



## Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Archival and Oral History

A project funded by the



<b>Reference Code:</b>	MAGOHP/07/ANON
<b>Oral History of:</b>	Lucy
<b>Pseudonym?</b>	Yes
<b>Status:</b>	Survivor
<b>Keywords:</b>	Sisters of our Lady of Charity Laundry, Sean McDermott Street; training centre at Sean McDermott Street; social services; sexual abuse; difficulties with counsellors; suicide; inter-generational effects.
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<b>Transcript:</b>	88 pages
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<b>Interviewer:</b>	Dr Sinead Pembroke
<b>Records/Papers included:</b>	None
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Anonymised interviews are freely available to the public. Immediate release of transcript and anonymised audio; interviewee's identity to be revealed in 30 years.
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## Notes on Redaction and Transcription Process

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Interviewee Initials: SP

Interviewer Initials: L

### Key

... = Short pause (or where words are repeated or the speaker changes direction mid-sentence)

(*pause*) = Long pause

*blabla* = spoken with great emphasis

(*blabla*) = Additional audible expressions, body language

[*blabla*] = background information that might be helpful

### Notes on Redaction Process

- Named individuals have been given pseudonyms
- A hospital has been given a pseudonym in order to protect the identity of the interviewee

### List of Pseudonyms

Pseudonym	Status/Relationship to Interviewee
Lucy	Interviewee
Aine	Social worker
Emily	Third Party Magdalene
David	Student/volunteer who visited laundry
Patrick	Student/volunteer who visited laundry
Susan	Student/volunteer who visited laundry
Andrea	Student/volunteer who visited laundry
Sr Bridget	Third Party Religious
Veronica	Social worker
Maura Malone	Supervisor (not resident in laundry)
St Oliver's Hospital	Hospital where fellow Magdalene was sent to work
James	Interviewee's son
Harry	Neighbour
Aisling	Interviewee's daughter

### Basic Data from Interview

Name/Pseudonym	Lucy
When Born	1961
Born outside marriage?	No
Raised by	Family
Education	Primary
Order	Sisters of Our Lady of Charity
Laundry	Sean McDermott Street
From	1977/78
To	1979 approx
Duration of stay	1 year

<b>Age on entry</b>	14/15
<b>Entered Via</b>	Sister, after visit by Gardaí/Social services also involved
<b>House Name/No</b>	No
<b>Haircutting/punishment?</b>	Yes
<b>Circumstances of Departure</b>	Ran away
<b>Emigrated?</b>	No
<b>Physical ailments?</b>	Did not say
<b>Of Note</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experiences of laundry in more recent times</li> <li>• Was in training centre, but worked in laundry</li> <li>• Visits to the laundry from students/volunteers who would be given the impression it was a happy place – interviewee sees nuns as actresses</li> <li>• Attempted suicide in laundry</li> </ul>

[Interview begins]

SP *Okay so thank you Lucy for agreeing to...to...to do the interview today. So I just want to ask before we start the interview that you confirm that you agree to participate in this interview voluntarily and that you are familiar with the information and consent forms that I provided to you?*

L Yeah I agree and I...read all the forms and signed and...whatever else.

SP *Thank you very much. So the first question I just want to ask is could you tell me something about yourself?*

L My name is Lucy. I'm from...the Dublin area and I was abused at home and I was put into the Magdalene Laundries by social services because of the abuse at home.

SP *Okay. So maybe you could tell me about your life prior to being sent to the laundry?*

L I had...my father and brothers who individually all abused. My father raped me when I was five and he left the family home then when I was seven or eight, I think I was...between seven and eight anyway. And we...we always referred to him as a different name; we don't refer to him as our father so... My brother took over, he was the eldest, he was older by ten years. And he took over as the man of the house, so the man of the house meant that he had to...he abused us as well so. He used to make us perform things that we shouldn't have to do. We were his slaves. I remember I...he used to call me at night down from...from my bedroom to turn off his light – on the pretence to turn off his light and his...because he used to sleep downstairs – and he would make me perform oral sex and there were times then when he used to kind of hold food against us. He'd say like you know, 'I'll give you some food if you perform oral sex' and...and we would do it because when you're hungry you'd kind of do...you'd do anything you know.

SP *Yeah. Exactly.*

L So, we used to be beaten. The beatings I don't know which was the worse, the abuse or the beatings I think...when we...when we were being kind of...sexually abused like, it kind of felt like

that you're...you're special, that...that was the only time you were getting a bit of affection, like that's what I thought...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...so it wasn't as bad as the beatings. But the...the worst part for me was the hunger. I couldn't cope with the hunger, I could cope with beatings and I could cope with the sexual abuse but I couldn't cope with the hunger. So, when food is kind of presented to you as...a reward, you're going to take it and...for a long time now I thought that was my fault because, you know, I did it myself because I...I always thought like it was me, I did it myself because I was hungry and, if...I said no to the sexual abuse I wouldn't have got fed. So I didn't know, so I kind of felt even though I was only say eight or nine or ten, even though I agreed to have it, and...I know that sounds terrible that I agreed to have sex but I only did it for to be fed, you know, because food was the weapon, it was a very big weapon in...in my situation because we didn't have money, we nev...there was no money in the house. My older brother, he was the only one that was working in the house. There was seven of us...there was eight of us including my mother. My mother used to get the beatings as well. She...she was treated exact same as we were, there was no difference I mean she always did her best to protect us and if we were being abused she would try and stand in and take the abuse for us. My brother used to...give her money and tell her that he'd hav...she...she would have to have a certain dinner on the table every day and if that dinner wasn't on the table like, she'd be beaten. And I always remember the cat came in one day and took the meat off the plate and she didn't notice. And he came home from work and he beat her to a pulp, absolutely beat her to a pulp and like we would try and step in as well but he was such a...he h...had so...so much control over...over...

SP *This was the older brother?*

L Yeah, yeah. He took the role of the father because the father used to do the same thing. So he took that role over and he said, 'well this is the way it's supposed to be'. But he knew what he was doing...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...like he was ten years older than me like so he knew exactly what he was doing. And this went on for...until I was fourteen...by him and then I have another brother who used to comfort me and tell me like that everything was going to be okay that he would be the one...he was the one that loved me and his...he used to rape me but I used to think that he was my protector, and because he was my protector I never mentioned him in any...anything because he didn't beat me, he used to say when I got a beating he used to come to me and say, 'I'll look after you, I'll protect you,' and then he'd rape me but I wouldn't... I would think like you know I'm being shown a bit of affection...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I thought that's what life was about.

SP *Yeah.*

L That the only way you got a bit of affection was through sex...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and that's the way I felt all my life...well all my...my young life and...th...the worst part for me as well was, as I said the hunger. And there was a swimming pool near our area and I remember like...like, to get out of the house we used to go there and it would be kind of like a shelter kind of thing. You'd be in the warmth and...but the...the lifeguards in this particular swimming pool used to notice...me and I think they could see like that I was kind of hungry or whatever and they used to offer me food and...in return they abused me as well. But I thought this was the way it was supposed to be, like the only way you got food was to have sex, so I suppose at the age of ten I was...you could say I was a prostitute for food, and that's the way I always thought of myself, you know, I always thought I was...you know a prostitute (*crying*). That's very hard, that part for me is very hard because, it's...it's one thing that you know as...as you grow up in life that y...y...your family do it to you, but then when you get *outsiders* doing it as well it's kind of like...it's k...it's a big vicious circle all around. How I got out of that situation was I was in school and one of the teachers had actually noticed there was something wrong. Like I would have a black eye or I would have a split lip or broken arm or something like that and m...my excuse always was, 'oh I fell down the stairs' or you know, 'I walked into a door'

because we were told if we ever told anybody what was going on in the home or...that we would be absolutely battered like we would be...oh, life wasn't...wouldn't be worth living you know. The...I remember...I remember this particular teacher she used to come in and she used to offer me food and for some strange reason or other I couldn't take the food from her because she was a s...superior person and I wasn't allowed to take food from her because if I took food from her she'd know that I was hungry and I couldn't let her know I was hungry because if she knew I was hungry she'd know there was something wrong. So, she obviously got a sense of something wrong and reported it. But the next thing I know was there was a knock on the door and I was taken away from the home. I was put into Sean McDermott Street [Sisters of Our Lady of Charity Magdalene Laundry] and I thought I was going to prison because I had maybe said something that I shouldn't have said to somebody and...

SP *Sorry how old were you?*

L I was fourteen...fourteen...fifteen, in about there. *(Pause)* I was terrified like, I did...I didn't know what was happening to me so, I went in... went into Sean McDermott Street and all I can remember when I...going in first was all the steel, or the bars on the windows so I said, 'oh my God I'm going to prison like and I'm going to die'. I was...everything was going through my head, you know. But the first thing I remember was I got fed. I was given a sandwich and a cup of tea and to me that was, 'oh my God,' like you know, 'I'm going to get fed here'. And I was given a bed, which like I know everybody did it in the old days like, everybody shared a bed, but there was four of us in the one bed and, I got a bed and I got food and I wasn't being sexually abused for this so to me that was the world. I thought I was after striking gold...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. But it wasn't until kind of later on in life that I realised that I was actually being used and abused in...with the Magdalene Laundries.

SP *Hmm.*

L I had to pay for my keep someway and so I had to work. They...they put me to work. The...the work I had to do in the laundry was I used to be called the 'polymarker' and when the laundry came in they were all big sacks and we had to sort through it all and it was all filthy dirty and

the smell of it and everything was awful it was...and I had to write down on a book every single item that was in...in the bag and polymark it, it was a machine that had kind of little stamps and it had numbers on it. And every time you did a bag you had to change the number and you had to change it...there was alphabets and numbers on it. But if you forgot to change that or if you forgot...lost a sock or something, you'd be beaten to a pulp for this because like you know, your job...you had to do your job right and this was the job you had to do. If you did it wrong you...you...hell to pay...but...

SP *Can I just...just to go back to when they took you, did they tell you...when they came to your door, did they tell you where you were going...*

L No.

SP *...what you were...what was going on? Like how did they present themselves?*

L From memory it was two Guards... [Irish police]

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and they knocked on the door and my older sister, she answered the door – my mother knew nothing about this...

SP *Okay.*

L ...and she answered the door, and there was a bit of conversation and she came into me and she says to me, 'I don't know what you're after doing but,' she says, 'you're...you're going away'. And I was convinced I was going to prison...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but she was the one to bring me...

SP *Okay.*

L ...to this prison that I was to go to. I wasn't brought in by the Guards...

SP *Oh okay.*

L ...for s...for some strange reason or other, I don't know why.

SP *So the Guards came to speak to your...to you or...*

L Yeah.

SP *...to your sister?*

L To my sister yeah...

SP *...and then she...*

L ...to whoever was...

SP *...yeah.*

L ...the eldest in the house on the actual day and I think my sister she was th...she was there, she was the eldest on the day.

SP *But then she was the one to bring you?*

L She brought me in...

SP *Okay.*

L ...and she ...she thought she was bringing me to prison as well, you know. D...like she said to me, 'I don't what you've done, I don't know what's happened,' but she says...she says, 'you're gone,' and that was it.

SP *And yeah there were no like social services or...?*

L There was yeah, there were social services involved because when I went into...when I went into Sean McDermott Street I was interviewed there by...by a woman from social services and she was actually expecting me.

SP *Okay.*

L So they...they were already informed that I was on the way, so...

SP *But they...yet it was some Guards who came for you?*

L Yeah I...I...I can't be 100 per cent...

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

L ...I can't be 100 per cent certain on who it was...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...but I...I...I do remember that there was...I...my memory is that there was Guards at the door...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and I didn't think for a minute...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...that it was for me or what it was but they...they spoke to my... they didn't speak to *me*, nobody spoke to me and my sister just came in and she just said to me, she said, 'I don't know what you're after doing,' but she says 'they're taking you away'. But she says, 'I have to bring you in'.

