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As far as possible the children were left with their mothers. Children brought up in orphanages were like children brought up in workhouses – institutions which he regarded as hot beds of crime and pauperism. Povery carries with it many evils, and the object of this and other Orphan Societies is to save the children, and that they shall go out into the world to live honest, Godly lives.

Introduction

As the nineteenth century drew to a close social reforms were introduced to raise living standards and reduce dependency on the Poor Law, and children’s health increasingly became a matter of national importance. The DPOS remained convinced that children could not thrive and become independent and productive adults if placed in institutions, particularly workhouses. Although it continued to support boarding-out in principle, the Society revised its rules in the late nineteenth century. The penultimate chapter discusses the marked shift in DPOS policies, its changing role, and the parallels between PO Societies and the NSPCC. Through case history analysis, it examines the ways in which bereaved families, including Irish playwright Sean O’Casey’s sister, were assisted by the Society in the twentieth century and identifies the benefits of its policy changes for widows and children. It also analyses the children’s transition from dependence to independent adulthood, evidence which serves as a barometer of the Society’s success in the twentieth century.

‘A new departure’

By the end of the nineteenth century, fifteen boards of guardians had appointed women’s committees to oversee the boarding out of workhouse children. The Pauper Children (Ireland) Act was passed in 1898.
and the Boarding Out of Children in Unions Order, 1899, increased the age limit to fifteen and from this point onwards, workhouse children were boarded out in greater numbers. Inspectors were introduced to the state-run boarding-out scheme in 1902 and under the Children Act 1908 they were called upon to supervise the placement of children who were boarded out privately (for the most part illegitimate children) as well as children boarded out from workhouses. (A professional, qualified social worker was appointed in 1948.) Nevertheless, while 2,230 children were boarded out in 1908, 5,645 children remained in workhouses which was 72 per cent of the total number of children dependent on poor law relief. Under the jurisdiction of the Irish Department of Local Government and Public Health in 1922 boarding out was not universally adopted despite the promotion of its benefits, particularly for illegitimate children.

Though social reformers had held up its boarding-out system as an example in the 1860s and 1870s, and despite its continued support of the boarding-out system, by the 1890s it had become apparent that the DPOS, which had been serving the Protestant community for seventy years, was clinging to tradition and somewhat antiquated rules, particularly with respect to the placement of orphans with nurses in the country as opposed to with their own kin. The Society had lost favour with the public because of the ‘old rule’, particularly as other local PO Societies had for a number of years formally adopted the new policy; moreover, by the 1890s public outdoor relief had become more widely available, thereby broadening the scope of widows’ relief options and simultaneously reducing the appeal of the DPOS. In order to retain its place among the growing network of prominent Dublin charities, and among local PO Societies, and keep pace with new child welfare trends, it became necessary to re-evaluate its policies. The DPOS stated in 1895:

Hitherto, it has been the almost invariable custom on the election of orphans to remove them from their mothers and place them with the Society’s nurses in the country. Within the past year, your committee have decided upon dealing with each case on its own merits and where they find, after careful enquiry, that the mother is a proper person, residing in a respectable locality, they will appoint her as nurse to her own children. On their election, the committee will allow a weekly sum for their maintenance, provided that such an arrangement does not interfere with her earning her bread.

In November 1898 the DPOS unanimously agreed to officially change its rules in order to permit widows to care for their own children with a
paid allowance ‘in cases which seem advisable’. The Society continued to board out orphans in other cases.

One of the reasons for its reluctance to change its rules was the belief that urban children were disadvantaged on two fronts – health and morals. Throughout its history, the DPOS had always favoured the placement of children in the country for health purposes; however, its committee stated in 1899, ‘when a mother is appointed nurse to her own children, she may with the committee’s consent reside in a city parish’. Even in 1912 there were still concerns that the city was not ‘a safe, moral place to bring young people up in. It sharpened their wits but, at the same time, it blunted their moral sense’. By 1915 there were 280 children cared for by their mothers with a paid allowance from the DPOS and 144 children boarded out. (The relatively high number of children on the Society roll was a result of the amalgamation of the DPOS and the PORS in 1898 discussed in the next chapter.) There were times when various committee members expressed regret at the rule change: the placement of children with their mothers or extended relatives did not always prove to be in the children’s best interests. In the broader context, the NSPCC detected multiple cases in which orphans were taken in by relatives and terribly mistreated. Furthermore, public inspectors of children ‘at nurse’ also reported that relatives often only applied for children once they were of working age.

Concerns over depopulation, infant mortality and the poor physical condition of Boer War recruits in the fin de siècle period informed later child rearing literature and stressed the importance of motherhood as a major factor in the maintenance of children’s health. Children were increasingly viewed as a national asset which required investment in order to produce healthy soldiers of the future. In Ireland the Health Committee, the Society for the Prevention of Infant Mortality and the Women’s National Health Association guided mothers in the care and feeding of infants. The WNHA also set up a milk depot for the distribution of pasteurised milk. Shannon Millin read a paper before the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society entitled ‘Child life: a national asset’ in 1915 in which he stated that ‘Speaking broadly, one baby out of every eleven born in Ireland in 1914 died within the year of its birth’. He also argued that the nation should protect future generations who represented ‘prospective wealth producers’. The objective of the NSPCC, now the leading authority on child welfare issues, was to ‘deal directly with the parents and to reform the home’. It recommended that children were best placed with their ‘parents and kinsfolk’ and ‘the very worst thing for a community’ was ‘to encourage the parental class to leave that care to private charity or to the state’.
Applicants to the DPOS

Sanitary reform and public health were prevailing social issues in the early twentieth century. Deaths caused by typhus fever had significantly decreased while deaths caused by phthisis (consumption of the lungs) were reportedly double those of London. The WNHA, led by Lady Aberdeen, spearheaded a TB prevention campaign in 1908. The negative impact of tenement overcrowding in Dublin was repeatedly cited in public health enquiries. Unemployment was also a recurrent problem in the 1900s and by 1909 relief for the unemployed was given throughout the year rather than the usual winter months. The religious composition of Dublin in 1911 was Catholic (83 per cent), Church of Ireland (13 per cent), Methodists (2 per cent) and Presbyterians (2 per cent), with a small percentage of ‘other’ religious beliefs including a small Jewish community. The widows of the Protestant lower middle class, whose numbers had declined considerably, and professionals as well as tradesmen and labouring families continued to seek assistance from the DPOS.

