# CLANN: IRELAND'S UNMARRIED MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN: GATHERING THE DATA

### **Statement of Witness 18**

**Reference Code:** CLANN/WIT18 Status: **Boarded Out Person** Institution(s)/Agencies: West Cork County Home; Regional Health Board. Date: 30<sup>th</sup> May 2016 Records/Papers included: Yes **Access Conditions:** Anonymised statements freely are available to the public. **Conditions Governing Reproduction:** Statements can be reproduced, however

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the citation below must be used at all



#### WITNESS STATEMENT OF

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- 1. I make this statement for the purpose of providing evidence to the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation established by the Irish Government pursuant to Section 3 of the Commissions of Investigation Act 2004.
- 2. Attached to this statement is an exhibit marked which contains various copy documents. References to page numbers in this statement are to pages in
- 3. I make this statement as a person who spent time in a Mother and Baby Home and was then boarded out.

#### CIRCUMSTANCES OF MY BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE

- I was born on 1952 in West Cork County Home, Cork (Pages 1-4). I was released from the home when I was aged 5, on 1956. As far as I am aware I was never put up for adoption. The only record I have from the home is my birth certificate. I have tried asking for other information, but I was simply pushed from one person to another (Pages 5-16). The home told me that they haven't got records as they did not keep records then.
- 5. My mother was admitted to the home on 1951. She was pregnant with me at the time. She did not leave the home until 1956. I was with my mother in the home during this period. As I was very young I only have a vague recollection of my mother. I remember her crying and saying she wanted to get out of the home.
- I was baptised whilst at the home, as evidenced by my entry in the Record of Births (Page 4) which states I was baptised in 1952. I obtained a copy of this document from the Health and Safety Executive after I submitted a Freedom of Information Request.
- 7. I do not believe my mother would have given informed consent for me to have been taken away from her. I do not think she would have had a choice.
- 8. Shortly after my birth, I believe a surgical procedure was performed on me. I do not know what the procedure was designed to achieve. It may have been a circumcision but in any case it was very badly executed and adversely affected my development during puberty. The procedure has ultimately led to my sexual organs failing to develop and function properly. This procedure has had a profound and lasting negative effect on me. Naturally I find this very difficult to talk about but feel it is important that the Commission knows the truth. I am unaware if baby boys were routinely circumcised at the West Cork County Home, but think it is unlikely that I am the only male survivor to have suffered in this way.
- 9. I wrote letters to the following institutions to enquire about the circumstances of my birth and to ask for written records:
  - (a) The Heath Service Executive (Exhibit B), and
  - (b) The Mercy Congregational Archives (Exhibit C).

However, I have been largely unable to gather further information.

#### CIRCUMSTANCES OF MY BEING BOARDED OUT

10. For the remainder of my childhood I was boarded out. This information is contained, in very brief form only, in an entry of the Indoor Register of the West Cork County Home under my name (Page 2) which I was sent following my Freedom of Information Request.

- 11. I do not believe the authorities performed any kind of checks on the homes in which I was boarded out. I was provided for only in the most basic sense, and received little attention from those who "looked after" me. I was never housed in a loving or caring environment and the authorities appeared not to know or care that this was the case.
- 12. I remember that when I was in school people who I now assume to be from the home would call to the school to see how to see how I was doing. They visited in order to pay the people who were looking after me at the time. I was not given any clear information about the identity of the people I was boarded out to. I was simply led to believe that they were aunts and uncles, or other relations. I was given no paperwork.
- I do not know how I came to be boarded out but I suspect that a priest or some other official connected to the home arranged it. I always had the impression that I was boarded out with relatives such as aunts and uncles. However, it was only later that I discovered that this was not the case. The people with whom I was boarded out were simply strangers who were paid for my keep. It is very distressing for a child to think he is living with blood relatives, only to later discover that this is not the case. The only real biological relative I had contact with was my mother's sister, who visited me on an annual basis after I reached the age of around ten. I learned later that she was in contact with my mother during this period. Later in my early adulthood my aunt distanced herself from me and later denied all knowledge of my background and her relationship to me. I am no longer in contact with her.
- 14. The people who were responsible for my welfare while I was boarded out scared the living daylights out of me. I was always being told that I was a "bad boy", and I was never told I was a good person. I felt that I was always under the threat of being taken away somewhere else, and that was a very real possibility.
- 15. I first stayed with an unmarried couple who I believe were brother and sister. From recollection, I stayed there for around 12 months until I was about 5 years old. I then went to another house for around 8 years, until I was around 13 or 14 years old. That was the way it worked back then, when school leaving age was 14. Once I had finished at school, the authorities stopped paying for my keep and so I was no longer wanted. I was farmed out for unpaid work from a very young age. I started working when I left school around age 14 or 15 and my boarding-out payments stopped. Looking back, I was totally unprepared for the world and was vulnerable and naïve.
- When I was 14 I was taken by the authorities from the house where I was staying. Two women, named Ms and Ms and Ms took me by car to a house in the later became the Health Board, which is now the HSE. They were therefore acting in their capacity as employees of the state and as such had a duty of care regarding my welfare.
- The address of the house was home, which served as an alternative to prison for young boys who had no home to go to, was run by a society called I was sexually abused in the home by He took me for rides in his car, in which he sexually assaulted me on many occasions. I know he also inflicted this on other boys who were in his care at the home. I was kept in that house for two years and was abused throughout this period.
- 18. Around two years ago I approached the organisation. I explained what had happened to me. It took around 12 months for them to accept that I was telling them the truth. Initially they refused me any real dialogue or redress. Eventually they agreed to