SP *Right okay.*

L You know, so...

SP *I find that interesting.*

L Yeah, so but the funny thing is, I don't know whether I've got it all mixed up in my head or whatever happened, but she doesn't recall bringing me in on the bus. I remember going in on the bus but she...she doesn't recall that. Now, b...now it was...over 35 years ago and she can't remember this. But, I do remember that.

SP *What does...*

L I know...I do remember...

SP *...what does she say?*

L She...she...she remembers...

SP *She just doesn't remember?*

L ...she remembers somebody knocking on the door okay...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...and she remembers speaking to somebody but she does not remember the journey into...

SP *Okay.*

L ...into...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...Sean McDermott Street, she doesn't remember it at all.

SP *Okay.*

L And (*pause*) we knocked on the door and she didn't come in with me...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I was just taken in on my own...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and it was a big creaky door, I'll always remember it I can still hear the creak of the door, you know, and the door creaked and I turned around and she was gone.

SP *Right.*

L You know.

SP *Yeah.*

L And they just took me into this room, and there was bars on the windows and there was a big long table...and a woman that was there and she interviewed me.

SP *And she was a social worker?*

L She was...she was a social worker, yeah Áine, [pseudonym] can't remember her surname but Áine was her name anyway and she interviewed me –she gave me a cup of tea and a sandwich.

SP *And did she say anything to you?*

L She just asked me about my family situation. She asked me to tell her what happened at home...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. So I had to tell her...give her my story, but I told her about my father and I told her about my two...two other brothers, one other brother who...who didn't actually sexually abuse me – not that I remember – but he used to beat me a lot. And...but I didn't tell her about the brother who had raped me because, in my own mind he was my protector so I couldn't tell anybody...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...on the person who was protecting me.

SP *I understand.*

L You know, because he said, you know, 'don't tell anybody because like I'll always protect you'.

SP *Hmm.*

L So, that was why *(pause)* I actually had a miscarriage and everything for him and I didn't...didn't...it took a lot of years for all of that to kind of actually come to being...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but he got away with it, you know.

SP *And how old were you when you had the miscarriage?*

L I was eleven or twelve.

SP *Yeah.*

L You know so...I always remember I had a 'Loop-the-Loop' ice-pop; somebody gave a *Loop-the-Loop* ice-pop, I don't know who it was and I became very, very ill after having the...the ice-pop. But I thought it was the ice-pop that caused me to...to bleed...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and to have cramps and to be very sick. But it wasn't, it was actually a miscarriage I was having, I didn't realise it at the time.

SP *And what happened? Did you go to hospital or...?*

L I...the...one of...one of the teachers had...had suspected something but didn't do anything about it then at the time, but it wasn't until they went back to investigate everything that it...it actually came out that the...one of the other teachers from the primary school had noticed something was happening...

SP *Okay.*

L ...you know, but they didn't do anything about it at the time.

SP *Okay.*

L It wasn't until I went into secondary school that the teacher that...

SP *Yeah.*

L ... I had...she was actually a psychologist...

SP *Okay.*

L ...you know.

SP *So I just wondered yeah when that...when you had the miscarriage...*

L *Hmm.*

SP *...like...*

L *Hmm.*

SP *...did...so...somebody...*

L No, nobody had...nobody had inter...had intervened then. There were no doctors or anything involved. There wasn't a...h...I don't know how it actually came out that it was a miscarriage but, they had asked me was I having any periods or anything and I said...I said, 'I had periods,' I said, 'but they were very bad,' I said, there was a big huge thing in the toilet but I thought it was...

SP *Oh.*

L ...just because I didn't know anything...

SP *Yeah, yeah, yeah.*

L ...about periods...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I knew nothing...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...so...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...like I didn't know what it was, I thought the ice-pop had caused all this to happen to me.

SP *Oh.*

L I haven't touched a *Loop-the-Loop* ice-pop since! (*Laughs*) Terrified to eat a *Loop-the-Loop* ice-pop! And...and...I...I told the...the...the teacher this I said, 'this big thing came out of me, I

don't know what it was,' and I remember being in pain and I remember bleeding very heavy after it. So that's how that...

SP *Oh okay...*

L ...that...yeah...

SP *...right so it happened in the toilet.*

L Yeah...yeah...yeah at home...yeah.

SP *But they never took you to a hospital?*

L No, no. Well, see the reason why they didn't take me to a hospital was because they...they knew everything would come out then.

SP *Yeah...yeah. No...I...I...*

L You know so, that's...you know, everything was done so secret, everything was secret, secret, secret like and you just, you dare not say anything to anybody, you'd be terrified of the consequences of...you...you'd be battered and you know, it's actually quite scary, you know...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...quite, quite scary.

SP *But yeah, so going back to the laundry then, I'm sorry that I interrupted...*

L Hmm.

SP *...the trail there but...so yeah you were sent to Sean McDermott Street and when you spoke to the...insp...the...sorry the soc...the social worker...*

L Yeah.

SP *...did...did she talk about anything to do with rights, how long you were going to be there, I don't know...*

L Not...

SP *...did she give you any information?*

L No. From memory actually when I...I think I was there a week before anybody spoke to me about what was actually happening to me...

SP *Okay.*

L ...and why I was there. That social worker her name was Áine she came to me and she told me that I was there because of my abuse situation at home and that they were there to help me and I was supposed to stay there until I was eighteen, at a legal age where I could go off and do my own thing or whatever but I actually ran away. So, I was there a year and I couldn't take anymore. I wa...like I was starting to get beaten up and everything and the b...as I said that was one of the things that used...I used to hate at home was the beatings. So, when that started then I...I ran away and I was homeless for a couple of weeks but I...I recovered...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I got myself up and...you know. I remember going back home, I made my way home, because I was cold, I was hungry, and I remember I didn't know where I was when I ran away first because I didn't know which direction I came from, but I...after two weeks I eventually made my way back home and when I went in my poor mother hadn't even noticed I was gone because she was so badly beaten in her life that she was just living in her own little world, she wasn't there. Do you know what I mean? She was there in...in body...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but she wasn't there in mind. So, she hadn't even noticed I was gone but my brother was there, and he actually started fighting with me the minute that I walked in the door so, I begged

him to let me stay for the night, you know. So I...I stayed the night and I remember there was a girl that was in...in the...Sean McDermott Street with me and I remembered that she was working in a hospital and I went to...to her and asked her for help and she...she got annoyed with me at first but then she said, 'look wait there,' she says, 'I'll see what I can do for you,' and it was the nuns again. So, I think it was run by the Sisters of Charity as well. So the nun came out and she says, 'what do you...' like she asked me what did I want. I said I was looking for a job and somewhere to live because I knew that this girl was living in there. So she says, 'okay'. So she gave me a bed and I worked there – but I got paid...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. I got paid for it, like it was a job...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...it was an actual job.

SP *Yeah.*

L So, you know, it was okay.

SP *Yeah.*

L And then I had an accident there and the nun was very cruel to me and she literally threw me out on to the street because I had an accident in the hospital. So, she threw me out, and luckily enough I had saved money and I was able to...to get a flat. I stayed in a friend's house and...for a couple of nights, and I got a flat...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and then I was okay. So, you know, still living with the memories of...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...of all the things that happened and...

SP *Would you mind telling for the tape the accident that you did have?*

L I sliced my thumb off on a meat slicer. The...I remember I was slicing ham and the ham was falling off the machine, it was one of those old machines that had hand...do you know the winders, and I stopped the machine to...to fix the ham and the mach...the wheel just turned by itself and it took my thumb and everything with it. But...I always remember, it was a Sunday afternoon, we all had to do a Sunday where we served the doctors the dinner...the doctors were...we had to be a waitress to the doctors on a Sunday afternoon – they were...they had a special dining room. So, my...that was my Sunday on and I had to look after them, there was nobody else on, only myself. So, I was bored and...and I...I kind...I need to keep busy, I just have to keep busy because I...if I'm busy I'm grand I don't have time to think about anything – even then like I was seventeen then, and even then I was you know, always wanting to keep busy. And I decided I'd get the tea ready for the girl who was coming on duty at six o'clock so she wouldn't have so much to do. So there was ham needed to be sliced, so I started slicing the ham and...then I sliced the thumb off and it happened so fast that I didn't even notice it at the time...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and I just felt this awful sensation in my hand and I looked down and my thumb was gone and it was just a spout of blood and I looked down and there was I was standing in a pool of blood and I screamed, and the doctors didn't want to be disturbed from their lunch, they were on their lunch break so they had to...I couldn't believe it, it was...there was...there used to be these lifts like, they were gates and, you know the 'ziggy-zaggy' gates...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...that they used to have and we used to put the trolleys on them for the food to go up to the wards, and the echoes went up through...went right up through the wards and it was a patient actually on the third floor had heard the screams of me...

SP *Okay.*

L ...ran down to the porter on the...on...on the desk and he came in and by that stage then I had fainted, you know. But the...I always remember the nun, she came up to me and she *accused* me of actually slicing my thumb off deliberately and she *dragged* me out of the bed and brought me down into the kitchen. She *literally pulled me* by the arm down and my arm is up in a sling and everything, and she pulled me into the kitchen to *demonstrate* how I had sliced my thumb off. Couldn't believe it like and this was in front of a full kitchen and there was people coming in with deliveries and everything...and she wouldn't accept that it was an accident, there was no way she would accept it was an accident. So she threw me out and she told me never to come back again, so.

SP *Jesus.*

L Hmm. Oh that's the nuns for you.

SP *Yeah. G...so you...*

L Protecting their...they had to protect their...their...what would you call it, their money, you know because they were so wealthy...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...so wealthy, they got everything handed to them...they you know, admittedly now like, the...the hospitals used to be so clean when the...the nuns...but they ruled with an iron fist.

SP *Yeah.*

L You know and they were very hard and they were...you know... I...I was lucky, I...I was one of the lucky ones I mean there was women in...in that Magdalene Laundry when I was in there and they were old and they were...they knew nothing else, and some of them like they didn't

know how to talk and they were just kind of rocking back and forth, and for me it was scary like, I...I was scared of these women.

SP *Were you one of the younger ones?*

L I was one of the young ones yeah...yeah. There was...when you go into Sean McDermott Street, in through the...the frightening door...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...as I called it, I used to call it the...the horrible corridor it was, when you go in there first there was big grounds then and there was all...there was a big huge garden and a big circle around it and the nuns used to walk around the circle but you...when you go in first, to the right was the laundry. I didn't notice it was a laundry at first when I went in because I didn't...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...see the laundry first. But then I went in through this door and it was...they called it a training centre for young girls like me. So they were supposed to b...it was supposed to be for young girls who were abused at home and they were there to get help and then beside that house then was the house where pregnant women, unmarried...they used to call them 'unmarried mothers' then, there was no such thing as 'one parent families' or anything then like. And they were all pregnant. I never actually saw those girls in the laundry while they were pregnant, it wasn't until afterwards that they used to start working in the laundry after they had their baby. But nobody ever saw their babies. We didn't know...

SP *I was going to ask, what happened to the babies?*

L Never know, I never s...I never seen a baby, I never...

SP *Okay.*

L ...saw what happened to them or never even knew when they had their babies or anything...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...like that like it was...

SP *So it was all kept very secret?*

L Yeah, it was very, very secret, very secret. And some of the girls would have disappeared, you wouldn't have seen them again.

SP *Okay.*

L You know, they were gone, like nobody knew where they went or what they were up to or even if they had their baby or...