The DPOS and local PO Societies regularly refused applications due to insufficient funds. In 1900 the Antrim and Down POS approved only thirty-nine of the eighty applications it had received that year. In an appeal for funds in the early 1900s the DPOS committee referred to the numerous applications it had received and the many cases in which widows reported that they had ‘no income’. In one such case eight children were left behind after their father’s death, six of whom were provided for by the Society. In 1910 a widow applied to the DPOS following the death of her husband, described as a young man, who had been on a high salary, and ‘furnished a house suitable to his income’. In the same year four children were elected following the death of an ‘industrious and respectable tradesman’. Also in 1910 a ‘man of the labouring class’, with seven children ‘gave way to habits of intemperance and died’. The family was left destitute and six of the seven children were elected. In 1915 applicants included widows of a shop assistant, brush maker, blacksmith, clerk, bootmaker, builder’s labourer, plumber, shopkeeper and gunsmith.

Shortly after the 1916 rebellion, the DPOS was informed that a Protestant family from Dolphin’s Barn had been ‘put to considerable loss at the time of the rebellion’. According to the report, ‘their clothes and belongings were riddled with bullets. The soldiers were in the house for some days firing at the rebels and the –s had to take refuge in the kitchen and the back garden. The destruction of their clothes etc has made a considerable loss to them which they could ill afford’.
addition, ‘several applications came from widows, whose children had become orphans through the rebellion’, and eleven children were elected to the Society roll.  

In some cases women were widowed abroad; for example, a young woman, aged twenty-seven, had married in November 1916 at St Peter’s Rectory, in Manhattan, New York. Her husband died on 20 March 1918, leaving her a widow with an infant son. His death was likely to have been caused by the Spanish influenza virus, which hit Queens, New York, in 1918 and tended to cause mortality among young adults. He had worked as a head waiter at the Woodstock Hotel, New York. A chocolate moulder by trade, his widow had worked in Jacob’s biscuit factory in Dublin before she left for America. It took all her husband’s small savings to pay for her passage home.  

The Society expected a rise in the number of applications as ‘the clouds of war are being swept away’. As well as casualties of war, accidental deaths were also reported. In 1919 the DPOS assisted two families from Arklow, County Wicklow: ‘At a meeting of the committee during the year under review no less than ten orphans, members of two brothers’ families were elected from the parish of Arklow. Both fathers perished in a disastrous collision at sea in December, 1919, leaving 14 orphans to the tender mercies of humanity. Another son perished with his father and uncle’.  

The influenza pandemic also had a devastating effect in Ireland which caused substantial loss of life; there were a staggering 10,651 deaths registered in 1918. Other applicants to the Society in 1919 included the widows of a blacksmith, insurance collector, bootmaker, builder’s labourer, gunsmith, shopkeeper, plumber, clerk, painter and inspector of police (whose widow was a nurse and subsequently moved to England with her children). There was an increase in applications from the widows of ex-soldiers in 1919 and 1920. In 1923 the orphans of an engineer, labourer (and sexton), chauffeur, steward, caretaker, bookbinder, clerk, park ranger, boiler maker, mechanical engineer and postman were admitted to the Society.  

**Sean O’Casey, his sister Isabella and the Dublin POS**  

Sean O’Casey, originally John Casey, was born to Michael and Susan Casey née Archer on 30 March 1880 at 85 Upper Dorset Street in St Mary’s parish. O’Casey had suffered from poor eyesight since childhood and was one of thirteen children, eight of whom died in infancy. O’Casey’s sister, Isabella Charlotte Casey, married Nicholas Beaver, a drummer in the Liverpool Regiment, in 1889. Her husband later worked...
as a ‘checker on the railway’\textsuperscript{40} and died on 10 November 1907 aged thirty-four.\textsuperscript{41} Alderman Healy inspected the case on behalf of the DPOS: ‘I visited Mrs Beaver at – today … The children go to St Barnabas Day and Sunday Schools. I recommend the children to be taken on by the committee and left with their mother’.\textsuperscript{42} The DPOS approved the case and the names of Isabella’s three children then aged eleven, eight and three were added to the Society roll in December 1907.\textsuperscript{43} The committee provided a small grant for each child and permitted them to remain with their mother. Once they had reached the age limit of fifteen, the boys’ names were removed from the Society roll – the eldest in 1911, the middle child in 1914, and the youngest in 1918.\textsuperscript{44} The family received assistance from the DPOS for a total of twelve years. Isabella passed away in January 1918 followed by O’Casey’s mother, Susan, in November of the same year.\textsuperscript{45}

In his autobiographies, O’Casey recalls a meeting he had with Mr Robert John Henchy, the secretary of the DPOS, to discuss his nephew’s poor attendance at Sunday School.\textsuperscript{46} O’Casey, who was working as a labourer at the time, told Mr Henchy that he would not force his nephew to attend Sunday School. Henchy replied that if he did not adhere to the rules the DPOS would have no option but to discontinue the grant; however, O’Casey remained adamant. Henchy warned, ‘but, my friend, if the Society take away the grant, the child will suffer’.\textsuperscript{47} O’Casey claimed that the DPOS grant was insufficient to bring up a child. (The grants were intended more as a supplementary payment than full maintenance grants.) Overall, while pointing out the class difference, and their opposing views on Jim Larkin, O’Casey portrayed Mr Henchy in a positive light, describing him as ‘essentially a kind man’.\textsuperscript{48} He noted the smile on his ‘handsome face’ and that he shook his hand before he departed. As he left, Henchy remarked that O’Casey’s nephew ‘didn’t look too well’;\textsuperscript{49} he also reminded O’Casey that he was bound by the Society’s rules to request that children attend Sunday School.\textsuperscript{50} In many respects the O’Casey story epitomises the sad reality of bereavement and child mortality in late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Dublin. Moreover, the meeting between O’Casey and Mr Henchy highlights the Society’s attempts to unify Church of Ireland parishioners from distinct backgrounds through its charitable work.

