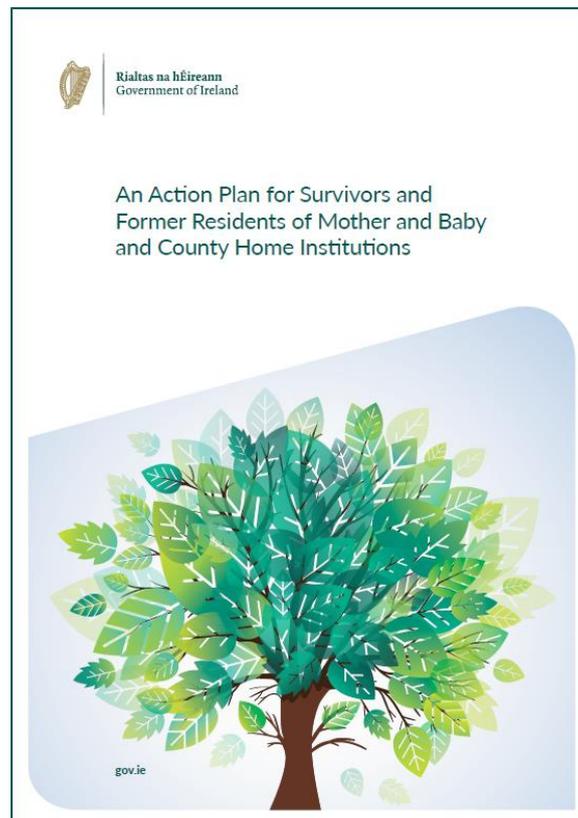




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An Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions

Questions and Answers



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The Action Plan

1. What is the purpose of this Action Plan?

When the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation was published in January 2021, the Government issued a State apology to those who spent time in the institutions and committed to a suite of 22 Actions which take account of the Commission's recommendations. Due to the broad range of areas covered by these Actions, co-ordination across Government is needed to drive and support implementation. The purpose of this Action Plan is to provide a high-level framework for collaboration between the Government, State and society to drive implementation of the 22 Actions. In addition to developing the Action Plan, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) has also sought to progress individual measures to ensure survivors see tangible results as early as possible. The published Plan includes milestones, timelines and progress updates on each action.

2. What will this Action Plan deliver for former residents and survivors of these institutions?

This Action Plan commits to a suite of 22 Actions across eight key themes.

- Theme 1 – A Survivor Centred Approach
- Theme 2 – Apology
- Theme 3 – Access to Personal Information
- Theme 4 – Archives and Databases
- Theme 5 – Education and Research
- Theme 6 – Memorialisation
- Theme 7 – Restorative Recognition
- Theme 8 – Dignified Burial

Of the 22 Actions, 6 have already been completed while another 13 are already in progress.

3. Who is responsible for implementation of this Action Plan?

Government as a whole is responsible for the implementation of this Action Plan. Each individual milestone is led by a named Department, agency or authority. These lead bodies and associated Partners are identified under each Action. Minister O'Gorman and his Department will coordinate and monitor delivery of the Actions.

4. How were the views of survivors and former residents incorporated into this Action Plan?

The Actions in this Action Plan are designed to respond to the priority needs and concerns identified by survivors and former residents and their families. The themes have regard to the Commission's recommendations and the recommendations of the Collaborative Forum of Former Residents of these institutions. Since publication of the Commission of Investigation's Final Report, there has been extensive consultation with survivors, former residents and their supporters. Notably, a public consultation on the forthcoming Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme received almost 450 submissions and 17 online meetings were hosted. Pre-Legislative Scrutiny of both the Certain Institutional Burials (Authorised Interventions) Bill and Birth Information and Tracing Bill have afforded important opportunities for engagement with survivors and former residents. Minister O'Gorman has also had numerous virtual and face-to-face meetings and contacts with survivors, their families and their advocates over the past months.

5. Will survivors and former residents be consulted in the implementation of these Actions?

Yes. Government recognises that the views of survivors and their families must inform the design and delivery of these measures if they are to respond to their needs. To achieve this, Government is committed to enhancing engagement and dialogue with survivors. The need for an inclusive and sustainable approach has become particularly clear since the publication of the Commission's Report. Since then, several hundred survivors and former residents based in Ireland and abroad have contacted DCEDIY for the first time. Many are not involved with advocacy groups. This additional demand is also evident from the very strong response to the consultation process to inform the development of the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme. We expect this engagement to increase significantly over the coming months. Our experience tells us that engagement at this level requires dedicated structures, processes and additional resources to ensure it can be inclusive, effective and sustainable. Minister O'Gorman will bring proposals to Government shortly on how best to facilitate this broader direct engagement. An important aspect of any new arrangement will be the development of specific channels to communicate with survivors and former residents who are living abroad.