SP *So you would have never seen...even a baby?*

L Never seen a baby but tha...there was always, there would have been a couple of women there now that after they had their baby, that they would have been put to work straight away. But they would never talk and they were lonely people and you could see the...see the loneliness and you could see the heart...but I look back on it now, like you can actually see the heartbreak and the loneliness. And there was a woman there, Emily [pseudonym] was her name and she was very good to me now, she...she kind of like...she took me under her wing. I thought she was old, but she probably wasn't old. To me she was old but she...she probably wasn't. If something went missing she would always try and kind of say, 'well I know where it is' or she'd try and defend me...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...before I got the...the beatings and that for it. But I always remember wishing I could be in a different department, like I'd be looking over at all the women they'd be doing the ironing and I was like, 'oh God I wish I could do that,' or the women that were folding the sheets and thinking 'I wish I could do that'. But little did I know that they were probably wishing the same as well...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. And I always...death was a funny thing in there. We were made to actually...pray around the body of an old woman who died and we had to touch the bodies of dead people. And we were told that...that was our way to say goodbye and we were...had to...to kiss them on the head and everything. I always remember that. I always remember the coldness...

SP *Did...*

L ...coldness...

SP *...did many...*

L ...complete coldness...

SP *...many women die while you were there?*

L There were...while I was there, there were...I think probably...it was probably about three or four. But there was one woman always sticks in my head I always remember...sh...this – only the one body sticks out in me – I don't know why. She was very old, she...her hair was snow white. She *probably wasn't old*, you know. Her hair was snow white and the *coldness*, I...it must have been the first woman...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...because the col...the coldness, I still feel that coldness.

SP *Okay and did...*

L I can still feel it.

SP *...you ever know what they died of...*

L No.

SP *...or...?*

L No.

SP *They nev...you just knew that...*

L Just...yeah, yeah, yeah.

SP *Okay. Sorry, and what year...I forgot to ask this, but what year was this?*

L '77...

SP '77

L '77, '78.

SP *No, the reason why I...I ask, well besides the fact that we have to ask, is a lot of people think this is the distant past...*

L No, it's not...

SP *...it's very recent.*

L ...no, it's...yeah. A lot of people could look back 33 years and can remember what they did with their life...

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

L ...you know what I mean like, for me looking back I remember where I was 33 years ago and what I was doing 33 years ago. It's not that far away.

SP *Yeah.*

L You know, I...I have a daughter now who's...who's thirty you know, so...and it was only three years prior to having her that I was you know in that place...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and if I hadn't have ran away I would probably have still been in that place...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. And, when I ran away there was no, nobody came looking for me, nobody cared what happened to me or...there was no investigation or anything like, I was gone that was it...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I was just...

SP *What was it you had told me before that you had been signed out was it? That some...like did you...*

L Somebody had signed me out...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...because I...

SP *Because even though you had run away...*

L Hmm, yeah...

SP *Sorry.*

L ...I recently had taken my father to court for the abuse. It took a lot of courage and a lot of years to do this, but we...he was incarcerated and part of my evidence was from the time I was in

Sean McDermott Street and the Guards were able to get the records from there and there was a sign out date on the records...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...but I didn't sign out.

SP *Yeah.*

L ...because...I don't know who signed me out but apparently they signed me out, so...yeah.

SP *Okay, interesting.*

L *Hmm.*

SP *And can you tell me more about your living conditions, like, living and working conditions there?*

L The...the living conditions for me was okay...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...because I came from real, real poverty. There was no such thing...we didn't have like...at home blankets or anything like that. We used to sleep with our coats over us if we were lucky enough to have a coat, you know. We would sleep with rags over us, anything to keep us warm but, I was in an actual bed and for me that was gold...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know, so I thought it was okay.

SP *Yeah.*

L At the time it was okay for me...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know what I mean, but when I kind of look back on it like, I realise like you know how vulnerable I actually was and how...it's I...it's like as if they knew, 'oh well she didn't have much so she's going to appreciate this little extra'.

SP *Yeah.*

L And that little bit extra I did appreciate...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...because I had a bed and I got three meals a day...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. So that for me was...I was lucky.

SP *Was it in a dormitory?*

L Yeah...

SP *Okay.*

L ...it was in a dormitory. There was curtains kind of separating us, we all h...there was...

SP *A bit like a hospital is it?*

L Yeah...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...yeah that's it exactly but we had smaller space...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...do you know what I mean, we kind of more or less really had space for a bed and a drawer and that was it.

SP *Okay, okay.*

L We...we had to get up at 6.30 in the morning and we had to clean our section of our dormitory first, clean bathrooms, clean the whole...the whole house had to be cleaned *before* we had our breakfast. And then when we had our breakfast we went straight to the laundry then. Now we didn't do the laundry every day, probably did the laundry maybe three or four days, and I always remember, there was one day we had two teachers come in and there was one who used to teach us Home Economics and used to teach us how to cook and there was another one who used to come in and do music with us, which I absolutely loved and I really looked forward to that, you know, it was brilliant to me this was fantastic. This was for about an hour it was kind of a little way for us to kind of all get together and just relax. And then there was another day then that we didn't go to the laundry was because we had to strip the...the house from top to bottom, everything...beds...everything had to be stripped, and cleaned and scrubbed and everything was checked and it used to take literally the whole day to do this. If you...if there was even a spot of dirt in the place like you...ooh! You'd just...you know, it wouldn't be worth it.

SP *Yeah.*

L You know, so you'd have to really...I remember you'd be down on your hands and knees and you'd be scrubbing the floors...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...there was no such thing as mops. You didn't use mops, you used a bucket and scrubbing brushes and cloths...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...that was all you ever used. Bathrooms, you had to get right in under the...you know the toilet bowl. You had to go in right underneath that and try and make sure that you cleaned all the inside of that as well, not that anyone could see it but you still had to clean it...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...things like that, you know.

SP *And were the...were you locked in?*

L Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

SP *And w...and you said actually already that there were bars on the windows?*

L There was bars on the windows and over the walls there was barbed wire and it was kind of like...there was kind of bar...steel bars and in between all them steel bars there was barbed wire...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...so there was no way that you could actually climb up over the wall. The walls were too high anyway.

SP *Yeah.*

L But I always remember the back of the house where we were here (*indicates location*), if you went into the bathroom and there was little square windows and if you opened them, you had to open them if you were having a bath but you could hear the sh...the children outside of the...the back of the house, you could hear them. And they'd always be *taunting* and jeering *us*, they'd be kind of like...you could hear them you know.

SP *Okay. These children, who were they?*

L They were from the...

SP *Oh from the school...*

L S...no, from Sean McDermott Street.

SP *Oh yes, yeah, yeah sorry.*

L They...they lived in the area.

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

L Yeah, yeah. So I always remember that and there was one of the girls actually, I remember she managed to stick her head out through the window and they'd be...they were throwing rocks and they'd be throwing – whatever they could get their hands on they'd be throwing up at us you know – and she said, 'would you go away and leave us alone!' and all this, like. This...this went on like...and on a Saturday we were all given 50 pence to go and do our – laundry shopping they used to call it – we had to go and get our tooth paste, tooth brush, soap and everything out of this 50 pence, but they used to maintain that that was our pocket money but th...we had to use it, we couldn't spend it anyway we wanted to spend it...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...we had to spend it on our toiletries...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and stuff like that things that we needed, and if we didn't have them, tough luck you were given 50 pence.

SP *Yeah.*

L It probably wasn't even 50 pence.

SP *And where would you...*

L ...at the time...

SP *...did you actually leave the grounds to get...?*

L Yes we all...we all...we had to go together...

SP *As a group?*

L ...as a group. There was we...there was two or three nuns used to come with us. So say one group used to go to one shop and we'd all kind of have different shops to go to but the nuns would be with us all the time. But we used to get a terrible time when we were walking up the street. The kids and even the adults and all, used to spit on us and everything like.

SP *Really?*

L Yeah, yeah you know, we were the 'orphan children' they used to call us.

SP *Right that's interesting.*

L Yeah, 'have you no mummies or daddies?' And...yeah. Hmm.

SP *Oh so ye...actually yeah that's...that was one of the questions I was going to ask is...*

L Yeah.

SP *...how you were perceived or received...*

L Yeah, yeah.

SP *...by people outside?*

L Yeah we were...they...they thought we were orphans.

SP *Okay.*

L So that's...that...that...

SP *And that was a bad thing?*

L Yeah, yeah you know, so.

SP *And...*

L Strange...strange, it was a very strange set up. The...the nuns used to put...put on this image that they were that they...they were doing everything for us. We used to have...I'm trying to think – I think it was a Thursday night we used to have students that come in – students that would be kind of say studying psychology or something like that and they used to come in and sit with us and this was kind of like what...what would you say? It's kind of like they were doing voluntary work...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and they would come in and visit us and they would play records or they played guitars and we'd have a little sing-song and things like that. But the nuns used to sit with us then and they used to make it look as if we were really kind of like, 'oh look at us we're a really happy family,' and it gave...it gave out to those people outside, it...it gave them a sense that we were so cared for, so happy, they were doing wonderful things for us, but when they went everything just kind of went back to normal...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and I actually kept in touch with one of those students up to about five years ago and we just lost contact, I don't know why or what happened but we just lost contact, but I never actually told him exactly what actually happened in the place, he never knew, you know...

SP *Right, yeah.*

L ...he never knew...you know anything about it.

SP *And do you think actually the reason why the nuns were sitting there was so that you wouldn't say anything?*

L When I think back on it now, probably was there to make sure that we didn't talk or to give the impression that it was a...a...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...family gathering...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...that they...that they were our protectors that they were looking after us and 'this is how well we were looking after them,' 'look how happy they are'. And we were happy when they came in, because we got away from the...the day to day stuff; we got this kind of little hour where we can have a bit of fun and we can have a laugh and do what we wanted to do. But like, if anybody like misbehaved, I mean you'd get a beating for it...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...after they were gone, you know what I mean?

SP *What were these students actually doing there?*

L There was, I always remember there was...wait a minute...one, two, there was David, Patrick, oh...Susan, Andrea [pseudonyms], I think there was four or five of them they used to come in.

One of them was...what was it...one of them was actually studying psychology I think, one was a social worker and two of them were just volunteers who came in and gave up their time, they used to come in with their guitars and sing songs...

SP *Okay.*

L ...and stuff like... things like that. They were like...you know the way nowadays if you went into kind of say a care home...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...like that but you'd...you'd...you'd go in on a voluntary basis like and just to give the children a little something...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...to kind of look forward to. You...you know the way hospitals and all, you get volunteers, it was exact same then...

SP *Okay.*

L ...but they were given the impression we were all happy and we were all kind of excited and so happy to be there and life was wonderful and...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and they did get that impression, you know.

SP *And what was your food like?*

L The food...

SP *Now I know this is bearing in mind...*

L Hmm.

SP *...bearing in mind the backgrou...your background is...*

L Yeah.

SP *...that you...*

L *...tha...tha...*

SP *...lacked food.*

L I...food, yeah. Food for us now was actually quite good. I'm trying to think now, I always remember at night time we had to set up the breakfast table. Now we...it looked...it all looked very posh, well for me it looked posh! *(Laughs)*

SP *Yeah.*

L But it probably didn't look posh for everybody else but to me it was posh because you sat at a table and you had a spoon and a...a knife and you had a bowl and you had a plate. So, you had cereal or you had toast. But we did all our own baking.

SP *Okay.*

L So, the teacher that used to come into us, she used to teach us Home Economics but she used to teach us how to bake. So, we baked our own bread, our own cakes for visitors...visitors used to come in like to see the...I never had a visitor – I could never understand that actually, why I never...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...had a visitor. And they were always kind of treated like royalty when they came in. Like they were...like, 'oh did the children make these cakes?' and you know, we used to make a whole week's batch of cakes...

SP     *Wow.*

L       ...you know. But I always remember the cockroaches. *Seriously* like. I couldn't believe it and I've never really seen cockroaches since. The place was *riddled* with cockroaches. And do you know that the cockroaches used to live in the flour? And we had to use that flour *still* to make the bread and the cakes for us?