**Cottage homes**

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(1879), were often too large, ‘for individual care, and the love these poor children so supremely need’, the much smaller cottage homes were intended to replicate family life as much as possible. From the late nineteenth century, the DPOS placed children in cottage homes, typically only in the event that both parents had died, if a surviving parent was in poor health, at the surviving parent’s request, or, alternatively, if no foster families were available. In 1895, Miss Charlotte Burroughs established Sunnyside Home for girls in Kilternan, County Dublin. The home was situated 1½ miles from the Carrickmines railway station. The DPOS committee sent inspectors to visit the home to judge its suitability for the placement of girls on the Society roll:

It is beautiful and most healthfully situated in the parish of Kilternan. It is under the immediate supervision of Miss Burroughs who lives quite close to the home. The matron who lives on the premises seemed a superior woman and very capable of looking after the children under her care. The sanitary arrangements are outside the house and consist of an earth closet which is emptied every morning. The house – sitting room, bedrooms beds, etc were all scrupulously clean. There seemed to be ample accommodation for about eighteen or twenty children. There are about eight children in the Home who all looked well cared for and in good health. There is a good school within a short distance.

Following Miss Burroughs’ retirement in 1916, it came under the management of a matron and local committee: the rector, his wife and three other ladies. Dr Ellerker was the medical superintendent at Sunnyside. The wider community contributed regularly to the home; for example, they purchased a pony for the girls on 27 October 1916 and later a gramophone. The home received fixed rates from the DPOS to pay for the children’s upkeep. Sunnyside also held its own collections and other fundraising events. Reports from Sunnyside suggest that the local committee pro-actively made the home as family oriented as possible. The girls usually joined the Kilternan Girl Guides and a select number spent summer holidays, generally for one week, in a camp at Greystones, County Wicklow. The children were also ‘well supplied with toys from the Harvest Gift Service’. In order to increase the transparency of its work among the orphans, the local committee also arranged ‘Home Days’ which gave Sunnyside supporters the opportunity to visit the home, observe its healthy surroundings and witness the children’s progress. (The home closed in 1953.)

Colonel Kemmis, County Wicklow, offered a cottage for DPOS orphans on his grounds in 1898; nevertheless, at this juncture, the committee expressed reluctance and declined the offer, not wishing to ‘depart
from their established custom of boarding the children out in the houses of farmers’. That same year, Revd J. S. Lindsay, Rector of Malahide, also offered premises for the benefit of Protestant orphans. The house was situated on a high and open space within two or three minutes’ walk of the church and the schools. The accommodation was generous:

On the right hand side of the hall door as you enter there is a large day room for the children, running the entire length of the house from front to rear. On the left side is the matron’s sitting room. Behind the main building there is a commodious kitchen, with excellent range, with hot water cylinder. There are also several pantries, lockups, clothes-room etc. Off the first landing there is sleeping accommodation for the matron a servant and one child with Bathroom and W.C. adjoining. The second story consists of two large dormitories with ample sleeping accommodation for twelve persons in each – 25 altogether. Over one of these there is a comfortable attic with fire place.

The home was approved by the DPOS committee and officially titled ‘The Church of Ireland Orphan Home in connection with the Protestant Orphan Society’, though it was more commonly known as the Malahide Home.

It came under the management of Revd Lindsay who was assisted by a local ladies’ committee, ‘which shall have – subject to the control of the committee of the Society – the supervision of all domestic matters including food, clothing and education, medical supervision, and [be] subject to periodical inspection by the officers and committee of the Society, who shall report at least quarterly to the committee’. In addition, some of the beds were set aside for use by the Society for ‘delicate children under its care ordered a change of air’. Children’s names were removed from the Society roll at the age of fifteen; however, the Society envisaged that the ladies’ committee would contribute to ‘the future disposal of the children when the limit of age has been attained’. On an inspection in June 1900, the children ‘seemed well cared [sic] and happy. In education they have been making fair progress. The dormitories and sleeping arrangements were scrupulously clean’. The following year it reported that, ‘up to the present twenty girls have been placed there, and the arrangement so far has given hope that it will work out satisfactorily. The orphans are regularly inspected and the reports of the inspectors have been placed before the committee and everything is done to make the children happy and comfortable’. However, in later years, a lady inspector criticised the manner in which the children were disciplined. The Malahide Home continued to receive children from the DPOS until its closure in 1915 due to lack of funds.
The less well known Clondalkin Cottage Home, which was the select vestry’s concern, was proposed by Revd Dr Ferguson in 1899. After some discussion it was decided that the Clondalkin Cottage Home, which catered for ten girls, aged between eight and twelve, should be managed by Dr Ferguson and a local ladies’ committee. Both Ferguson and the local committee were subject to the authority of the DPOS committee, which had agreed to contribute annual payments for the girls’ maintenance.

In 1901 Miss Neville proposed a cottage home for Swords after which a DPOS subcommittee was formed to visit the property which had the capacity to accommodate twenty-five boys. The committee reported that, ‘there is a fine garden in which the boys can either engage in gardening operations or Athletic Sports. Miss Neville who met the subcommittee was extremely considerate in her proposals’. The garden often produced a surplus of vegetables which were then sold. The home built up an admirable reputation for health which is discussed later in the chapter.

In a minor number of cases, the DPOS also sent children to other highly reputable children’s homes located in Dublin such as the Cottage Home for Little Children, Kingstown, Miss Carr’s Homes and the Female Orphan House. Local PO Societies, such as the Monaghan and the Cork PO Societies, also placed children in cottage homes.

The aforementioned Cottage Home for Little Children, Kingstown admitted Protestant children only. Revds W. E. Burroughs, Dowse and Day assisted both the Cottage Home, Kingstown and the DPOS. The DPOS occasionally called upon Rosa Barrett to receive children under its guardianship. In March 1899, three siblings, two boys and a girl were sent to Kingstown. The DPOS committee resolved ‘That the following three children which were elected on 3rd be sent to the Cottage Home Trivoli Road Kingstown and that a sum of £– per annum be paid to the committee of management for their maintenance. This committee undertaking not to remove any of the children without giving one month’s previous notice’. There is also evidence that Miss Rosa Barrett requested that the DPOS receive children from the Cottage Home.

The DPOS was often the first port of call for parish clergymen who wished to place children in one of the Protestant cottage homes in Dublin. For example, a widow whose Protestant husband, a compositor, had died of acute pneumonia applied to the DPOS in 1906. ‘There are two children left with the widow whose husband died after one day’s illness … The mother proposes getting her into Miss Carr’s Home. The younger child is an invalid having some affection which the mother
hopes to get attended to in the Children’s Hospital, Harcourt Street’. The DPOS was approached first, with a view to assisting the child’s admission into Miss Carr’s.