a mediation, and I received help from a charity w	vith the mediation process. The mediation
itself was fraught and the people representing	were insulting to my
representative and I. One	representative who was present at the
mediation openly referred to me as a "pot-hunte	agreed to pay me
10,000 Euros by way of compensation for what	had happened to me.
issued no admission of liability or apology to mediation did not give me the closure I had hope	
I feel that my childhood, such as it was, did no	

I feel that my childhood, such as it was, did not prepare me for the world. As someone who was not reared in a conventional family, I was particularly vulnerable and naïve. Other children could go home from school and talk to their parents if they had any troubles. I had no-one to talk to. I had been given the impression by the people with whom I boarded out that I had aunts and uncles and these were the people with whom I lived, but they never filled the role of a parent. Times were particularly rough around Christmas because when everybody else went home to their loved ones, we were just left behind in lodgings. I always had the impression that people knew my business and talked about me, as there was such a stigma attached to being boarded out. I was the subject of jokes because it was known I was born out of wedlock. It was a rough lifestyle and I was very lonely throughout my childhood.

#### INFORMATION AND TRACING MY RELATIVES.

- 20. My mother was in the home from the state of the state
- 21. At the age of 12 I had discovered that I had a sister. I hadn't been given any further information so did not know how to contact her.
- 22. During my visit to my mother in 1976, she gave me my sister's address. I was around 21 or 22 years old when I first contacted my sister, after I had got married. From that point I had a broken relationship with my sister. She was told by the nuns in her school that I had been adopted. She found it hard to understand that, in fact, I had never been adopted. Her impression had previously been that I had been adopted and had had a happy childhood, but that had not been the case.
- At the age of 13 she went to to live with our mother. She did not get along with our mother, and she believes that our mother only took her to so that my sister could work and our mother could benefit from her earnings. She had a rather turbulent life and several broken relationships. She died years ago.
- 24. The contact I had with my sister was sporadic. Years went by when there was no contact. When you're not brought up with somebody and you are not reared in the conventional family, it's very hard to put the pieces together. It is easy to draft apart, and we were essentially strangers really. No matter how hard you try, you can't have the same relationship you would have had in a normal family setting. She died years ago.

- 25. My sister had been put in St Aloysius, the institution 100 yards from mine. Both institutions were run by the same congregation of nuns, who would have known at the time that we were brother and sister.
- 26. I found out around four years ago with the help of Barnardos that I had a second sister who was born in 1944. I hadn't known about the second sister. She died of gastroenteritis when she was three months old. I obtained a copy of her birth certificate but I have been unable to find her death certificate. No-one seems to know where she was buried. I enquired with some distant relatives in West Cork (who are related to the aunt who had previously visited me as a child) regarding the location of my sister's grave, but they were not even aware of the name of the institution in which she had been born.
- 27. I tried searching for my father but was unable to obtain any information about him. My mother was very vague when I asked about him. The only information she gave about him is that my sister and I (who died two years ago) had the same father. She gave the two of us the same information, which was that he died of a heart attack at the age of

#### DETAILS OF MY MOTHER'S EXPERIENCES IN A MAGDALENE LAUNDRY/SIMILAR INSTITUTION

28. It was a hard life for my mother in the home. She was not paid for her work in the home, yet she was harassed by the guards in Ireland to pay maintenance for my sister who was next door in the industrial school. The cost was two shillings a week for her keep. It may as well have been two thousand pounds, considering my mother would have had no money. The guards followed my mother into the home when she was in there to give birth to me to see when she was going to pay the maintenance she owed for my sister. It went as far as a court, I believe, but it was quashed because she didn't have the means to pay and she never would have had the means to pay. I think she owed in total six pounds at the time.