SP     *Jesus.*

L       They *never* threw *anything* out, *nothing*, there was no way, you just had to get over the fact that the cockroaches were in it. As soon as you took that flour out and you opened the lid the cockroaches zoomed out of it...

SP     *Oh my God.*

L       Hmm. *Oh!* [When I] think of it! And we still had to use it.

SP     *And tell me what was...*

L       It's a wonder we never got sick actually! *(Laughs)*

SP     *Yeah, yeah. What was the lunch like or what would you eat for lunch?*

L       Oh we didn't...I don't think we had lunch.

SP     *Oh you didn't have lunch?*

L       No, no we had...we had the breakfast and we had dinner and we had a tea.

SP     *Okay.*

L       So the breakfast...the dinner...actually now that I think back after...it's very hard to kind of remember everything, you know.

SP *I understand, yeah.*

L One of us used to take a day each to...to cook a dinner. There was always...one of the nuns was always there to teach you to cook the dinner, so we always took turns to cook dinner so there was...there was always a meat, a veg, or fish. Yeah, I suppose mainly fish and meat and veg and potatoes, that was...like we did...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...we did have food...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but we probably didn't, but to me it was food...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know, I...I thought...

SP *Do you know what the nuns were eating?*

L They never ate with us.

SP *Okay*

L No, no.

SP *...were they completely separate?*

L They were *completely* separate they *never* ate with us...

SP *Okay.*

L ...never.

SP *And were they based like...were they housed somewhere else or...?*

L That's the funny thing I actually don't know.

SP *Okay.*

L Now I do remember the...Sister Bridget [pseudonym] she was our head nun and she had her office in our house but she always locked that office and she'd go off at six o'clock in the evening and there'd be other nuns who would come over, there'd be young nuns [who] would come over in the evening time.

SP *Yeah.*

L But we had to be in bed by I think half-nine and then th...there was a television, I remember a television in the sitting room and the sitting room was *lovely*. But...I thought it was lovely...  
(Laughs)

SP *Yeah. (Laughs)*

L ...you know for me!

SP *Yeah, no I understand.*

L I don't know if people understand this but for *me* everything was kind of like a palace because of what I came from. So I kind of like appreciated things...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but didn't realise like that...how hard I actually worked to have all this, you know.

SP *And how long did you work and...so when you were working in the laundry, how long were you working until?*

L Oh we worked from after breakfast...we would have our...we'd get up and clean the house first and then we'd have our breakfast at about half-seven and then we would have our breakfast...we'd have to be over there for eight o'clock and we'd be finished I think, six or seven in the evening time.

SP *Okay.*

L We came over for our dinner; our dinner used to be about...I think it was one or two o'clock – we'd have our dinner – and that was it until six or seven o'clock. Then we'd go over and we'd have the tea, and our tea consisted of the cakes or the breads...

SP *Okay.*

L ...which we had made on the Friday.

SP *Yeah.*

L We'd always do the baking on the Friday so that would...

SP *Okay.*

L ...do us for the week and that was it.

SP *And then you might have a bit of recreation time and then bed?*

L Yeah we would be allowed to watch the television for an hour or if these volunteers came in.

SP *Okay.*

L So that was our...always for the hour...

SP *Okay.*

L ...we always got to do something for an hour and then we'd go to bed...

SP *Okay.*

L ...and that was it. You know, but you dare not get out of the bed or...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I remember...did I ever tell you that I tried to commit suicide in there? I took two bottles of Benylin cough mixture but I woke up the next morning! (*Laughs*) I couldn't believe it! It just put me to sleep! It was obviously...it wasn't cough mixture they probably just put something into the bottles. You know, so. Yeah I was so disappointed when I woke up the next morning! (*Laughs*)

SP *They never knew that...*

L No!

SP *...that you tried to...?*

L I'm trying to think. There was...in the kitchen...the kitchen was huge and there was...all the presses were all up on the walls and there was loads of bottles of cough medicines and different types of medicines and I remember robbing the two bottles of...and nobody noticed.

SP *And why d...why did you try to commit suicide?*

L Because I hated it. I *absolutely hated* it. I...the beatings I couldn't, I...I oh my God I just can't...

SP *Can you tell me more about the beatings?*

L I...it was kind of...the slap across the face – we used to get slapped across the face.

SP *By who?*

L By the nuns.

SP *Yeah.*

L And I think that was...that was h...very hard because it...it stung you know, it really used to...kind of stung the face off you. It wasn't really so much beating it was more slapped...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but they used to slap you very hard. Or if...they'd kind of maybe strike you across the legs with a stick or something like that...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know.

SP *Do you want to describe that?*

L The...it wouldn't be...it'd be kind of a thin kind of stick...it w...

SP *A bamboo?*

L Yeah, that's what it would be like yeah, it was something that had flexibility in it anyway...always remember, but you'd get the strikes across your legs; you know, you'd get kind of like weals across the backs of your legs and all that. You could feel...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...the pain of it you know.

SP *How would you like...be standing or...?*

L Oh no you'd be standing...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...yeah, yeah you'd be standing. Mainly it would happen in the laundry if you were kind of slacking...

SP *Okay.*

L ...you know, if you...if you stopped to talk, if you were kind of...like because like you were slowing...you were actually slowing down productivity by...by stopping to talk like, there was no...you could *never* have a conversation or anything in th...in...in the laundry because you...you would actually...I remember this woman Emily [pseudonym] I...I turned around to speak to her and she'd go, 'sssshhhh!' like that, you know, she...she *shut* me up straight away. She wasn't being bad by doing that but she was doing it for *my* sake...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know what I mean and I thought she was (*whispered*) '*Oh God, she's being rude!*'

SP *Yeah.*

L But she wasn't being rude...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...she was just...she was j...she was helping me...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know.

SP *And how many women were working...or how many women were in your house, say?*

L In my house I think there was 12...

SP *Okay.*

L ...12. They all would have been around my age...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and they all would have had the same history.

SP *Hmm.*

L My last couple of weeks there, I think it was probably...the main reason why I kind of ran away...there was...this girl came in and she was...she was...she was in trouble with the law and that's why she came in, she was a very troublesome child to her parents or whatever, this was the story. But she was *very violent*, she was really, really violent and she...she picked on me, I don't know why she picked on me, I don't know what the problem was I think maybe because I was the youngest at the time. She...she got everybody to turn against me. She accused me of stealing cigarettes, which I...I didn't steal and I could swear to this day that I didn't steal. But she planted the cigarettes in my bed and under...I was in the bath...I always remember I was in...in the bath and she shoved the cigarettes under the door to make it look as if I had had them in the bathroom all the time because she said, 'oh she has them in there, I know she has them in there!' And then the nuns, I remember they op...made me open the door and they found the cigarettes because they were und...I had a towel under the door and they had put the cigarettes, well that girl had put the cigarettes under...so when the nun picked up the towel the cigarettes were there. So, I got terrible abuse over that. The nuns gave me a terrible time. I was totally ostracised. Nobody would speak to me. I was a thief, and how dare I steal after all they did for me and, I remember, I was...I couldn't sleep, I...I couldn't eat and there was a priest there he was German, I can't remember his name, but I remember going over to the church and praying to God to help me to maybe take me away or to kill me in my sleep. I always remember that and the priest came in and...and found me there and he said to me, 'have you anything to tell me?' And he also thought I had actually stolen the cigarettes and I said, 'no,' I said, 'I didn't steal the cigarettes'. Like it had gone all over the place that I had stolen the cigarettes, and but he believed me in the end, you know and he said, 'things will be okay'. But I ran away the next day.

SP *Okay.*

L And how I came to run away was...one of the girls had a visitor and I remember she was going out the door and I was watching for the door and when...when they had disappeared...they were c...I think they were coming in or something, but the door was open – I don't know why – because I remember trying the door a couple of times and I couldn't get out, but this particular day the door was open, and I got out. And I said, 'I'm never going back there again'. But I didn't know where I was going to go.

SP *Yeah.*

L But you *don't* think, you know when you're *young* like that you just d...you just want to escape, you know and I...I jus...I said, 'I have to go,' because I couldn't cope anymore.

SP *Actually I forgot to ask but what would you wear? What...what clothing did they give you? I...I'm presuming they gave you clothes 'cause you would have...*

L Yeah because I went in with nothing...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...so I...I think for...for a time, I wore what I had on me and I had to wash them every night and I had to hang them up and I'd put them on the next day regardless of whether they were dry or not. But I think after a week...the...two weeks I think it was, there was a social worker there, her name was Veronica [pseudonym] she brought me up to...into the city to...to buy my clothes and she bought me two outfits. So I had...between the clothes I had on me and those two outfits then and that kept me going then.

SP *Oh so you didn't wear a uniform then?*

L No...no...no...

SP *Oh okay.*

L ...not...

SP *Even when you were in the laundry?*

L ...no...no...not...we wore an apron...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but that was it but we didn't...we didn't...I don't remember wearing a uniform.

SP *Yeah.*

L No. We had an apron.

SP *Okay.*

L That...was...that was all th...

SP *And were you given a different name?*

L No.

SP *You were...you just kept your name?*

L Yeah...yeah...

SP *Okay.*

L ...I don't think...no I had my own name.

SP *Okay.*

L Yeah, yeah.

SP *And what about everyone else that was there. Was...was that their name or...?*

L Well as far as I knew yeah...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...yeah, didn't know anything about anybody in it like.

SP *Yeah, oh I was going to ask you...*

L We were all...we were all there and nobody divulged what they were there for, or what was their reasons.

SP *Hmm.*

L There was one girl who came in after me and myself and herself just hit it off straight away and she was absolutely lovely. She was actually from the travelling community, and myself and her got on great and we...we bonded together but she ran away as well, but she ran away before me, and I...I have tried for years to try and contact her. I put ads on the radio; I put ads on the papers and no, no sign of her. So I haven't got a clue...

SP *Okay.*

L ...haven't got a clue what happened to her.

SP *Yeah.*

L And I do feel sad because like to me she was...I...I loved her; she was...she was great, you know.

SP *Yeah.*

L She...no...she just disappeared off the face of the earth; don't know what happened to her.

SP *And what about religion? Did that play a part?*

L Yes, we went to Mass every day, every day we went to Mass and we had to pray *every day*. We...did we pray before...yeah we...after we cleaned the house we prayed before our breakfast, and we prayed before our dinner and we prayed before our tea. Religion was very big.

SP *Okay.*

L We had to pray a lot and I used to do all the readings in the church. I was always picked to do the readings and I remember, it was Christmas and a lot of them had visitors that came and the...the volunteers and all they used to come [sic], there was a special Mass on, the volunteers and everything came in, and there was one guy there I was just in love with him. I was just so in love with him. And he was sitting there in the church and I was so excited because he was sitting there in the church and I was doing the reading, I forgot to turn the microphone on! (*Sharp intake of breath*) *Well!* (*Laughs*) I can't tell you what happened to me after that! My God I was...oh my God I was beaten to a pulp. I let the church down, I let the whole thing down, I was a disgrace because I had forgot to turn on the microphone. You know the little microphones...

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

L ...that they have, yeah? I forgot to turn that on. Hmm. And I was just so excited about seeing this guy...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...in the thing like, 'oh yeah, ah like, he's coming to see me!' you know and yeah forgot to turn it on.

SP *And you were beaten for that?*

L Yeah, yeah because the...the prayer of the Lord wasn't coming out properly...you know.

SP *And tell me were there...you know I'm not sure if you...if you were aware of this or not, were there people in charge of you? They...they have been referred to as auxiliaries, did you have one in charge of you was there kind of a...?*

L Yeah there was a Sister Bridget that was her name...

SP *Yeah, okay.*

L ...she was in charge of us...

