

## Time Line

**1765:** The Magdalen Asylum, later called Denny House, was founded.

**1902:** Mrs Dickie was appointed in March as the first woman inspector of boarded-out children; in November Miss Fitzgerald-Kenney was appointed to join her.

**1906:** The Vice-Regal Commission on Poor Law Reform in Ireland reported. It suggested that mother and baby homes should be established in Ireland to cater specifically for first time unmarried mothers, owned or managed by religious communities or philanthropic persons, or disused workhouses that were adapted for the purpose and would only accommodate single mothers and their children these special homes should be managed by committees of contributory Boards of Guardians.

**1908:** The *Children Act* introduced regulations and inspections of boarded out children; local authorities were required to appoint infant protection officers to inspect homes where children were nursed out.

**1910:** The Nursery and Rescue Home and Rotunda Protestant Girls' Aid Society was established in Templeogue, Dublin, as a shelter home for Protestant women experiencing a 'first fall' pregnancy.

**1911:** Census.

**1916:** Introduction of the Maternity and Child Welfare Scheme.

**1918:** The *Midwives Act*, was designed to ensure that only registered midwives and other qualified persons attended women in childbirth; the North and South Dublin Unions merged to become the Dublin Union.

**1919:** Pelletstown (later called St Patrick's, Navan Road) opened as a mother and baby home.

**1920:** Denny House (then called the Magdalen Asylum) started to receive state funding; Sinn Féin gained control of most local authorities following elections.

**1921:** The Children's Home for children and unmarried mothers was established in the workhouse in Glenamaddy (it later moved to Tuam); by 1921; the Dublin/Leeson Street Magdalen Asylum/Home had been transformed into a mother and baby home, exclusively for Protestant women experiencing a 'first fall'; Miss Alice Litster was appointed an inspector in the Dáil Department of Local Government.

**1922:** Establishment of the Irish Free State; *Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann) Act*; Bethany (in May) and Bessborough (in November) opened as mother and baby homes; the Nursery and Rescue Home and Rotunda Protestant Girls' Aid Society changed its work to the nursing out of children born to Protestant unmarried mothers and renamed itself the Nursery Rescue and Protestant Children's Aid Society; the Rotunda Hospital first introduced ante-natal care.

**1923:** The *Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act* provided for the county schemes; Thomastown union workhouse becomes the Kilkenny county home; Miss Alice Litster was appointed temporary inspector of boarded-out children; The Irish Free State joined the League of Nations on 10 September.

**1924:** The Department of Local Government and Public Health (DLGPH) was established under the *Ministers and Secretaries Act 1924*; Boards of Health or Boards of Public Assistance were established; severe outbreak of measles in Pelletstown; severe outbreak of influenza in Bethany; original Declaration on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the League of Nations General Assembly on 26 November.

**1925:** The Children's Home moved to the former workhouse in Tuam in June; the Commission on the Relief of the Sick and Destitute Poor, including the Insane Poor was established; the Shannon Scheme is approved.

**1926:** St Vincent's Home, Cabra, opened as a residential centre for children with intellectual disabilities.

**1927:** The Commission on the Relief of the Sick and Destitute Poor, including the Insane Poor published its report; the Electricity Supply Board was established; electric lighting was installed in the Tuam home.

**1929:** The DLGPH issued a circular to all boards of health and public assistance seeking information about the number of unmarried mothers in county homes; local authorities were asked to submit those statistics on a six-monthly basis.

**1930:** Bessborough maternity unit opened; a purpose designed admission register was introduced in Bessborough; Regina Coeli Hostel opened; The *Illegitimate Children (Affiliation Orders) Act* provided that putative fathers could be made liable for maintenance of their illegitimate child if paternity could be established; the Anglican Church withdrew its opposition to contraception for married couples; Pope Pius XI responded with the encyclical *Casti Connubii* published on 31 December.

**1931:** Sean Ross opened as mother and baby home; The *Legitimacy Act* provided that the child of an unmarried woman was 'legitimate' if the parents married within ten months of the birth; there was an agreement between Galway county council and Mayo county council to admit women and children from that county to Tuam;

**1932:** Kilrush closed; St Philomena's opened; The *Therapeutic Substance Act* to regulate the manufacture, import and sale of therapeutic prophylactic and diagnostic substances was passed; Miss Alice Litster was appointed inspector of boarded out children.