In 1910 the DPOS ventured to assist in the case of an infant aged just one year nine months old. The committee received an application for his admission from a Dr Piggot who wrote on behalf of the child’s widowed mother. Her husband, a plasterer, had died after a long illness; he had been disabled through heart disease and paralysis. Having ascertained that all the relevant supporting evidence such as marriage and baptismal certificates could be procured, Dr Piggot stated, ‘I am most anxious if elected he should get to Miss Barrett’s Home as he wants care. He suffered illness in his infancy. I hope the poor little child will be elected’. An inspector visited the widow’s home: ‘I saw the child who is a nice little fellow and was in charge of a woman who lives in the same house while the mother is at work. The room is clean and respectable though small, but the child would be decidedly better in such a place as Miss Barrett’s Home’. The mother decided ‘not to part with her little child’ until he was older.

In 1916 the committee entered into a working scheme with the Female Orphan House, North Circular Road, by which they were enabled to send a certain number of orphans to the home to be trained and educated. Generally, children were placed in the orphanage only in the event that their mothers had died. The DPOS committee acted as child welfare coordinators in all of these cases.

**Children in the family home**

In 1898, out of the 2,067 cases dealt with by the NSPCC, 1,987 children were mistreated by their own parents, 21 children were illegitimate, 22 were step-children, 29 were nurse children and in 8 cases they were ‘otherwise related’. Neglect was the leading complaint (631), followed by assault and ill treatment (57), abandonment (52), and exposure and begging (27). In the late nineteenth century, the NSPCC reported drunkenness and unsuitable surroundings as the leading factors in neglect cases: ‘in nearly every case drink is the dominating cause of cruelty and neglect to children’. The NSPCC recommended that ‘the improvement of tenement houses and the strict enforcement of sanitary laws, temperance legislation, and especially the prevention of the sale of drink to children, are all needed, and have alike our cordial support’. The NSPCC sought out neglect in family homes and its duty was to ‘enforce parental responsibility’. The DPOS and county PO Societies had always given priority to the selection of ‘suitable nurses’,
and condemned immoral surroundings and drunkenness. The NSPCC’s ‘carefully trained inspectors’ used ‘warnings’ and inspections to prevent neglect.\textsuperscript{77} It referred to several cases in which the threat of prosecution improved parental behaviour towards their children;\textsuperscript{78} moreover, in other cases the NSPCC, like PO Societies, attempted to ‘reform the parents by persuasion’.\textsuperscript{79} PO Societies had operated a warning and inspection system to raise nursing standards from the 1830s. It, like the NSPCC, and as discussed in chapter 5, rewarded nurses’ good work with gratuities for the care of sick children and threatened to remove children if standards of care were not met. It also did all in its power to vet step-parents prior to children’s return to their mothers. In the majority of cases the NSPCC was informed of cases of neglect by the public and liaised with the police. In like manner, members of the community informed the DPOS committee or local superintendents of cases of neglect and members of auxiliaries were also relied upon to watch over the children. The NSPCC offices and shelter were located at 20 Molesworth Street and the DPOS office at 28 and later 33 Molesworth Street.

From the late nineteenth century onwards, women became more involved in orphan inspections on an official basis. In June 1899 the DPOS appointed the committee of inspection and clothing for that year, ‘that each member of the committee be requested to inspect a certain number of the orphans each half year in addition to the inspections of the Clerical Secretary and that where possible the co-operation of ladies be invited’.\textsuperscript{80} Clergymen were ‘empowered to invite the assistance of the following ladies’.\textsuperscript{81} The ladies were the committee members’ wives. In 1904, a visiting committee was organised to include six women.\textsuperscript{82} The general committee remarked in 1905 that the work of the ‘Visiting Committee’ was of great benefit to the children’s welfare and happiness.\textsuperscript{83}

The DPOS monitored the children’s progress while in their mothers’ care identified problems, offered widows advice, which was not always welcome, and in some cases recommended the children’s transferral from their mothers’ care.

I regret to be compelled to write to you to say that the orphans named – living in our parish under the care of their mother are being greatly neglected. The mother is not a thrifty woman and is being very careless about their attendance at church, Sunday school and day school. But she says she will not part with her children so I must wash my hands of them all together as they are now not of our parish. And I am persuaded that my advice is best for her and them and yet she refuses to help herself in any way.\textsuperscript{84}
The inspector’s concerns seem justified yet the Society had always met with widows’ resistance when it came to the possible removal of their children from the family home.

Inspectors also visited widows’ homes to establish whether they could realistically afford to care for their children in the long term. The identification of inferior housing was a recurrent theme in both DPOS and NSPCC annual reports. A DPOS inspector observed in May 1901, ‘This room is rather small – top front in a tenement house – I don’t particularly care for the surroundings. I am of the opinion however with Revd J. Haythornwaite’s supervision that she may be allowed to reside where she is at present’. Certain applications were approved on the strict condition that widows would find superior accommodation; ‘election of child confirmed. To be left with mother on condition that she finds suitable quarters containing two rooms at least’.

An inspector, a clergyman, visited a Protestant family in Townsend Street in April 1914 and found that, apart from her two grown-up daughters who contributed a small weekly sum, the widow, a ‘general worker’, had no relatives to assist her. He indicated that the widow and her late husband, a coal porter, had been ‘from humble means’ and that the widow was ‘very poor’.

While he admitted he had ‘no experience of tenements’, he expressed disapproval of the widow’s home: ‘I must confess I do not like her room and I doubt if anything could improve it’. Nevertheless, he suggested that the widow’s children remain with her as he considered her a ‘strong woman’ and ‘very capable’.

Conversely, in June of the same year, a DPOS inspector reported on a separate case in which he felt that the children’s removal from the home was necessary:

I visited this case today and saw Mrs – and the children who appear to be well cared for from their condition, but I fear the food she is able to supply them with is very meagre for the means are very small. She said she had saved a few pounds which is now nearly come to an end. And she got nothing from her husband’s trade society head quarters at Liberty Hall … The rector says we ought to leave the children under the mother’s care; I do not think it is possible for her to keep them, feed them, clothe them, and pay rent, as she is earning nothing so I told her and she promised to consider by Friday [whether] she would give them up to the Protestant Orphan Society for the homes.