SP *Okay but...*

L ...she'd...

SP *...were there any other ladies who were kind of seen as being, I don't know how would you say it...in charge of you?*

L That worked there?

SP *Yeah.*

L Yeah, there was one...there was one woman there called Maura [pseudonym]. She...she was the...she...she would have been...she was one to make sure that everything was done, that we were all there and she...she reported everything to...to Sister Bridget, she reported everything to her that was happening in the day. That was her job.

SP *And was she an outsider?*

L She was an outsider...

SP *Okay, right.*

L ...she came in every day...

SP *Okay.*

L ...yeah. (*Whispered*) Maura Malone was her name...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...can't think, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SP *Okay, and did anyone...do you know, did anyone leave while you were there?*

L There was...

SP *Besides the running away?*

L ...the...the running away, yeah there was the girl that I went to in St Oliver's Hospital.  
[pseudonym of hospital]

SP *Yeah.*

L I...I went to...she...she left then. She was given the employment...

SP *Okay.*

L ...in the hospital from there.

SP *And why was she allowed to leave or...?*

L Because she was eighteen.

SP *Okay, so she was...*

L Once...once you came to eighteen the w...th way...the plan apparently was...this...this was supposed...the way it was supposed to work out, that when you came to eighteen that they

were going to get you full time employment and I'd seen it happen once with this girl and she was the only person I seen [sic]. Now, her family actually came to collect her...

SP *Okay.*

L ...you know, so...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and then she...she...

SP *She was working for the nuns?*

L Yeah, yeah.

SP *But you said that there were other women who were like elderly...*

L Yeah...

SP ...when you were...

L ...they...they were...they wouldn't have been in our section.

SP *No, no.*

L No, the elderly women th...they were all in the laundry. Didn't know anything about them we just saw them every day.

SP *Yeah.*

L We worked with them; never saw them outside, they were *never* outside.

SP *Okay.*

L They were never even out in the fresh air. I don't think they ever got fresh air. They were...you know y...the only time you saw them was actually in the laundry.

SP Okay.

L You wouldn't see them, and apart from the...the women that were pregnant they were the only other women that we saw in the place.

SP Yeah.

L There was never any men there, it was all women apart from the priest that was there and the volunteers that came in...

SP Yeah.

L ...th...one night a week...

SP Okay.

L ...and that was it because there w...there was no male presence...

SP Okay.

L ...at all.

SP Yeah...

L You know.

SP *Yeah, oh yeah that was it I wanted to ask, was about the actual laundry. Do you know who...who you...who the laundry was from? Like where...where it came...*

L No.

SP *...from or...?*

L No.

SP *No.*

L I always remember the priests'...

SP *Oh yeah, yeah.*

L ...gowns and stuff like that and the altar boys and nuns' habits....

SP *Okay.*

L ...all that kind of thing but I...I don't actually...I don't recall now. There were...there were some gents...gents clothes, there was a lot of gents, suits and clothes but there was...there was very little women's clothes now...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...apart from the nuns and that was it, but there was very little women's clothes. We didn't even get our own clothes done there. We had to wash our own clothes by hand ourselves.

SP *Oh right, okay.*

L Yeah. There was no washing machine and we couldn't use a washing machine or anything like, anything that we had to do, you couldn't send it to the laundry, there was no way you could send it up to the laundry. We had to wash everything by hand ourselves...

SP *I see, okay.*

L ...you know. And out of that...that 50 pence – I think it was 50 pence that we got – we had to buy our own washing powder out of that. So if...say one week you need washing powder you couldn't buy anything else.

SP *Yeah.*

L You could only get a small packet of washing powder...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...at the time. So you couldn't buy anything else so you had to make that kind of do, everybody had their own packet of washing powder, everybody had their own tooth paste and tooth brush and soap...

SP *Okay.*

L ...so you dare not take anybody else's...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know, that was forbidden.

SP *And did you get an education? I know that you mentioned home-economics but did they actually...*

L No.

SP *...give you...?*

L No...

SP *No, okay.*

L ...no education.

SP *Okay, because I know that you went to school...*

L Yeah.

SP *...before.*

L Before that yeah, yeah.

SP *Yeah, they never gave you an education?*

L No...

SP *Okay*

L ...no. Which is something that, I regret in my life because I...I know that I would have had the ability to do something with my life and to...to get a bit further, instead of just being a single parent or you know, you get caught under these traps like you know, men show you affection and you think, 'oh somebody here loves me,' you know, and then you just got...you get caught in a trap and then you're kind of left in that trap then for the rest of your life. Whereas I feel if I had an education now I...I probably would have done something with my life...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. There's so many things I...that I would love to have done; I would love to have studied music. I love music. My mother now – Lord rest her – she studied music, she was...she was great at music. She was a great singer, she was able to play the piano, she was able to read music, and I know that if I was given the chance I could have done the same.

SP *Yeah.*

L But unfortunately I didn't get that chance and people say you know, you can always do it now but I don't think the...you don't have the strength to do it now or the...the time to do it...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know, that's the thing when you're rearing a family now, you just don't...you don't...you...you just lose track of time and then you just want to give...protect your own family and look after your own family and...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know.

SP *And actually do you want to talk a bit more actually about...actually before...I wanted to sort of talk about your life after, but before we do I just wanted to...very quick question about whether...were you ever ill when you were there and did anyone ever come to...if...if anyone was ill would someone, a GP be sent in or?*

L *Never seen a GP, never and I think...no one paid attention to you if you were sick.*

SP *Okay.*

L I don't actually even...I don't recall being sick.

SP *Okay.*

L I don't recall it, I don't think beca...the reason why I wouldn't recall it is because you didn't have time to be sick. You weren't allowed to be sick. And there was no one sick.

SP *Was there any accidents in the laundry or did you ever have an accident?*

L No...I...not...no...no I don't recall I don't...and I don't remember any women...all...just remember is some of them had died and that you know but I don't remember actual accidents...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know.

SP *And yeah no...do you remember...actually sorry I just see there is a question here about factory inspec...or like inspectors. Did inspectors ever...did inspectors ever come to...to inspect the place or?*

L No.

SP *No, okay.*

L No.

SP *And so you never had any visitors?*

L No.

SP *No okay. And can you tell me actually, I always find this a really interesting question, but what makes a Sister good or bad...what made a Sister good or bad?*

L Oh. *(Sighs) (Pause)* There is no good or bad, they were...they were all the same. They kind of...it was like they were robots...they...we never saw the fun side of them the only time you would see the kind of...they were kind of...to me the nuns were kind of like actresses. When people were around they were able to put on this persona that that they were happy and everything was happy and jolly in the place and, 'look at us, aren't we great?' But as soon as people went it would be diverted back to being the baddies again. But there was no such thing as what makes a happy nun or a sad nun or a Sister or whatever you call them, I don't know.

SP *Yeah.*

L I could call them a few other names but I won't! *(Laughs)* No they were...they were of the same humour all the time...

SP *Okay.*

L ...all the same.

- SP *And how would you describe your relationship with the other girls or the women, or girls?*
- L The women...the women...the girls, yeah we all got on great. We kind of...we all were on the same page.
- SP *Do you think that you had...did you have like a strong relationship...like I guess I'm talking about friendship wise.*
- L Yeah.
- SP *I mean was it a very strong bond or...?*
- L No, no there was...there wasn't anything like that. There was just that one girl that I spoke about before...
- SP *Yeah.*
- L ...who ran away. She was the only person there that I seemed to have a bond with and...it's kind of like the same all my life I haven't been able to make a bond with anybody really. I don't have actual friends apart from yourself now who I just met now and you're fantastic but I actually don't have friends that I could kind of say, 'I'm going to meet such-and-such for a cup of coffee,' or 'I'm going to do this'. When I refer to people as friends I would refer to peop...people I know...
- SP *Yeah.*
- L ...rather than... Now I'm...I recently joined a choir and there's 50 women there and I could walk into that room with all those women and I could still stand there on my own because I would find it very hard to go over and make conversation with anybody because I don't know what to talk about...
- SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know, I just...and I often wish, I'd say, 'God I wish I was different, I wish I could kind of know what they talk about,' because I don't know what to talk about because for me my life is just, full of pain and full of hurt and I feel if I start talking to somebody that I'm going to tell them and I don't want to tell them because when you tell people how you are or what you're feeling and what you've been through they actually don't want to know you anymore. They have this kind of like..oh...the...it's kind of like they stand back from you as if you were kind of a leper or... And it's not that, it's because *they're* scared, *they* don't know how to handle it; *they* don't know what to say to you. So, I've never even created a bond with anybody...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...you know so, if there's a group of girls talking I...I wouldn't interrupt them or anything like that but I could...if they're all kind of...or something, I'd walk in and say, 'hi girls, hiya!' and everybody would say, 'oh yeah, hiya!' but that would be it.

SP *Yeah.*

L Do you know what I mean.

SP *Yeah.*

L I...I have worked in pubs and restaurants and everything all my life but for me the reason why I've worked in those jobs all the time is because it was...there was a barrier and I was kind of like...I was the actress and I was acting out this part and everybody used to say 'ah Lucy's [interviewee's pseudonym] on today, ah that's great, Lucy's always in great form and Lucy can do this and Lucy does that and Lucy works real hard and everything like...' [Inaudible whispers]

SP *It's alright.*

[Interviewee indicates she is worried because she has used her real name, however a pseudonym has been inserted]

L And...

SP *Don't...don't worry, don't worry.*

L Yeah, yeah. Just scratch that anyway. So, it was kind of like I was, I could put on this great act but as soon as I went home I was just kind of...go back into myself again.

SP *Yeah.*

L I...I don't go out, I don't go out at all, very seldom go out.

SP *Yeah.*

L Very, very seldom because I go out like and I'm kind of saying, 'oh God do I really have to be...?' I do...I just want to sleep. It's like I want to sleep my life away.

SP *Because you put that act to people do you find that when you come home, is...do you feel drained emotionally, emotionally drained?*

L *Absolutely drained.* A...that's exactly what it is and I'm just absolutely exhausted. And I do wish that I could (*sighs*) oh God I wish I could kind of let go and like I wish I could of unburden all this but no matter who I talk to, no matter how many counsellors I talk to it's...the pain is still there. It's never going to go. It's always going to be there. And people will say to you, 'ah...f...it's in the past, forget about it,' like you know, but you can't because it's...it's in your brain, it's in your head...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and you can't erase that.

SP *And do you want to talk a bit more about how it still lives with you?*

L For me, I haven't been able to get into a relationship. I've been in relationships, I'm in a relationship at the moment but they're...for me they're never staying relationships because I have this fear that they want to get closer by kind of wanting to maybe move in with me or they

want to get married and as soon as I hear that I'm gone, I *run* for the hills because I am absolutely terrified. I'm fifty-two years of age and I have *never* lived with a man and I am absolutely terrified to live with a man. My daughter is married and she's got three children and I have this horrible fear that her husband is abusing her children. Even though he is not, but I think he is. It's in *my* head that he is and I think that of everybody. If I see a man with a little girl walking down the street, the first thing that comes into my head, 'oh my God what's he going to do to that little girl?' If I see a man playing with a child on his lap I think that he's thinking sexual thoughts towards her. I think that he wants to abuse her. That's my biggest fear in my life, that every man that I see with a...be it a little boy or a little girl that they're abusing them...

SP    *Yeah.*

L     ...and it's automatic...