**1933:** Unemployment Assistance was introduced; The *Public Hospitals Act 1933* listed mother and baby homes among the institutions that were eligible to apply for hospitals sweepstake money.

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**1934:** The *Registration of Maternity Homes Act* provided that all maternity homes were required to register and became subject to inspection; The *Children Act* closed some gaps in the 1908 Act; Bethany moved to premises on Orwell Road; the Dublin municipal health authorities introduced an anti-diphtheria immunisation scheme in city schools (rolled out the following year).

**1935:** Pelletstown maternity unit opened; Tuam maternity unit opened; Castlepollard opened as mother and baby home; anti-diphtheria vaccine trial in Dublin Union on 24 children in January; Widows and Orphans Pensions were introduced.

**1936:** Work started to connect the Tuam home to the sewerage system; the papal prohibition on religious sisters engaging in midwifery or attending at births was removed; virulent outbreak of diphtheria in Sean Ross; antenatal clinic opened at the Rotunda; a routine anti-diphtheria immunisation scheme in county Waterford resulted in 24 children contracting tuberculosis.

**1937:** in April, a 12 year old died following the immunisation disaster of the previous year; Bunreacht na hÉireann replaces the constitution of the Irish Free State; BCG vaccination first introduced to Ireland by physician in St Ultan's.

**1938:** Miss Alice Litster replaced Mrs Margaret Crofts as Inspector General of boarded out children in the DLGPH; Miss Kennedy O'Byrne and Miss Mary Murray were appointed inspectors of boarded out children.

**1939:** The *Public Assistance Act* was passed but did not come into effect until 1942; the government established a therapeutic substances advisory committee.

**1940:** The CPRSI assumed responsibility for the repatriation of Irish unmarried mothers; Emmanuel Home, a children's home that accommodated many children who had previously been in Bethany, challenged the right of the DLGPH to carry out an inspection on the grounds that children placed there were not maintained for reward; John Charles McQuaid becomes archbishop of Dublin.

**1941:** *Children Act*; epidemic of gastro-enteritis in Dublin; new admission to Castlepollard ceased due to overcrowding; the government introduced a food allowance scheme for welfare recipients living in urban areas.

**1942:** New admissions to Castlepollard resumed and its maternity hospital, St Peter's, opened; the *Public Assistance Act 1939* and the *County Management Act 1940* came into effect.

**1943:** the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers sent a memorandum to Government (and others) on the issue of children in institutions.

**1944:** St Clare's Hospital was established as an infectious diseases hospital for children; the Joint Committee of Women's Societies and Social Workers submitted a memorandum to the

DLGPH about unmarried mothers and their children; outbreak of typhoid in Sean Ross; Children's Allowances were first introduced for the third and subsequent children in a family.

**1945:** Bessborough closed to new public patients; Sean Ross closed to new admissions; The Charter of the United Nations was signed on 26 June and came into force on 24 October.

**1946:** An isolation unit was opened in Pelletstown; Penicillin was first used to treat infants in Bessborough in April; Mary E. Murray was appointed Inspector of Boarded Out Children (north of the country); rural electrification began.

**1947:** The *Health Act* and the *Health Services (Financial Provisions) Act* were passed; Department of Local Government and Public Health was divided and a separate Department of Health was established; bread rationing was introduced; *Nuremberg Code* set standards relating to clinical trials conducted on human subjects.

**1948:** Miss Fedelma Clandillon was appointed Inspector of Barded Out Children (south of the country); Fianna Fáil government was defeated in February general election; Dr Noël Browne became Minister for Health in the subsequent coalition government; regulations were introduced providing the basis for nationwide programmes of immunisation against diphtheria, whooping cough and later polio; the Commission on Emigration and other Population Problems was established; The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December.

**1949:** An inter-departmental committee on the reconstruction and replacement of county homes was established.

**1951:** The county homes interdepartmental committee submitted its report; The White Paper on the Reconstruction and Improvement of County Homes was published; Mother and Child welfare scheme was proposed by the Minister for Health Dr Noël Browne to improve maternal and infant health.