As the case suggests, the Society thoroughly investigated widows’ circumstances in order to make arrangements which best suited their individual needs.
DPOS inspectors closely monitored children’s attendance at day school and Sunday school and regularly reported their findings to the committee. The visiting committee and a lady inspector were expected to visit the widows to resolve cases of truancy and unexplained absences from school.\(^{92}\) If a compromise could not be reached with the widow regarding school attendance, the Society sent, or threatened to send, the children to Protestant Industrial Schools, or stopped the widow’s allowance altogether.\(^{93}\) Susanne Rouvier Day, Poor Law Guardian, Cork, recommended that parents who neglected their children’s education should no longer be entitled to outdoor relief and should instead be provided with indoor relief.\(^{94}\) Under the terms of the School Attendance Act, 1926, parents were obligated to ensure their children’s attendance at elementary school.

**Support for widows**

Church of Ireland widows worked in Dublin as charwomen, dressmakers, house-keepers, domestic servants, cooks, teachers and nurses.\(^{95}\) A number of widows also took in lodgers.\(^{96}\) As discussed in previous chapters, many did not seek out or accept charity or public relief of any kind unless they had young dependents, their health had deteriorated and they could no longer work. The DPOS provided widows with vital targeted assistance on a case-by-case basis which ranged from facilitating access to their children, providing children with temporary care, and assistance with finding better accommodation, to easing the burden of single motherhood during periods of crises.

Many widows whose children were boarded out or placed in DPOS children’s homes, wished to maintain close contact with them and there are numerous references to cases in which the Society facilitated access; for example, in 1900, when a widow asked to have her children ‘home for the holidays’ the secretary agreed without question.\(^{97}\) In another case a widow requested that the Society place her children with a nurse who lived close by. Unwilling to unsettle the children who were doing well in another location, yet eager to compromise, the committee instead ‘granted tickets for two excursions per year’.\(^{98}\) The Society also regularly provided widows with grants to partially fund children’s vacations with them.

Widows who had remarried occasionally postponed their children’s return for various reasons. For the most part, the DPOS agreed to keep the children under its guardianship and arrange suitable placements until it became possible for their mothers to receive them. In one such case, which was reported in 1899, the committee informed the ‘intending
stepfather’ that he would be required to pay towards his step-son’s maintenance as a boarder in the Swords School.\textsuperscript{99} The following year, a widow, who had recently remarried, requested that the Society ‘retain her children for the present’.\textsuperscript{100} In response, the committee enquired, ‘what is she prepared to pay towards maintenance of the children (3)?’.\textsuperscript{101}

A widow, assistant matron of the Newcastle Sanatorium, County Wicklow, originally placed her child in the Cottage Home for Little Children. The boy was subsequently admitted to the DPOS for a short time while the widow was ‘training in the Rotunda Hospital’. The widow was appointed matron of the Sherborne Preparatory School, Dorset, after which she requested the return of her son and both left for England.\textsuperscript{102} Typically, in cases of this kind, the children were accommodated in the Society’s associated children’s homes and schools as short-term boarders. The DPOS represented a source of child care for widows which gave them the opportunity to establish themselves and prepare financially for their children’s return.

In 1902 the committee reported that a child under her mother’s care had been assaulted, advising that ‘the child be sent to Dr – to be examined and that the mother be directed to seek the assistance of the Police with a view to bringing to justice the man whom she charges with assault on her child’.\textsuperscript{103} The assistant secretary stated that ‘he waited with orphan – on Doctor – on Saturday Morning 3rd September who directed him to bring the child to the Dispensary on the following Monday morning. He brought the child accompanied by her mother as instructed, the Doctor in charge refused to have anything to say to the case and the mother expressed a desire to let the matter drop’.\textsuperscript{104} The DPOS secretary provided the widow with crucial support and encouraged her to seek justice for her child, which were highly significant responses to a difficult case.

Although most widows preferred to keep their children with them and while many excelled in their role as mothers when healthy, there were others in poor or deteriorating health for whom the social reality of single motherhood was too great to bear. The ladies of the visiting committee made every effort to assist these widows particularly during bouts of illness. They reported such cases to the managing committee and requested additional grants for the families in the greatest distress. In 1907 a young boy and his mother were brought to the office to explain his non-attendance at school, which would in normal circumstances have led to a harsh warning and the threat of discontinuance of allowance. However, when it came to light that his mother was in poor health, the committee ‘recommended that they get another chance’.\textsuperscript{105} In a second case, a lady visitor informed the committee that one of the widows was ‘at present incapacitated from looking after her children’.\textsuperscript{106} The sec-
The secretary wrote to the widow stating that the Society was responsible for the children and ‘that she should go into hospital and hand the children pro term to the Society’. There is also evidence that the DPOS kept children on the Society roll after the normal age if widows were ill. As discussed in chapter 5 widows were admitted to asylums and/or became physically ill under the burden of single motherhood. Records of provincial mental asylums suggest that widows continued to be admitted, albeit in smaller numbers, into the twentieth century.

The Society also assisted widows to find better accommodation if necessary. As discussed earlier, DPOS inspectors identified poor housing as one of the leading problems for widows. A lady visitor reported that the room in which a widow and her children resided was ‘overcrowded’ and therefore ‘unsatisfactory’ and that unless there was some change she would call for the children’s removal. In this case the same lady visitor approached the visiting committee to ‘help Mrs – to get better quarters than her present home’. The secretary agreed to assist and promised to ‘make further enquiries and make the best arrangements possible’. In this case, the Society increased the widow’s allowance in line with the higher rent.

During the war, the DPOS distributed bonuses to supplement DPOS widows’ allowances and made Christmas appeals: ‘owing to the present high price of living our nurses and mothers find it very hard to support the orphans under their care on the amounts they receive from the Society’. Moreover, just after the Great War had ended, the secretary, R. J. Henchy, appealed for support for an upcoming jumble sale being held in aid of the Society: ‘Old clothing and boots are a very great help to the widows and orphans, as the price of these commodities is so high at present’.

Home Assistance was introduced in 1924 and was essentially another name for the system of outdoor relief. The issue of stigmatisation of widows in receipt of home assistance was raised in the 1927 report of the Poor Law Commission. The solution was the Widows’ and Orphans’ Act, 1935. Widows had to be aged between sixty and seventy or have a dependent child under fourteen; widows who remarried or lived with a man were no longer eligible. At an annual meeting of the Kilkenny POS, a committee member stated: ‘The government has made it known that they were about to introduce a scheme of insurance for widows and orphans. That was a very wise and good move’. The DPOS investigated the terms and found that as many of the widows whose children were already under its care had not been insured under the National Health Insurance Act, the dependents were consequently precluded from state pensions. In relevant cases, adjustments had to
be made to widows’ grants in light of the legislation. If widows were ineligible for either contributory or non-contributory pensions they could benefit from ‘home assistance’. The age limit and other criteria for non-contributory pensions were eventually removed and the 1937 amendment abolished the insurance test which made pensions more widely available.