SP    *Yeah.*

L     ...it's absolutely automatic I just firmly believe it. And that's why I would never get into a relationship with a man and I have never...I have two children, they're both from different fathers. When my daughter was born I swore that no man will *ever, ever* have anything to do with her in her life and that I would be her sole parent and I would bring her up and she's very, very happy and then 13 years later I got pregnant again and I had my little son and he is, such a happy little child. I brought him up on his own as well and they didn't need fathers, they didn't need them, they had me and I did everything I could to protect them and I've done so far and they're happy and I'm glad I was...had the chance to do that for somebody else, make them happy. And I think if...if I ever got into another relationship I wouldn't...I wouldn't even...I would think very hard of even letting them stay overnight in my home because I would sleep with one eye open. I would think if they were going to stay here, 'oh my God they're going to interfere with my children,' and I couldn't do that and I couldn't put myself through that and I couldn't put my children through that. So no I would never live with a man...

SP    *Yeah.*

L     ...because to me all men are the same even though they're not...

SP *Yeah, yeah.*

L ...you know. And I...and I do wish sometimes...I do hear people talk about their fathers and you'd be in a circle and people would be talking about that, 'oh yeah my dad and my dad,' and this, and I can't understand, I don't...I can't understand how they have a relationship with their father.

[Phone rings in background, interview interrupted]

L Funny how you forget isn't it and you just kind of get in to it. You're so easy to talk to do you know what I mean. That's why, I absolutely...I've met you a couple of times and I find you so easy to talk with. I don't really get upset talking to you, you know what I mean. You seem to be able to relate to me and that's amazing and I think you're fantastic! I really, really do. There should be one of you everywhere. Everybody should have a friend like you. You're wonderful, you really are honestly. And I mean that genuinely from the heart.

SP *Thank you.*

L And your mother and father should be very proud of you...

SP *Thank you.*

L ...because if I had a daughter like you I would be so proud. I really would. You're the best. So where was I?

SP *Well actually maybe that can lead on quite well to what I...your experience of counsellors...you were telling me?*

L *(Sighs)* Yeah, counsellors, hmm. I don't like counsellors. The first counsellor I met, I was twenty-one I think my doctor referred me to a counsellor because I was very depressed I just had my daughter and like that I was kind of...had this fear in my head like, 'oh my God somebody's going to hurt my daughter,' and I was so protective that I was kind of going off the head kind of, more or less.

SP *Yeah.*

L So my doctor referred me to a counsellor and I went to see this counsellor and we spoke and we talked for about an hour. / talked, she listened and then she said to me, 'look,' she said, 'would you like to come back next week?' So I said, 'yeah,' so she wrote me down in her diary to come back. So the next week I went and I sat there for an hour and she came out of her room and she completely forgot that I had an appointment with her. So...a...and she says to me, she says, 'oh look I'll rearrange' and I said, 'no forget about it,' I just couldn't be bothered. So it took me a long time then to kind of like suggest even think of going back to counselling. So I think it was five, six years ago I decided I was...I...would have been ten years ago, I decided that I was going to sue...not sue my father but how would you say it...kind of...I was going to get him charged for what he did to me...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I was going to make him pay...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...for what he did and I was going to make my brothers pay for what they did to me, because they...basically they destroyed my life and like I'm still kind of like...still in great pain over this. But I...I decided I would go to...my doctor had suggested to me again...to go to counselling again, so I went in to see another counsellor, and it was kind of like...she sat there and just went, 'hmm, hmm,' she just let me talk, but I didn't feel she was interested because she wasn't...she wasn't looking at me she was kind of like, 'yeah, yeah'. And then, 'right time is up!' you know, and I just kind of felt *uncomfortable*. So I stuck with her for a couple of times and I went...and then I gave it up, I said no, 'this is ridiculous,' because I was coming out...I was coming out upset...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...because the fact that I didn't feel that she was listening to me number one and, I didn't know where to kind of even start talking with her you know what I mean like, it's like, 'where do I...what do I do here?' So and then three years ago then I...I decided I'd have go back again,

try it again because the court cases were coming up and I was...I was in an awful state so...I was on the verge of suicide...so my doctor had remem...recommended that I go to a certain place where they deal with people who feel like...suicidal. So I went to this counsellor and at first yeah she listened but like...like that, she listened. There was no...talk. I did all the talking she just did all the listening. So eventually then the government had closed down the...this was government funded so the government had decided they were going to close down this house and this counsellor had decided that she was going to go private. So she said to me, she said, 'look,' she said, 'I'd like to continue our sessions,' so I agreed because as I said I was going through the court case and all that time and...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I really needed somewhere to unload...and...or offload, and that was my space. So, we had to go away for the court case because my father wasn't here so we had to go away for it and...but I was away for three weeks and then when I came back and I went back to the...and I had told the counsellor that I wouldn't be there for the next three weeks because we had to go away for the court case and...when I came back she charged me for those three weeks. It was kind of like...oh...oh I told her that I didn't want to do the counselling anymore because I didn't...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...the last time I was with her she was staring into space and I had stopped talking and she hadn't even noticed that I had stopped talking, it was just kind of like *staring* like you know and I said, 'oh my God this is ridiculous'. So I had decided that that's it I'm not going to do this counselling anymore so I told her and she says, 'oh you can't just stop the counselling you have to give me notice'. And I said, 'look I don't want to do it anymore,' and...it was then she said to me, 'oh you owe me for the three weeks you weren't here'. And I was shocked, I was absolutely shocked, so I said, 'look forget about it'. So that was my experience of counsellors.

SP *Okay.*

L So they don't know...I don't think counsellors know how to deal with situations like this. Number one is because they don't understand it; they have never experienced it so...and I think for

someone to be a counsellor in this field, they have to have some connection to it somewhere along the line because people don't understand and counsellors *do not* understand, it's no way.

SP *Yeah.*

L They...they...they don't feel what a person feels and I'm sure they're probably saying, '*oh God* if I have to listen to this again!' You know, that's the way I felt...

SP *That's how you felt, yeah.*

L ...you know, that I was...they were...I was draining them...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...instead of me being able to feel relief...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I was kind of feeling more pressure to go to them so, no. They don't work for me.

SP *Yeah.*

L You do! You're great, you're brilliant, so apart from that now. You should be a *counsellor!* *Definitely*, go for counselling. I don't mean go for counselling (*laughs*) I mean do...do something because...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you do, you...you seem to...you seem to kind of relate to...to what people are feeling and you...a...you're the most understanding person I have ever met. You really are! So...you're wasted! Whatever you're doing I don't know but you're...

SP *Maybe...maybe you might inspire me alright.*

L Yeah, yeah!

SP So *eh*...

L But y...you don't realise how helpful you would be to people. I...for me personally I think that you would be a great help and, see the way you come out to my house? That's fantastic. Counsellors, you have to go to them and you're coming out of them all raw...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and you're feeling vulnerable and you're feeling suicidal...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and you're getting into a car or you're getting onto a train and you're just kind of saying, 'ah here I've had enough!'

SP *Yeah.*

L You could crash, you could throw yourself in front of the train, you could...you know, whereas you come to me and for me that's the way it should work because I'm in my own environment and I...if I want to cry I can cry and I can do what I want to do...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and after you're gone I can just kind of go and have a good bawl for myself and you know...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...that's the way it should be...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...shouldn't it really?

SP *I...I agree, that...yeah...*

L Yeah.

SP *...no I...I agree entirely.*

L Yeah.

SP *That's kind of why I was asking about...like...your counselling experience...*

L Yeah.

SP *...because I think it's important for people to understand that aspect...*

L Yeah.

SP *...of..of this.*

L Yeah. Because I always kind of felt with counselling, 'okay your time is up I've got other people to see,' and you're kind of taking from that...and you're... 'I'm losing money over you'.

SP *Yeah.*

L That's the impression I get.

SP *Yeah.*

L Whereas with you, you come out here to me, you don't even care about the time. You know what I mean, you dedicate your time to me and you don't have to but you do. And...you know...and...who else is going to do that? And you're doing this free, which is even...my God more amazing, do you know what I mean? So...

SP *Can you tell us a bit more – sorry, ‘us’, I mean ‘me’ – a bit more about...psychologically how all of this has made you feel?*

L The...

SP *Maybe perhaps to give an insight into the suicidal...*

L The reason why I would be suicidal is, I could go into a situation where everybody around me is very happy and I can't understand why they're happy and I wish I could have that happiness. And I would love to feel that, and I would...oh *my God* I would give anything to just kind of say, 'God yeah, you know, life is great'. But life is not great because you've got this *constant, constant* thing in your head. And I have...I have so much to live for; I've got my...my son, my daughter, my three grandchildren, I have my home, I have a partner, but having all that doesn't take away the pain that I feel and the thoughts that I feel. I was...I'm in a choir and I went last week and we were doing rehearsals and I came out of the rehearsals and – we're right on the sea front – and I wanted to walk into that water last week. And...it looks so...like, the sea was very rough but it looked so inviting. I wanted to just kind of keep walking, I said, (*whispered*) 'Lucy [pseudonym] (01:23:54) just keep walking, just keep walking'. And the only thing that stops me is, the hurt that would cause my family and I know I would be hurting them and I don't want to be the one to hurt them, you know what I mean, because *they* haven't done anything wrong and *I* don't want to be the one to hurt them because *I* know what it's like to be hurt...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and I know how the hurt feels and I couldn't leave them with that. So, I would be the type that...I would pray every night that I don't wake up in the morning. That I could die of natural causes but it's a wish I have but unfortunately I wake up every morning, and say, (*sighs*) 'oh here I go another day,' you know, and people will say, 'well you have everything,' you know, 'what are you depressed about? What are you unhappy about?' I haven't got peace of mind and peace of mind is worth more than anything in the world.

SP *What do you think would be peace of mind for you?*

L Not to have all these memories not to have all these horrible thoughts in my head that every time I see a man with a child or, that my...my daughter now, she's married, I don't know what goes on behind closed doors. I do have terrible imaginings that is he beating her? Or is he giving her a hard time? Is he doing anything to the kids? You never get away from that...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...*never* get away from that. I know my son is safe because my son is with me...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...and he's okay, but, what if some...he goes out...and something happens to him as well like? You know, it's...what ifs, what ifs.

SP *It's actually interesting that you're...because that is another thing I was going to ask about, is your role as a parent and how all of this affected you?*

L Hmm. Hmm.

SP *And I think you've kind of answered it there.*

L Yeah, yeah, it's the fear of what's going to happen to them and their lives.

SP *Yeah.*

L Now I chose not to have their fathers involved with them because I would ima...think that all fathers were the same that they're all going to abuse their...their children. And I didn't want to put my...I didn't be the on...want to be the one to put my children in that situation.

SP *Yeah.*

L So I kept them away from that situation, you know and that was the main reason and...and I'm so glad that I did because I...I think I've done a good enough job they're...I've kept them safe, you know and they've grown up happy and they're very happy. And my children can look back

with happy memories on their lives; they don't have this horrible feeling in them like that, the fear of going into th...into their home like, the stomach's churning. I mean I always remember like coming home from school and, your stomach would be...oh you'd be sick and you'd be...this horrible shaking feeling you get in your body, it's h...awful and every day of the week you have that.

SP     *Yeah.*

L       'Who's going to be in the house? Which of them are going to be there? Who's going to...am I going to get beaten? Am I going to get raped? Am I going to get abused? Am I...what's going to happen to me today?' Because *every day, every single day* something happened and then...I remember there was a little shop, a...a little corner shop we had, and I was about eight and I went down there and I asked for work and the woman in the shop, she used to...they...they used to kind of do deliveries in those days like, and I...she'd give me a little pram to wheel and she'd give me the address and I'd go to the...to the house with the stuff and every time I...they'd always invite me in but I always said, 'no,' you know what I mean, because if I went in that...they'd know that there was something wrong with me. And I wouldn't...I would always refuse the food or...and I remember one day it was lashing rain and one of the women she took me in and she put a bowl of soup in front of me and I said, '*oh!* But I'm going home to have my dinner now,' you know, and I always remember...and I always remember that bowl of chicken soup and I r...and I said 'no' to it because I was afraid that she could say, 'God she's hungry...'