**1952:** The *Adoption Act* was passed; The *Social Welfare Act*, provided for maternity allowances; The *Vital Statistics and Births, Deaths and Marriages Registration Act 1952* provided for a short form birth certificate.

**1953:** The *Health Act* provided for free maternity care for women and free medical care for infants up to six weeks old and it also made some changes to the public assistance laws - Maternity Allowance was introduced; the *Adoption Act 1952* came into effect on 1 January 1953; the first children's officer - the precursor of professional social worker in child care - was appointed; The European Convention on Human Right was adopted by the Council of Europe on 3 September.

**1954:** A new maternity unit opened in St Kevin's; the Commission on Emigration and other Population Problems reported.

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**1955:** Dunboyne opened as mother and baby home; a child guidance clinic, run by the Hospitaller Order of St John of God opened; Ireland became a member state of the United Nations, and accepted the obligations contained in the charter, on 14 December.

**1956:** Suez Canal crisis occurred, resulting in economic downturn; a staircase collapsed in Regina Coeli; there was an outbreak of polio in Cork; paediatrics was introduced to the final medical examination syllabus.

**1957:** Miss Margaret Reidy became mother and baby homes inspector; St Louise's Adoption Society was established to deal with adoptions from Pelletstown; The *Children (Amendment) Act* was passed.

**1959:** The Magdalen Asylum (Denny House) moved to 83 Eglinton Road; The expanded declaration on the rights of the child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November.

**1960:** The Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Waterford health authorities were established; four-in-one (vaccine (Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, and Polio) vaccine trial started.

**1961:** Tuam Children's Home closed; Census; the Commission of Inquiry on Mental Illness was established.

**1962:** The second Vatican Council started; *Report of the Medical Research Council (UK)* dealing with vaccine trials was published.

**1963:** Regina Coeli was condemned as unsafe; the contraceptive pill became available on prescription through the coded language of using it 'as a means of regulating a woman's menstrual cycle'; The *Adoption Bill* was passed; the report of the Commission on Itinerancy was published.

**1964:** The *Guardianship of Infants Act* clarified that an unmarried mother is automatically the guardian of her child; the play *An Trial (On Trial)* by Máire Ní Ghráda was first produced; unmarried mothers start to appear in the media; measles vaccine trial on 12 children in Sean Ross.

**1965:** The *Succession Act* was passed; the Commission of Inquiry on Mental Handicap published its report; the second Vatican council closed; the chromosomal abnormality in trisomy 21 was discovered; the term 'mongolism' was officially replaced with 'Down's syndrome'; suspected polio and suspected measles vaccine trials in Pelletstown; suspected measles vaccine trial in Bessborough; Quintuple vaccine trial in Pelletstown and Bessborough started in August (and concluded the following year).

**1966:** Census; free secondary education was announced; the Commission of Inquiry on Mental Illness reported; the National Drugs Advisory Board was established; The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December.

**1967:** *Abortion Act* in England; introduction of free second-level schooling.

**1968:** Measles vaccine trial in Pelletstown; milk trial in Bessborough and in Pelletstown; papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* was issued; introduction of free school transport and grants for attending third-level institutions; the European Convention on the Adoption of Children was signed and ratified by Ireland on 25 January.

**1969:** Sean Ross closed; milk trial in Bessborough and in Pelletstown in April; a family planning clinic, the Fertility Guidance Company (later the Irish Family Planning Association) opened in Dublin (despite the prohibition on contraception); moon landing in July.

**1970:** The *Health Act* established the regional health boards; *Reformatory and Industrial Schools Systems Report* (commonly known as the Kennedy Report) was published; a national conference on the unmarried mother was held in Kilkenny; Miss Murray retired and Miss Clandillon had responsibility for boarded out children.

**1971:** Castlepollard closed; the changeover to decimal currency occurred; Ccensus; Irish Association of Social Workers was established; St James' Hospital was established as a result of the amalgamation of a number of different hospitals; Archbishop McQuaid resigned.

**1972:** Bethany Home closed; Miss Carr's Flatlets opened; Cherish, an organisation for one-parent families, was founded.