The DPOS continued to assist widows after the Widows’ and Orphans’ Act and appealed to the public for funds on their behalf again in the 1940s due to rising living costs. The numerous written expressions of gratitude sent by widows to the DPOS committee attest to the effectiveness of its system.

**Health and medical care**

As the DPOS, and local PO Societies, increasingly left children with their mothers rather than place them with nurses in the country, widows became directly responsible for their children’s health and medical care. It was perhaps no coincidence that a number of widows in receipt of DPOS allowances were trained nurses. It is highly likely that these widows were permitted to care for their own children, firstly, due to the respectability associated with nursing, and, secondly, their ability to care for sick children particularly at a time when the NSPCC continued to report the prevalence of medical neglect.

While the ladies who managed the DPOS cottage homes in various locations were responsible for the children’s general and medical care, they also relied upon and corresponded with the DPOS committee regarding medical matters. Dr S. J. Gordon became a DPOS committee member in the early twentieth century. Both Dr Gordon and other members of the committee agreed that the Swords Home’s location had contributed greatly to low levels of illness: ‘in the open country with large garden and playground, good sanitation, and water supply ensures health and we have an almost unbroken record of freedom from serious illness’. Swords reported in 1933 that ‘there has been complete absence again of serious illness during the year and the more recent arrivals among the boys show a marked improvement in health and physique – good evidence of their healthy surroundings’. The home’s medical officer was thanked regularly ‘for the care and attention to the boys’ welfare at all times’. Sunnyside had also established an excellent reputation for good health. The available evidence suggests that the DPOS committee and local committees responsible for the cottage homes prioritised children’s health and ensured their access to medical care.

The DPOS continued to pay widows an allowance beyond the ordinary
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Illness</th>
<th>Treatment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>Cod liver oil &amp; malt extract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Working Boys'</td>
<td>Scarlatina</td>
<td>Cork St Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Home Malahide</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>girls</td>
<td>9–12</td>
<td>Malahide</td>
<td>Whooping cough</td>
<td>Recovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Consumption</td>
<td>Consumptive Hospital, Newcastle&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>Fits</td>
<td>n/r Removed from the school temporarily</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Weak back, feet</td>
<td>Medical boots</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Stewart Inst.</td>
<td>Pulmonary TB</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>Tonsillitis</td>
<td>Adelaide, removal tonsils (5 wks hospital)&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Wasting away</td>
<td>Adelaide Hospital, mother removed her&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Sunnyside</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Crooksling Sanatorium&lt;sup&gt;d&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>Peamount Institution&lt;sup&gt;e&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sunnyside</td>
<td>Spine</td>
<td>To mother fitted with a medical corset</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Affection of eye</td>
<td>Treatment arranged</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>TB</td>
<td>To local doctor then Peamount Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Scarlatina</td>
<td>In hospital progressing well</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1922</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Pneumonia</td>
<td>Adelaide Hospital&lt;sup&gt;f&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1923</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Eye weakness</td>
<td>Given spectacles on prescription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1924</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Scarlatina</td>
<td>Cod liver oil after recovery, to Sunnyside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Very delicate</td>
<td>Robeleine, Virol, cod liver oil, to Sunnyside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Rickets</td>
<td>Malt &amp; cod liver oil, Adelaide, Sunshine Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Pneumonia after measles</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Meningitis</td>
<td>Died</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Illness</td>
<td>Treatment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1926</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Eye weakness</td>
<td>Given spectacles on prescription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Surgery orthopaedic hospital, steel supports</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1927</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Flat feet, weak back</td>
<td>Hand removed, Stevens’ Hosp. (1 yr) Sunnyside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>with mother</td>
<td>Operation on arm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1928</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Sunnyside</td>
<td>Eye weakness</td>
<td>Given spectacles on prescription</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Adenoids, tonsils</td>
<td>Drumcondra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>girls</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Sunnyside</td>
<td>Measles, mumps</td>
<td>Prolonged holidays, no bad cases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>girl</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Sunnyside</td>
<td>Influenza</td>
<td>Newcastle Sanatorium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1937</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>Weak ankles</td>
<td>Orthopaedic Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>girls</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Sunnyside</td>
<td>Spring – mumps chicken pox</td>
<td>In quarantine for a very long time, all recovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>girls</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Sunnyside</td>
<td>Appendicitis</td>
<td>Operation, recovered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1939</td>
<td>boy</td>
<td>n/r</td>
<td>Swords</td>
<td>Knee injury</td>
<td>Children’s Hospital, Harcourt Street</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**

a Newcastle Sanatorium, the National Hospital for Consumption, was founded in 1896. It was modelled on the sanatoria which had flourished in England and Scotland. Its design was based specifically on the National Hospital of Ventor on the Isle of Wight. Lord Fitzwilliam provided nineteen acres between Newcastle and Newtown Mount Kennedy, County Wicklow. It was the first open air hospital of its kind in Ireland.

b To mother, then to Stillorgan Convalescent Home.

c DPOS intervened to ensure she received necessary medical care and admitted her to Steven’s Hospital, Dublin.

d The Crooksling Sanatorium was established by the Dublin Joint Hospitals Board, at Brittas, County Dublin in 1911 and aimed at the poor to prevent consumption (TB). The expansive building was situated on a hill known as Crooksling; over 300 acres surrounding the site were also purchased.

e The Women’s National Health Association founded the Peamount Institution in 1912 as a TB sanatorium.

f Four months later mother given grant to bring children on holidays to Glendalough, County Wicklow.

*Source:* DPOS register of orphan histories; minutes of visiting committee; annual reports, 1899–1940.
term if their children were ill; moreover, it arranged children’s holidays to the country for health purposes. The Country Air Association also funded similar excursions for children while the WNHA formed the Children’s Fresh Air Fund in 1919 which arranged for children to spend two week holidays in the country, known as the Fresh Air Fortnight.