SP     *Yeah.*

L       ...you know, 'something's wrong. Why...why is this girl hungry?' But now if my son or daughter went into a house and somebody offered them a bowl of soup or something, 'oh God yeah I'd love it, thanks very much,' you know.

SP     *Yeah.*

L       They wouldn't have the fear of saying 'no,' you know.

SP     *Yeah. And tell me you know when you said all the memories, but do you suffer...do you suffer flashbacks?*

L Yeah...yeah I have nightmares...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I have nightmares constantly.

SP *Okay.*

L And it's always the same nightmares, there's always a shadow over me and a shadow is kind of telling me what to do and I would wake up screaming and I would be *convinced*, absolutely convinced that there was four men – it's always four men I don't know why – in the room. And I look under the bed and I look under wardrobes and I come downstairs and I creep downstairs and my son once or twice now has...has actually found me and saying, 'oh my God mam what is wrong with you?' My son knows nothing about my past, absolutely nothing. He knows that my father beat me but that's about it. He knows nothing else. My daughter knows everything about me but he doesn't know anything.

SP *Why didn't you tell him?*

L *(Pause)* Why didn't I tell him? I think I wanted to kind of protect him because he...he is very protective over me. I was attacked three years ago, four years ago I was actually attacked in the house by two girls...knocked on the door and I was minding my grandchildren. My daughter and her husband had gone away, it was my daughter's birthday. They had gone away and it was my sister's birthday and all the family were...were gone to her party. So, there was nobody around and James [pseudonym of interviewee's son] was gone into a football match. He was – Shamrock Rovers, loves Shamrock Rovers – so he was gone to the football match and there was a knock on the door and I thought it was, my son-in-law's mother just lives a couple of doors up...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I thought it was her because...blonde hair. So I opened the door and they pushed in the door and they start [sic] beating me up. They broke my arm – I had my phone in my hand and I was trying to ring the police...

SP *Jesus.*

L ...and they broke my arm...they kept bashing my arm off the banister to try and release the...the phone. My s...grandson was in the sitting room and he heard all the commotion and came out and he saw they actually had me by the head of hair and they punched me in the face and everything, it was horrific, absolutely horrific it was, and I haven't...I don't have a house phone so I...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...knocked in next [door]...they didn't get anything because I didn't have anything.

SP *I was going to ask were they trying to rob you or...?*

L Yeah, oh yeah. The...but my...I didn't scream out because I was afraid of...of actually hurting my...my grandson or my grandson hearing me, and he was...but he was inside the room scr...he was only six...he was screaming the place down. My granddaughter apparently she got under the bed. So, I knocked in next door and – after they'd left – and they had heard a bit of commotion, they didn't know what it was, so I knocked in and the young lad there next door came in – Harry [pseudonym of neighbour] – and he rang the police. So I says to him, 'can I p...can I please just have your phone, please give me your phone'. So I rang my sister's house and there was no answer. And I kept ringing it and I said, 'please somebody answer the phone, please somebody answer the phone!' So my niece eventually answered the phone, she has a child I knew she couldn't have been out because she was babysitting...she would have been minding her own child so I said...I said, 'is anybody around?' I said, 'I'm after being attacked,' I said, 'I need someone to take the kids'. And so she in turn rang her mother who was at the party so they all came up then but the...I was brought in to hospital straight away anyway because I was beaten so badly. But I was terrified for the grandchildren but...while...the...the police were here, the police brought me to the hospital... but while the police were here James saw the sirens and everything and he ran to the house...didn't know what was happening. And

he went to pieces. He was only fourteen, he absolutely went to pieces and he punched walls, he actually broke all his knuckles in frustration...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. And to this day he sleeps with a knife under his bed.

SP *Wow.*

L And I try to keep taking it out but every time I take it out he puts it back...

SP *Wow.*

L ...to this day...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and he...he said to me, he said, (*whispered*) 'if anybody ever hurts you,' he said, 'I'll [interviewee mutes swear word] kill them,' and I'm terrified, I w...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I w...I'm terrified to tell him...

SP *Okay.*

L ...you know because of the way he would react.

SP *Does your partner know?*

L *Yeah.*

SP *Yeah, okay.*

L For James I kind of like...it's kind of like I want to try and protect *him* from that pain...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...because if I tell him I know he's only going to be in pain...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...because he will...he will feel my pain...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and he always does. There's...we have...there's just this bond, I don't know what it is, it's jus...we just have this bond and like, everything I go through he seems...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...to sense it...

SP *Yeah.*

L ... you know, but...

SP *D...does...do you talk about your time in the Magdalene Laundry?*

L No he doesn't know about that.

SP *But to...to anyone I mean, to...?*

L No.

SP *No one? Oh, okay.*

L No, no *never* told anybody about it.

SP *Okay.*

L Now my daughter knows I was in care...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but she...

SP *She doesn't know the ex...*

L No.

SP *...like what it was.?*

L No, no.

SP *That it was a...M...a laundry.*

L Yeah...yeah... nobody knows...

SP *Okay.*

L ...you know, so...

SP *Okay.*

L I just kind of keep that...I actually keep that...my s...I told my partner...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but I didn't give him any details, do you know what I mean, I just kind of told him...yeah. How it...how...how came about that I told him was when it all came up on the news and everything and then I was...got real upset...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and he says to me, 'what the hell is wrong with you?' I said, 'nothing,' he said, 'what is wrong with you?' So I ended up telling him.

SP *And why didn't you tell people?*

L I was...ashamed you know, it's kind of like...I had gone through everything I had gone through at home and then for me to go into another situation where I thought I was being protected – well I was in a way being protected – but I was being used and abused at the same time, but I was being fed, and I was kind of ashamed of that because I felt – for me – that I was selling myself again...

SP *Okay.*

L ...you know, I was selling my services for food and a bed.

SP *Yeah.*

L That's...you know, the way I felt...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and I still feel like that.

SP *No, it's a really interesting...*

L Yeah, yeah.

SP *...that's a really...*

L Yeah.

SP *...good point as well.*

L Yeah, yeah. Because it's kind of...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...it's kind of like...you don't...just...like...you don't want to kind of tell everybody you're the victim all the time...

SP *Hmm.*

L ...do you know what I mean? Y...y...there's only so much you kind of want to say, and people say, 'oh fuck sake here she goes again!' And that's the way I feel. I feel like 'ah here we go again, here's...here comes the victim'. And I don't *want* to play the victim all the time I don't *want* to be a victim.

SP *Yeah.*

L I want to be kind of like normal...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...but I don't want to p...I don't want to portray the victim all the time, I want to portray that 'oh wow not a bother on me!' you know...

SP *Yeah.*

L 'I'm fine and I'm okay,' and I am okay...most of the time I suppose, you know.

SP *And do you suffer anxieties and...?*

L Yeah, panic attacks...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and things like that yeah.

SP *And you know, we were talking about earlier on...*

L Hmm.

SP *...about how...yeah you seem...that you're very anxious...*

L Yeah.

SP *...so that's what I...*

L Yeah, yeah.

SP *...kind of gathered.*

L I would...I would be...myself and my partner had a terrible week this week. We didn't talk for the whole week. He was hav...he's having problems with his own son who lives somewhere else and because he was having a problem with him on this particular day last week he came in here and I – I would cook his dinner and everything for him – and he was like an anti-Christ and it's like he took it all out on me and I just kind of stood back and I said, 'whoa I'm not putting up with this. I do *not* do this,' so I says, 'go away' I says, 'I don't even want to see you, I don't even want to speak with you,' you know...that's...I don't want...no one is ever going to abuse me again. And I have this kind of thing, there's this...it's kind of like this wall is there.

SP *Yeah.*

L And you can only go so far with me and then try and get over that and then I just explode.

SP *Yeah. And I also noticed that you're afraid that...when...like, to rock the boat with authority? Was that...*

L Yeah.

SP *...would that be...?*

L Yeah, am absolutely...I have...yeah...I have this fear that...for somebody who...who...who has authority like, say lawyers, for instance, that they can tell *me* what to do instead of me kind of being strong and telling them, 'look no, it's the other way around, you're supposed to do what *I* say,' but no I'm letting them tell me what to do and I shouldn't. It's the same with doctors, it's the same with police or anybody...anybody in auth...even male...male figures to me...male figures are authority. And male figures to me are kind of like...I...I...kind of...very, very anxious around them all the time and when...when my partner came in with this real authoritative thing I s...I just kind of said, 'oh no,' and I...I felt this awful sickness.

SP *Hmm.*

L I felt this kind of churning in my stomach and I started shaking, I got that old melancholy feeling as they say...

SP *From the...from the...*

L ...you know and I said, 'no,' I said, 'no I'm not doing this, I'm not...I refuse to do this'.

SP *Yeah.*

L So we only started talking yesterday after a week. So you just you...

SP *But all of that is due to your...*

L Yeah.

SP *...your past.*

L Yeah, unfor...because I can't deal with it. I don't know how to deal with that...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...whereas I know for a fact in a...in a...like I...I'd go over to...to my daughter's house and herself and her husband are there and he's shouting at her and she's shouting at him and five minutes later they're just talking as normal. And I'm saying, 'oh my God Aisling [pseudonym] (01:38:41) how do you let him shout at you like that like?' And she looks at me, 'mam don't be silly,' she says, 'everybody does that' she says, 'that's normal!'

SP *Yeah.*

L And I say, 'does it not upset you?' And she says, 'why would it upset me?' I said, 'because he shouts at you'. She says, 'sure I shout at him, I give him just as much,' she says, 'not at all,' she says, 'don't be worrying'. But for me I automatically become scared and I automatically get defensive and I automatically try and protect myself. So therefore I just kind of push them away – 'go away I don't want to see you anymore'.

SP *Yeah.*

L You know. It takes me a long time to kind of calm down...

SP *Hmm*

L ...from the situation like that.

SP *Yeah. Did you have any hopes or dreams while you were like in the laundry in the...in Sean McDermott Street?*

L No. Simply because I was in...I just lived from day to day, there was no such thing as dreams or aspirations or you know, 'I wish I could, I wish I could,' I just lived from day to day.

SP *And what about anxieties, did you...?*

L I was terrified of going back home.

SP *Okay.*

L As bad and all as the laundry was...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...I was terrified of going back home.

SP *I understand.*

L That was my big fear.

SP *Yeah.*

L And my fear was that if I didn't behave myself or if I didn't do what they told me to do or if I didn't do the work properly that they were going to get rid of me.

SP *Okay.*

L They were going to send me back home again...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and that was my fear.

SP *Yeah. And I want to ask something a bit more positive I guess is...and a question that I kind of like that I have here – sorry I'm just trying to find it because I want to say the exact – of all your accomplishments what are you most proud of?*

L My children. *Absolutely*, I'm...I'm proud that I brought them to the age they are without any bad memories and if you met my children now and you asked them have they any bad memories in their lives and they'd say, 'no' and they could say it with conviction because they are so happy.

SP *And something else I've noticed is you always seem to make dinner for everyone, do you know...?*

L Yeah! (*Laughs*) Yeah, I...I cook a lot...

SP *Is that...*

L ...it's...thing...yeah...

SP *...is there a reason behind that?*

L I always have this thing that people are hungry. *Always* like you know, 'oh they're hungry,' you know and, 'I have to feed them, I have to feed them'. Now I don't over feed them...

SP *No, no w...w...*

L ...you know what I mean just kind of...

SP *...what I mean is...is that...I've noticed even like...say your daughter is married and everything but they'll come over here...*

L They'll come over here for...for dinner...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...we had a *lovely* big roast dinner yesterday now, and the gas thing is it was m...my granddaughter was a year old yesterday and I kind of said like, I'll do a big huge roast. Now I do something...I have...I love to cook and I have a list and...I have a list of 28 dishes, so there's no dish repeated in the 28 days, it's different all the time all the way down. So I just kind of stick to that list so they don't know what's coming the next day...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...like none of them know what they're having for dinner today, only I do.