#### ACCESS TO INFORMATION

- 29. I have found it incredibly difficult to access information about my childhood, my mother and my siblings. Even when I submitted my Freedom of Information Request to the HSE, there was much delay in obtaining the information and I suspect that not all of it was disclosed (though of course I am unable to prove this). Whenever I attempted to obtain information I was made to feel that I was a nuisance. I got the impression that the authorities close ranks on you when you try to obtain information. I have been told countless times by various institutions that my records have been lost in a fire, a flood, or that the nuns are very old now and wouldn't remember. (See again pages 5-16). I find it difficult to imagine that there are no records contained in these institutions.
- 30. If it was more straightforward to obtain basic information, it would be easier to piece together my background and my childhood. It is important for everyone to know who they are and believe this right should not be denied to me or others in similar circumstances to my own.

I believe that the contents of this statement are true.
Signed
Date 30/5/20/6

All redactions have been carried out by the Clann Project



## Exhibit



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Deimhniú breithe arna h-eisiúint de bhun na hAchta um Chlárú Breitheanna agus Básanna 1863 go 1996

Birth Certificate issued in pursuance of the Births and Deaths Registration Acts 1863 to 1996

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9th August 2011.



Re: Request for Information.

Dear

Thank you for your letter dated the 3/08/11.

I note that you are asking the HSE to verify if a number of social workers were employed by the Health Board during the 1950s. Due to the timeframe involved and the fact that the Health Boards weren't formed until 1970s, it is unlikely that we will be able to establish which organisation employed the social workers.

However, I am making some queries on your behalf and will let you know of the outcome as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Staff Officer.



22<sup>nd</sup> August 2011.



Re: Request for Information
Dear
I am writing in reference to your recent letter and our telephone conversation. I note that you are seeking confirmation that four individuals, namely Ms. Ms. Mr. and Mr. worked as social workers for the Health Board during the 1950s and 1960s.
As I explained the Health Board did not come into existence until 1970. Health Authority had responsibility for Health and Social Services for City and County between 1961 and 1970. Prior to this these functions came under the remit of Boards of Public Assistance of which there were three covering the
Our Human Resources Dept checked their Personnel Files Archive Database in order to establish if these people continued to work for the Health Board when it was formed. A file was found for a Ms. Which corresponds with the timeframe above. Ms. Was originally employed by Board of Public Assistance, then the Health Authority and finally the Health Board. Her position was Children's Officer and she retired in the late 1970s.
There was not a file available for Ms. but according to Ms. 's file Ms. worked as a Temporary Children's Officer during the 1950s and 1960s.
Files were not located for Mr. or Mr. However, in part of Ms. file a Mr. is noted as being employed as a Superintendent Assistance Officer in during the 1950s. There was no mention in the file of a Mr. though from local knowledge we have discovered that a man of this name worked as a Part Time Assistance Officer in
I hope this information is useful to you.
Yours sincerely.

26 August 2015



Dear

I want to thank you once again for the request form we received from you on 10<sup>th</sup> August.

You asked for any information we may have on record about the time you spent in the West Cork County Home, in Clonakilty.

Here in our Congregational Archives we hold basic records such as registers and files for those who as children, were in the care of the Sisters of Mercy.

You may wish to know that the Sisters of Mercy ran an Industrial School for girls in Clonakilty called St Aloysius Industrial School.

The County Home was a public health facility and did not belong to the Sisters of Mercy. We do not hold records from it here in our Congregational Archives.

Enquiries regarding former residents of the County Home should be directed to Mount Carmel Hospital or the local health authority.

I am sorry that we cannot be of more assistance to you with this enquiry.

I am returning to you with thanks the copy of your birth certificate which you very kindly sent to me.

It was good to speak with you on the telephone and should you like to talk with me again or if you have any queries about this I am at this telephone number in Dublin Monday to Thursday morning. Your call will be very welcome.

Please be assured that we are happy to assist you in any way we can.

Yours sincerely

Counselling Psychologist

Oifig An Aire Oideachais agus Eolaíochta. Sráid Maoilbhríde, Baile Átha Cliath 1





Office of the Minister for Education and Science Marlborough Street, Dublin 1



PLEASE QUOTE REF NUMBER ON ALL CORRESPONDENCE.
Our Ref:



Dear

The Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills Ms. Mary Coughlan T.D. has asked me to acknowledge your recent letter concerning the issues you raised.

Enquiries are being made about this matter and a further letter will issue as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,



Private Secretary







30 June 2010





Dear

Thank you for your email concerning the redress board.

As this matter is more appropriate to the Department of Education and Skillls, the Minister has asked me to let you know that he has asked his colleague, Ms Mary Coughlan, Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills, to look into this matter and reply to you directly.

Yours sincerely

Private Secretary to Minister Barry Andrews, TD

Cuirfear fäilte roimh chomhfhreagras i nGaeilge

Office of the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs
Hawkins House Dublin 2 Tel
Teach Haicín Baile Átha Cliath 2 Fax

Web www.omcya.ie



Email.