**Further training and work**

In the early twentieth century, when DPOS girls turned fourteen they were ‘in the opinion of the committee to be fitted for domestic service’, and transferred to the Providence Home or other similar homes for technical training in domestic service. At this time, the DPOS committee warned widows if they disapproved of their daughters’ placement in domestic service they would no longer receive its assistance. The Dublin Domestic Training Institute, 37 Charlemont Street, Dublin was founded in 1906 under the Board of Education of the General Synod of the Church of Ireland, and, in connection with the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction for Ireland scheme as a residential school for training girls in domestic economy. Seven girls from various PO Societies received scholarships, along with ‘six from the Girls’ Friendly Society, and twenty-seven were supported by assisted scholarships and private payment’. These scholarships in domestic training were provided by the County Councils. However, due to poor uptake, in 1911, the Institute foresaw its imminent closure unless matters improved. The managers, such as Canon Charles Dowse, lamented the possible loss of advantages for ‘young women of Ireland’ should it close. Despite a rise in domestic service wages, girls received comparatively less pay, based on the assumption that girls were not workers in their own right but rather worked for a short period prior to marriage.

While most girls entered domestic service, a minor number availed themselves of other training opportunities. Miss – was sent for trial in the postal and telegraph business ‘in accordance with the instructions of the committee in February 1900’. In the same year another girl was ‘to be taught shorthand and typewriting and qualified in both these branches of education’. Shorthand and typewriting remained in demand; a number of mothers requested that the DPOS assist their daughters to train in office work which was typically of six months’ duration in a technical school.

The visiting committee reported in 1908 that one of the girls aged fourteen ‘desires to be trained as a teacher and is going in for the Intermediate’. In October 1919, a widow requested assistance from the committee to purchase a uniform for her daughter who was ‘going
as probationer to the Rest for the Dying’, which was duly provided.\textsuperscript{139} In 1933 a girl obtained a scholarship to Alexandra College and trained as a school teacher at the Kildare Street Training College.\textsuperscript{140} The committee informed the widows when suitable positions arose for their daughters and also encouraged them to seek out placements for their children.

Training for boys included the agricultural schools, technical schools, and Hibernian Marine School. Apprentices who lived outside Dublin continued to lodge at the Working Boys’ Home with the Society’s assistance.\textsuperscript{141} The Morgan Endowed School, Castleknock, was among the other training options. The Love and Gardiner’s Charity provided educational grants to members of the Church of Ireland whose ‘parents have lived within the old city limits; the children must also have attended a primary school in the city or County of Dublin; the proposed employer must be Protestant’.\textsuperscript{142} The managers stated that they would ‘give a favourable consideration to orphans under the care of this Society whose case falls within their scheme’.\textsuperscript{143} While the charity was aimed primarily at boys, it also contributed to DPOS girls’ training fees.\textsuperscript{144} In a number of cases, the DPOS retained children beyond the ordinary term for periods of between four and six months, or longer if necessary, in order that they could complete their training. The Commission on Technical Instruction identified the inadequate number of valuable apprenticeship schemes.\textsuperscript{145} The Apprentice Act was passed in 1931.

\section*{Independence}

The main objective of PO Societies was to guide children through adolescence into independent adulthood. The Tipperary POS reported in 1905 that since its foundation in 1835 it had assisted 1,027 orphans and apprenticed 400 and that it currently had 58 children under its care.\textsuperscript{146} The Cork POS updated subscribers on the orphans’ progress in 1914: one entered the Royal Navy Hospital School Greenwich; one joined the Royal Engineers as a mechanic; one joined the Royal Navy; one was elected to the Masonic Orphan Boys’ School Dublin; one accompanied his mother to the USA; two went with their mother to England; one went with her mother to Dublin.\textsuperscript{147}

Eighteen men who had once been on the DPOS roll, most of whom were educated at Miss Neville’s home Swords, ‘gave up their brave lives for the sake of their King and country … The Society has erected in their boardroom a roll of honour which bears the names of the eighteen heroes. Simple as it is the committee felt it was the least they could do to keep in perpetual memory the names of which they are so proud’.\textsuperscript{148} A committee member’s son also died in action.
The challenges associated with securing young people of the church employment were discussed at the 1929 Youth Conference convened by the Church of Ireland. In the 1930s, children who had grown up in the cottage homes found work, for example, as assistants on farms or in grocers’ shops, while others secured jobs locally. Occasionally, girls were employed by Sunnyside and the Cottage Home, Kingstown. For example, a girl who had been raised in Sunnyside, but who ‘was not very strong’, was employed as a maid in the home. The Meath POS referred to the clergymen, officers in the army, and successful men of business who had ‘once belonged to the Protestant Orphan Society’. Tables 7.2–7.4 provide an overview of the paths taken by some of the orphans raised by the Dublin POS and Galway POS.

The following excerpts are from letters written by former orphans to the DPOS which were included with their applications for marriage portions. The first is from a letter dated 1898:

**Table 7.2** Galway POS orphans, 1890–1909

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Church sexton</td>
<td>Post office assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clerk</td>
<td>Post mistress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engine driver</td>
<td>Hospital nurse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artillery</td>
<td>Domestic service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Navy</td>
<td>Emigrated to America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Police</td>
<td>Killed in Boer War</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Galway POS annual report, *Irish Times* (11 November 1909).*

**Table 7.3** Dublin POS orphans, 1903

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Boys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domestic service</td>
<td>Other homes/orphanages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training for domestic service</td>
<td>Emigrated to America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other homes and orphanages</td>
<td>South Africa with mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dressmaking</td>
<td>England with mother</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>Apprenticed shop assistants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post office</td>
<td>Placed in offices in the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typist</td>
<td>Given up to mothers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Returned to mothers</td>
<td>Adopted by nurse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Dublin POS annual report, 1903, pp. 14–15.*
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment/apprenticeship</th>
<th>Further information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Housemaid</td>
<td>Girl Married&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children’s nurse (worked in munitions factory during WWI)</td>
<td>Girl Married&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imperial Tobacco Factory</td>
<td>Boy Died of consumption</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Railway Bus Service</td>
<td>Boy Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heley’s, Dame Street</td>
<td>Boy Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Woolworths, Belfast</td>
<td>Girl Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor driver, Belfast</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined British Army, bugler</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bugler in artillery, Woolwich</td>
<td>Boy Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hibernian Marine School</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Signs Limited</td>
<td>Boy Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob’s Factory</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NKM Irish Cream Toffee</td>
<td>Girl n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shoemaker</td>
<td>Boy America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger on motor van</td>
<td>Boy America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motor mechanic</td>
<td>Boy Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School teacher (scholarship Alexandra College and training Kildare St Training College)</td>
<td>Girl Baltinglass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravesend School, steward</td>
<td>Boy Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benson’s Jewellers</td>
<td>Boy Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ferrier &amp; Pollocks</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Killed in Active Service Field Ambulance</td>
<td>Boy n/r 1940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>Boy Wounded in action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hopkins Tailors Outfitters, Dublin</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Salt Company, 40 Lr Mayor Street</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined Navy</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peugeot Motor Co., Dawson Street</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Messenger SN Railway</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typist</td>
<td>Girl n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joined SS &lt;i&gt;King City&lt;/i&gt; Cardiff</td>
<td>Boy Died&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posting dept Arnott &amp; Co.</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harland &amp; Wolfe, Belfast</td>
<td>Boy n/r</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:
<sup>a</sup> Her husband had carried out two years’ active service as a Lance Corporal with the 13th Lancers and suffered serious wounds on three separate occasions.
<sup>b</sup> Married a soldier who ‘was awarded the Divisional Parchment Certificate for Gallantry in action on 1 July 1916 and was awarded the Belgian War Cross for conspicuous bravery in the last battle of Flanders’.
<sup>c</sup> Casualty of SS <i>King City</i> lost by enemy action Aug. 1940.