SP *Yeah.*

L Do you know what I mean? So, they don't know what they're having for dinner until I start cooking it. I don't tell them what they're having for dinner. So it's great like, so it's always a surprise for them for th...

SP *Do you think that's related to your...your upbringing?*

L Yeah, definitely, definitely. And I love when they say, 'oh look what we're having for dinner today!' You know what I mean and they love the dinner and they'll always eat the...kids won't eat the fecking dinners Jesus Christ almighty!

SP *Very picky.*

L *Oh!* Honest to God. Now I never ate vegetables because I've never had vegetables and every time I look at a vegetable I go, 'oh!' I was afraid of a vegetable, I'm terrified of onions. I don't know why I'm terrified of onions, the thought of an onion go into my mouth would just make me vomit...couldn't. But yet I will still cook them for...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...to put into the rest of their dinners – just because I don't like them. But...and as a result I very rarely cooked vegetables and it's only in the last say eight years that I've started to cook...I started...'Jesus Christ Lucy you better start cooking vegetables'. But Aisling [pseudonym of interviewee's daughter] to this day won't eat vegetables. There's no way will she touch them but, my son now he eats them now, which is great.

SP *Yeah.*

L So yesterday I did...I had a big roast dinner on yesterday and I have this special gravy and – I make a special gravy and all, they love the gravy and – the first thing my son says to me was, 'oh love...oh my favourite dinner, oh Ma the thoughts of the cleaning up,' he said, 'it's killing me!' I said, 'hang on a second,' I said, 'what about all the preparation that has to go into the dinner?' 'Oh but Ma,' he said, 'the amount of pots you used!' (*Laughs*) As much as he loves the dinner he just hates the cleaning. Now my family are great they always help me to clean up after dinner, always...there's always, everybody chips in...

SP *Very good.*

L ...which is good...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...do you know what I mean like? E...everything is not just left on my plate, I...now when I'm cooking I don't want anybody in the kitchen, just leave me alone and let me get on with it. But with the cleaning they always help me...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...there's always a routine; James would get up and wash the dishes or Aisling would dry them or put them away or my partner would help me to do them as well like, he's very good too so they...they all help.

SP *Good.*

L You know.

SP *And I guess I just want to kind of finish up now with...are y...actually...are you in touch with anyone from the laundry?*

L No.

SP *No, because you were telling me actually...*

L Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SP *...yeah that you tried to look...*

L I tried yeah...yeah, yeah.

SP *In terms of the redress process that's on-going and everything like, what would you like from it?*

L *(Pause)* How would I...that's a good question. I suppose I would probably go with what everybody else would like because I don't feel like I would kind of really have a say in it because I was only there for a year but I think everybody should get paid for their time there and maybe some kind of illness help or kind of...some kind of help thing that they can go to, or pension...some kind of pension thing to help them towards...kind of...their future because, a lot of...a lot the women in there they worked very, very hard and I can tell you they worked to the bone and they got no thanks for it and they got no...they weren't appreciated, they got no wages and I know that for a fact because none of us got wages...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know what I mean. They...like me they had their bed and board and...and that was their wages. And they were probably like me, they were probably grateful for it at the time, you know and for me I think they deserve...they deserve to get something to keep them...make them comfortable now in their...the last years of life, that they haven't got the worry of, 'oh, where am I going to get money for the doctor?' or like...because a lot of them would be ill...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know because like they wouldn't have been fed properly...properly or they kind of...they wouldn't have got fresh air, they wouldn't have got the sun element, so a lot of them would probably suffer from say arthritis or bone problems, stuff like that and they need help with all that...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...they...they...they need...they need support. They need someone they can talk to and they can't have any of that unless they have money and they do need money because unfortunately for a lot of them and myself included we've no education and a lot of the jobs out there now you need education and there's no getting out of that. You either try and go back to school or go back to...if you're going to go to work and unfortunately for...for me and for a lot of the women

is...it's all to do domestically, it's all to do with kind of cooking and cleaning and that's the kind of work all of us ever do...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...because we don't know anything else, you know.

SP *And how do you feel towards the religious orders and religion and stuff like that?*

L I hate religious orders. Now I am a religious person myself personally, I have faith in God and I have faith in Jesus and I love the angels; the angels are my inspiration I talk to the angels all the time, absolutely love them. I hate religious orders because to me they're money grabbers. What do they do with their money? I would love to know what they do with their money. Every Sunday in church, why do they have a church? The Lord...the religious...like the Catholic faith always taught us that the...the Lord was everywhere, so why do they have to go into the church? Why do they have to give money? The Lord never asked people for money. The Lord gave to people. I don't see the church *giving* to anybody. I have *never* seen the church give to anybody. You've got the Pope, right. This I have to say gets...really gets on my nerves. You got the Pope...do you ever see all their...their...all the Cardinals, all the clothes they wear? What laundry did them for them?

SP *Hmm.*

L What laundry pressed all their clothes and made them all white and shiny?

SP *Yeah.*

L Who polishes their shoes because I can tell you one thing, they don't do it. Who's paying these people to do this? What are they doing with all these gold crosses? Jesus didn't die on a gold cross, he died on a wooden cross, he was nailed to it, so why have they got gold, they've got gold dripping out of everywhere. They've got the Sistine Chapel which is worth billions, they've got...I guarantee you...they're not sitting down and making their own breakfast, and they're not sitting down and making their own dinner, they've got servants and, still they're taking

everybody's money. I would love to see the Pope go on an ordinary flight to a country that is really, really poor like, what's that country now, Condo? Or, Conda?

SP *Congo?*

L Congo, and see the poor people there. They haven't even got a roof over their heads and for one day that all these people you know all these massive...I guarantee they have five course meals...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and bottles of wine to beat the band. How...what will that do for all those people in Congo?

SP *Exactly.*

L One day, what would it do for people? They have the cheek to charge into the Basilica whatever you call it, I don't know what the feck it's called. But they have a cheek to charge people into that and they don't even...you can't pay it by credit card, you have to pay it by cash. What do they do with the cash? Please somebody tell me! Honestly it's...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...oh...oh I just get so...I just get so mad!

SP *Yeah.*

L They have...as I said...obviously just some laundry somewhere which is doing...doing all this work, are they getting paid for it? I can guarantee you they're not...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know, and I...I can guarantee they're still...there are obviously still some laundries out there doing all this work for them because they...they're not paying out money, they're hoarding all that money, gold rings...

SP *And speaking...*

L ...where are they going around with their gold rings!

SP *...of which that is one of the things that has come out in the McAleese Report it said...that the nuns or the religious orders never made any profits from...*

L Oh would you get off, get off the stage! Profits!? They have made *millions absolutely millions*. The church...do you know what, the amount of times that you see signs in the church, the church needs a new...needs a new roof? Come off the stage, like how many times do you have to replace a fecking roof in a church? How many times do you replace a roof in a house? Never! So why is the church different like? Does God come and slash it every time like yez don't give money in to it or something? Crazy, absolutely crazy. What about all the money that goes into the baskets in church, three or four times a day? What about all the money that goes into these boxes for candles? I can guarantee you like you know, the poor people aren't getting this. They're saying they're doing this for the poor; they're all for the poor, they're all for the poor, they're not. They're only for the wealthy. They don't look after the poor; they don't know how to look after the poor.

SP *Yeah.*

L I can tell you...excuse me...there was...our local church up here, I worked in a shop across the road from that and there was a homeless man there and he was always there and he was...he used to sleep in the shelter of the church and the one...this particular day anyway he must have overslept or something and the priest came along and found him. What did the priest do? Did he invite him in for a cup of tea? Did he invite him in to warm him up? No! He called the Guards to remove him. So how is that helping the poor? How is that helping the homeless? It wouldn't have cost him a penny to bring that poor man in and give him a little bit of warmth and give him a cup of tea. That's what they're supposed to do. Isn't that what religion is about? Is that not what the Catholic Church is supposed to be about?

SP *Yeah.*

L I haven't seen them helping anybody. In fact I would see a priest walk over a homeless person rather than help them and the...the reason why priests are priests is because they have automatic connection with children. So they're in there, they know...they know all these things, they know all the tricks of the trade. They're kind of, 'that's grand now we'll get in here, no one's going to report us, who can they report us to. No one's going to believe them, we're priests. We'll g...we'll get a house, we'll get our maids, we'll get our servants, we'll get our food'. They've everything!

SP *Yeah.*

L Haven't they?

SP *Yeah.*

L Sorry about ranting on about that but it's just...

SP *It's alright, it's okay.*

L ...it does my...

SP *I asked the question.*

L *(Laughs)* Says you, 'I only asked a question. Didn't mean you to rant!' But no...

SP *No, no.*

L ...I did, it does make me angry.

SP *Yeah.*

L It makes me very, very angry...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know.

SP *And who do you think is responsible for putting you...for...for your time in the laundry?*

L Social services. Mainly social services because...my mother didn't put me in, because my mother didn't even know I was gone. Sure like, she wasn't well, she was very sick. She had a...a mental breakdown and she was just living in a cocoon, she was just in her own...she was there in body but she wasn't there in mind so she hadn't even got...she wouldn't even know how to go about something like that.

SP *Yeah.*

L My family wouldn't have done it because they didn't care. They just wanted to abuse me anyway so I was there as a kicking ball or I was there as the sex slave...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...or whatever I was there for. So they weren't...didn't want to get rid of me. So, social services I...

SP *And do you think – because you know what social services are there for – they're supposed to be there to help someone...*

L Protect, yeah...

SP *...from a bad situation.*

L Yeah.

SP *I mean how do you feel about what they did in your situation?*

L I feel that social services are working for either...number one, they're either working for the Catholic Church or they're working for the government and the government don't want to have this thing of dealing with children in poverty, children in trouble, children who are being abused;

they don't want that so they put all that on to the HSE or the social services or whoever it is they put it onto or the Catholic Church and they're all...the government and the Catholic Church are kind of to me are in cahoots with each other. It's kind of like...you know, 'we've got another one here, do you want to take this one like? She'll work for you,' and you know, 'you can pay us,' and you know, 'for all the work that they do'. And that's the way it seems to me that they...*somebody* was getting paid for the work that we did. It certainly wasn't us.

SP *Yeah.*

L So it was either the church or the government and, as I...as I said before the only items of clothing that ever came in was either belonging to priests, nuns or gents. And the only ones in...back in 1977, '78 were...would have been men in authority, which would have been the government. So, their clothes all got washed and dried and ironed and spick and span. Sure that's why they...they're always on TV looking excellent, you know, somebody's doing it for them – unpaid – you know. So I would love to see a...a stop to it...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...and I think the government should pay you know, whether it's this government and the past government or future governments, at the end of the day it all stems from the one entity, they *all* did it, they're *all* responsible because back 33 years ago, people that are in the government now were in the government then and they *knew* exactly what was going on then and they *never* spoke up and they *still* haven't spoken up. So they knew what was going on; they *knew* that somebody was doing all this work for...for...for nothing...

SP *Yeah.*

L ...you know. So that's my feeling on it.

SP *Well I just...w...we're going to end it now but I want to really thank you for being so o...open and honest.*

L No you made it so easy for me, you really have because...I don't...I wouldn't have been able to sit down and talk with somebody else like this. We're here what three, or four hours...

SP *Yeah.*

L *...my God! (Laughs)*

SP *But no I really thank you because I know how difficult it is...*

L *Yeah, yeah.*

SP *...and...and thank you very much...*

L *Oh not at all you're very welcome.*

SP *...for being open.*

L *If it helps...if it helps anybody in the future now, I'm telling you it would mean a lot, it would definitely mean a lot.*

SP *Thank you.*

L *And thank you*

[Interview ends]