**1973:** DTP vaccine trial in Pelletstown started; Ireland became a member of the European Economic Community; the Unmarried Mother's Allowance was introduced; the report of the *Commission on the Status of Women* recommended significant reforms relating to women's work, legal status and welfare entitlements; the ban on the employment of married women in the civil service was (partially) lifted; Britain's National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child (NCUMC) changed its name to the National Council for One-Parent Families; Cherish became a limited company with Senator Mary Robinson as President; oil crisis; Ireland signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in October; The Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December.

**1974:** A High Court judgment determined that the proceeds of the sale of Bethany Home should be allocated to Denny House and to Miss Carr's Children's Home; vaccine trial in Pelletstown concluded; In *McGee v The Attorney General*, the Supreme Court ruled that married couples had a constitutional right to make private decisions regarding family planning; the *Anti-Discrimination (Pay) Act* was passed; Senator Mary Robinson had introduced the *Illegitimate Children (Maintenance and Succession) Bill) 1974*.

**1975:** The High Court found that the requirement of uniformity of religion in the *Adoption Act 1952* amounted to discrimination on grounds of religious belief in breach of Article 44.2.3 of the Constitution.

**1976:** Comhairle na n-Ospidéal issued a discussion document on the *Development of Hospital Maternity Services* which recommended that in-patient maternity services should be

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concentrated in hospitals catering for 1,500 - 2,000 deliveries a year, meaning that there should be no more births in the mother and baby homes; The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights came into force on 23 March.

**1977:** The *Employment Equality Act* was passed.

**1978:** the European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock came into force in August.

**1979:** *Health (Family Planning Act)* – contraception was legalised on prescription for family planning purposes only (de facto restricting it to married couples); The Magdalen Asylum changed its name to Denny House and amended its charter to admit unmarried mothers without religious restriction, and, in certain circumstances, married women; the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre was founded; Pope John Paul II visited Ireland.

**1980:** The maternity unit at Pelletstown closed; The Daughters of Charity bought adjoining houses on Belmont Avenue to provide flatlets or hostel type accommodation for unmarried mothers and their children.

**1981:** The *Maternity (Protection of Employment) Act* was passed; Census; The Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women came into force on 3 September.

**1982:** The Castle opened; unmarried teacher Eileen Flynn was dismissed from her convent secondary school when she became pregnant; the Eastern Health Board established a committee on support services for unwanted pregnancies; the law reform commission's report on illegitimacy was published.

**1983:** The eighth amendment to the Constitution of Ireland was approved in a referendum; a review committee on adoption services was established.

**1984:** Ann Lovett died; the Employment Appeals Tribunal upheld the right of the religious order to dismiss teacher Eileen Flynn - this judgment was upheld by the High Court; the report of the review committee on adoption was published; The Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 10 December.

**1985:** Pelletstown closed and its much smaller successor opened in Eglinton Road; the *Health (Family Planning), (Amendment) Act* was passed; Bessborough maternity unit closed; responsibility for Denny House was transferred from the Department of Health to the community care section of the Eastern Health Board; The *Age of Majority Act* was passed; The Convention on the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women was ratified by Ireland on 23 December.

**1987:** *Johnson v Ireland* in the European Court of Human Rights challenged the lack of divorce in Ireland and the legal status of 'illegitimate' children; The *Status of Children Act* abolished the status of 'illegitimacy'.

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**1988:** the European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock was signed and ratified by Ireland in October.

**1989:** the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November; Ireland ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in December; The Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment came into force on 26 June; the European Convention on the Legal Status of Children born out of Wedlock became binding in Ireland in January.

**1990:** Dunboyne began the process of closing; the Convention on the Rights of the Child came into force on 2 September and was signed by Ireland on 30 September.

**1991:** the *Child Care Act* was passed but much of it did not come into effect until 1996.

**1992:** Subsequent to the *X* case, the Supreme Court established the right to abortion if the pregnant woman's life was at risk because of pregnancy; The Convention against Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment was signed by Ireland on 28 September; the Convention on the Rights of the Child was ratified on 28 September.

**1993:** Bishop Eamon Casey resigned following the discovery that he was the father of a child; The Second Commission on the Status of Women reported; The Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption concluded.

**1994:** Denny House closed; The *Stillbirth Registration Act* was passed.

**1995:** The constitutional ban on divorce was removed; a Commission on the Family was established.

**1998:** The *Adoption Act* was passed; the Commission on the Family published its report.