Source: Dublin POS register of orphan histories.
Gentleman, Mr Hewitt informed me that you were annoyed with me at my getting married and changing my address without telling you. I am very sorry if I have caused you any trouble by doing so. Thanking you for all past kindnesses and anticipating a continuance of the same. P.S. Gentleman I wish to let you know that my husband – was one of your orphan boys.152

A former orphan wrote to the committee in 1917 to apply for a Kinsey marriage portion. He was living in England at the time, where he worked as a tramcar driver for sevenpence an hour ‘when there was work’.153 He had married in 1908 and had four children aged eight, six and (twins) three. ‘You will find that I have never been an apprentice also I have got no trade of any kind. Owing to my own fault for not taking same when required to do so’.154

In another letter of application to the Kinsey Marriage Portion Fund received in 1924, a former DPOS orphan stated he had served his time as a saddler in Newtown, Barry, Wexford, continued to work for the same employer after his apprenticeship and subsequently joined the army. He informed the committee that he was no longer in the army and that he could not find work. ‘Times are bad with me, owing to the motor business there is very little doing in the saddlery line and I tried several times to see if I could get a job and could not. So I would be very grateful if you could send me a little help as I have a wife and child to keep also hope you will forgive me for troubling you’.155 In a second letter received months later, the applicant’s wife wrote, ‘cannot get a job, so we have made up our minds, if we can get our fare, to go to Canada as my husband has a sister there and perhaps he would find work there’.156

Orphans who had settled all the over the world from England to New Zealand also contacted the Society in Dublin to request their ‘birth lines’. The Society appears to have consistently released the requested information.157 The DPOS stood out from contemporary child welfare agencies in this respect primarily because children typically emigrated with relations or joined family members in the destination country.158 Thus, DPOS and most local PO Society orphans did not generally experience the often long-term emotional distress and stigmatisation described in studies of child emigration schemes to Canada and Australia and did not share the same sense of ‘lost identity’ as the children in Margaret Humphreys’ study Empty Cradles who were denied access to their family histories in adulthood.159

The personal testimony of a family whose forebears were assisted by the DPOS in the early 1900s presents further convincing evidence of the Society’s commitment to the welfare of bereaved families. In this case
a mother with three young dependents was placed under considerable financial strain after her husband’s death. The Society stepped in to assist and the widow was able to remain in the family home, which may not have otherwise been possible. The boys were sent to boarding school where they thrived and received a good education. The widow lived into her eighties in the same home and the boys grew up to be well-rounded individuals, found success in their chosen careers, married and became supporters of Church of Ireland associated charities.160

**Conclusion**

The DPOS underwent considerable change in the late nineteenth century: widows cared for their own children often in urban locations; DPOS
committee members increasingly assumed the role of child care coordinators while the visiting committee and secretary carried out many of the duties of modern social workers. The DPOS and local PO Societies provided widows with targeted assistance and acted as reliable support networks in the absence of, or as an addition to, their families. In many respects, the NSPCC’s vision of cruelty prevention mirrored the earlier work of PO Societies particularly with respect to its inspection system. The DPOS and the ladies’ committees in charge of its associated cottage homes invested much time, effort and money in the children’s health and medical care. The children’s aftercare was no less important and there is ample evidence to support the view that the charity did its utmost to

Figure 7.2 Adult DPOS orphan with his wife c.1880s to 1890s.
secure valuable training and stable employment for the orphans. The final chapter examines the broader religious and social context in which the DPOS operated in the second half of the twentieth century.

Notes

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16. NSPCC annual report, 1901, p. 29, NLI.
22. *Ibid*.

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DPOS annual report, 1924, NAI, POS papers, 1045/1/1/95–114.


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63 Ibid., 14 Apr. 1899, p. 70.
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66 Unregistered applications (refused and postponed), NAI, POS papers, 1045/5/4.
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100 Ibid., 15 June 1900, p. 149.
101 Ibid.
102 Minutes executive subcommittee, 1929, NAI, POS papers, 1045/2/7/1.
103 Minutes, 1902, NAI, POS papers, 1045/2/1/14, p. 8.
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105 Ibid., 15 Feb. 1907, p. 36.
106 Ibid., 1910, p. 76.
107 Ibid.
109 Minutes visiting subcommittee, 19 May 1911, NAI, POS papers, 1045/2/8/1, p. 89.
110 Ibid.
111 Ibid.
112 Irish Independent (21 December 1917).
113 Irish Times (18 January 1919).
115 Ibid.
116 Ibid.
117 Irish Times (18 June 1935).
119 Ibid.
120 Cullen, ‘Widows in Ireland’.
121 Ibid.
122 Letters registered application files, NAI, POS papers, 1045/5/1–9.
123 See Cronin, ‘“You’d be disgraced”’, p. 115.
124 Minutes, 1903, NAI, POS papers, 1045/2/1/14, p. 275.
125 DPOS annual report, 1933, NAI, POS papers, 1045/1/1/95–114, p. 44.
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128 Ibid., 1939, p. 37.
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130 ‘Children’s Fresh Air Fund’, Irish Times (8 April 1939).
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134 Ibid.
135 Minutes, 16 Feb. 1900, NAI, POS paper, 1045/2/1/14, p. 123.
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141 Minutes, May 1904, NAI, POS papers, 1045/2/1/14.
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Personal and private testimony of a family whose forebears were assisted by the DPOS in the early 1900s.