To whom it concerns.

My name is \_\_\_\_\_ I was born on the \_\_\_\_\_ /1952in the county home in clonakillty west cork.

was born out of wed lock and if that happened in those days both mother and child would be shoned.

I was born in the county home and later moved to the institution section with my mother.

I have evidence to back up this claim in documents that I have got under the freedom of imformation act.

While there i used to hear my mother crying I would often hear her say that this place was driving her up the wall and could she get out of there.

You can imagine the effect would have on me as the years passed by.

This has had a physiological effect that has stayed with me to this day as a result iam now on a lot of medication including medication for depression.

I can,t say that I have very good memories of this place either I did have my own bedroom but there was two beds in the room.

Some time during the night a lady used to come along and sleep in that bed lift me up and was letting on to be taking me away I don't know what the reason was for that but it used to scare the living day lights out me so much so that I used to try not to go to sleep.

been less and boarded out again to another family by the name of in a place called in west cork also.

I was kept there while I attened primary school and I went for one to secondary school.

It must have been for about seven or eight years in total.

I did not understand anything about been boardedout out at the time and was always lead to believe that the people in the house were all aunts and uncles.

These houses we only another word for cheep manual labour in my case I was made do the farm work such as sew potatoes, save hay, turf, milk cows feed pigs ect as one survivor recently said to me that very often that the boys that were kept in the indurstrial schools were very often the luck ones.

After I left school the house that I was boarded out would no longer get paid for my keep so I could no longer stay there iwas moved once again.

One day two agents from the health board came to the house where I was kept and I was taken from that house without knowing were I was going and I was dropped off in a house in cork city the address of this house was



This house was run by the society of there would have been seven to eight boys staying there at the time. On about the second day a man by the name called the house aand I was taken for a spin in his car where I was sexually assaulted. I was later told by other boys that he used to do that with all the boys. I was later verbally abused by him he told me one day that I had no confidance and he doubted if I would ever amount to anything in life. You can imagine the effect that would have on a very vunnerable fifteen old. There was a statement made to the guards but do to the passage of time its very unlickely that there will every be a prosecution. I have also made a complaint to and to there credit they have given help with counciling ect I have made efforts to contact HSE my plight but they have made no attempt to address this problem. I just want some one out there to listen and give me a fair hearing. I will stand over thing I have said in this statement. lhave lately heard some one say on T.V.if you are telling the truth your memory wont fail you I am telling the truth and my memory has not failed me. Yours sincerely. survivor.

J. UEV. ZVII 17.40

the same time.

## Residential Institutions Redress Board

Bord um Shásamh Institiúidí Cónaithe

BY FAX & POST:M
Our Reference Code: Your Reference Code
Re: Your Client: Address: Date of Birth: 1952 Late Application
5 <sup>th</sup> December, 2011
Dear Madam,
We write in respect of the above and refer to previous correspondence herein.
As you are no doubt aware we have been unable to locate proof that your client was resident in St. Aloysius's School, Clonakilty, Co. Cork.
In an effort to clarify matters, the Board took up a copy of the Records relating to Mr.  's sister, who does appear to have been resident there from the 1950 until she was discharged by order of the Minister to her mother on the 1962.

Block 5, Belfield Office Park, Beech Hill Road, Clonskeagh, Dublin 4

Tel: Fax: Email: Web: http://www.rirb.ie

It should be noted that the Records which the Board has received in respect of

make no reference to the fact that she had a brother resident in the Institution at

Having now had an opportunity to review the papers filed by you on behalf of Mr. was born in West Cork, County Home on the we note that Mr. 1952. Is it possible that you might make contact with the HSE in Clonakilty to see if they have placement in West Cork County Home in any Records regarding 1952 and they may be able to then assist you as to where Mr. was placed when he left that Institution. For the moment there is no proof that your client Mr. was resident in St. Aloysius Industrial School, Clonakilty, Co. Cork, until this matter has been established to the satisfaction of the Board, the Board will not be in a position to proceed with the Late Application filed by you on behalf of Mr. We would be obliged if in light of the contents of this correspondence you would revert and take his urgent instructions in this matter. We look forward to hearing from you at your convenience. Vours faithfully

Solicitor to the Board

J. ULV. ZUII 17.20



Mt Carmel Community Hospital, Clonakilty, Co.Cork.

23<sup>rd</sup> August, 2013.

Dear
In response to your recent letter the only records available in Mt Carmel Community
Hospital are that was admitted on gave birth to on 1952.
was discharged to the care of Miss
on 1956 and baby was discharged to the care of Mrs on 1956.
I enclose a copy of the your record of birth and baptism.
I regret to inform you that there are no medical records records available on either your Mother or on yourself.
Yours sincerely,
Director of Nursing.
Enc.

