self-harm.... I ended up in the ... (homeless shelter).... There's a child ... that I haven't seen for ... years. There was no point because of the drink.

- 18.101** All male witnesses who reported abuse in Novitiates stated that they left the religious Communities as young adults. They gave accounts of feeling disconnected for many years and had difficulties settling in work, relationships and accommodation. Three (3) witnesses described experiencing shame as having '*let the whole family down*' or that they had brought shame on both themselves and their families. One male witness commented that he found it difficult to live in Ireland with the label of having failed to complete religious training. Witnesses reported that treatment for depression, alcohol abuse, and issues related to trust and anger contributed to more settled lives and relationships in later years.

- 18.102** Fifteen (15) witnesses reported that they required counselling and therapy currently or in the past, a number of whom described the benefit for themselves and for their families.

My counsellor, she was a life-saver really. She understands, she was very conscious of the fact of the effect it could have on me. She is the one person I don't feel ashamed with, I felt ashamed most of my life, I felt bad most of my life. I'm working hard at not feeling bad again.... When I walk up the street I'm still very much on the edge....

- 18.103** Six (6) male witnesses reported that they had histories of involvement in criminal activity and associated violence, four of whom gave accounts of having served custodial sentences. These witnesses each reported being abused in more than one out-of-home facility as children.

...Thirty five years ago this happened to me.... I know I'm a decent person or I was a decent person until I was 14 years of age, I didn't know anything. I just feel bitter and resentful, why I couldn't have a better life, a better marriage and do the things a father wants to be? I'll never be their father because I'm not around.... It carried with me all my life, the violence, which I'm not proud of...

- 18.104** Difficulties in work situations, overcoming poor self-image, lack of self-worth and educational disadvantage was commonly reported. Female witnesses described being anxious, fearful, lacking trust and having episodes of tearfulness. A number of those who had experienced abuse in laundries and other residential facilities described effects such as claustrophobia, sleep disturbance, enduring anger, and shame related to having been '*inside an institution*'. Other witnesses described feelings of guilt and self-blame, which in some instances led them to feel that they were responsible for the sexual and other abuse they had suffered:

I couldn't have a man who showed friendship to me. Every time you had a good job I moved....There was a man who ... (offered assistance with employment)...I couldn't trust him. That happened a lot of times in my life...

18.105 A number of witnesses commented to the Committee that the effects of their childhood abuse 'are still felt', and as one witness reported; 'for several years I had nightmares of being drawn back to the Institution'. Others remarked that coping with memories of childhood abuse is a constant struggle:

The older I get I find these years haunt me, I will carry it to the grave with me.... The nuns made you feel as if you're a nobody and you never have any roots.... As the years go by you try not to be spiteful, I try not to be bitter. ... I have bad days and then I have good days.