6. How long will this Action Plan be in place?

Given the breadth and scale of this Action Plan, it will be implemented in a phased and structured way. While some Actions are already achieved, with many others already in progress, some are, of necessity, medium and longer term goals. A number of actions relate to ongoing service provision, such as health supports, while others are dependent on new legislative arrangements. There will be a formal review of the Action Plan after three years to assess the progress made in that time.

7. How will the implementation of this Action Plan be funded?

This Action Plan is a high-level framework document. Actions will be underpinned by more detailed plans, including cost estimates where appropriate. Over the lifetime of the plan, additional decisions may be necessary on funding for individual commitments. The following dedicated funding has been secured:

- €4.5 million in Budget 2022 to support overall management of the Action Plan this coming year. This includes funding for stakeholder engagement, intervention at the site of the former Tuam Mother and Baby Institution, as well as research and memorialisation initiatives.
- The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme will receive separate additional funding from 2022 onwards. The Government intends to seek significant contributions from the religious congregations who were involved in operating the institutions towards the cost of the Scheme.
- Additional funding of €1.34m has been assigned to the Adoption Authority of Ireland in Budget 2022 to support the implementation of the Birth Information and Tracing Bill, when enacted.
- Tusla, the Child and Family Agency, has been allocated an additional €40.5m in Budget 2022, part of which will be used to fund additional posts to support implementation of the forthcoming Birth Information and Tracing legislation in a timely manner.
- An additional €1m will be available in 2022 & 2023 to support the immediate preparatory work needed for the National Memorial and Records Centre.
- An additional €3.5m per annum will be allocated from 2023 onwards for the establishment of a Children's Fund to support children of today experiencing disadvantage.
- Dedicated funding has also been made available to the Health Service Executive to support a number of specific initiatives, including: enhanced and dedicated capacity in the National Counselling Service; the establishment of a Patient Advocacy Liaison Service, and a Health

Research Study to inform health and well-being policy in response to the specific needs of survivors of these institutions.

8. How will Government report on the implementation of this Action Plan?

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) will prepare an annual report on the progress in implementing this Action Plan, which will be published and laid before both Houses of the Oireachtas. The first annual report will cover the 12 months following publication of the Action Plan itself. The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth will update Government colleagues regularly through their participation in the Cabinet Sub-Committee on Social Affairs and Equality.

9. How will survivors be kept informed of the progress of this Action Plan?

The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY) is keenly aware of the importance of providing regular updates to survivors and former residents. We will send quarterly updates via the Department's mailing list outlining progress in particular areas. These updates will also be published on the Department's website. If you would like to be added to the Department's mailing list, or to receive updates in another format, please contact us via email at motherandbabyhomes@equality.gov.ie or by phone at 01-6473200. The Department has established a dedicated hub on its website for information on issues related to Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions and the Government's response. This website can be accessed [here](#).

Financial Recognition

10. Where can I find information about the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme?

Government has approved proposals for the design of a Scheme, to be known as the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme. This Scheme, when established, will include a financial payment and a form of enhanced medical card. A separate Questions and Answers document giving details on the Scheme and today's announcement can be found [here](#).

Health Supports

11. What counselling supports are available to survivors and former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions?

We recognise that the distress and hurt experienced by many citizens because of systemic failures in these institutions continue to impact them today. We are committed to ensuring that professional counselling support is available for anyone who may need it. The HSE National Counselling Service is available from Monday to Friday between 9.30am and 5pm for anyone who feels they may need this support. Those who identify themselves as former residents of the institutions will be prioritised for the service. Information about the service and contact details are available on the HSE website [here](#). This information is also available on the Department's online information hub.

Outside of these hours, you can also directly contact the CONNECT free telephone counselling and support service where you can talk in confidence with a trained counsellor. This service is generally available between 6pm and 10pm Monday through to Sunday on 1800 477 477.

12. Is there a dedicated point of contact for survivors and former residents who wish to access health supports?

Yes there is. The HSE operates a dedicated Freephone information line for former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions at 1800 817 517.

The Department of Health, in partnership with the HSE, is currently working on establishing a Patient Advocacy Liaison Service (PALS) for survivors and former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions which will be added to this service in the coming months. This service is expected to be fully established in early 2022.

13. What will the Patient Advocacy Liaison Service (PALS) do?

When up and running, this service will have a dedicated team who can provide bespoke information and support to survivors and former residents, on a confidential basis, to assist them in accessing health services which they may need. The service will include:

- A signposting and information service including phone, email and web chat;
- A suite of online, easy to understand accessible information on a range of health services and health and wellbeing topics tailored to former residents;
- A single named individual as a point of contact, responding appropriately and directly to former residents to support them to navigate the health service;
- Knowledge expert advisors who will oversee and monitor queries received and subsequently tailor and develop the service;
- Awareness raising campaign to ensure former residents are informed and encouraged to avail of the Counselling and PALS services.

Further information on this service will be published and circulated to survivors and former residents when it is available.

Access to Information

14. What records and personal information does DCEDIY hold?

When the Commission of Investigation was dissolved in February 2021, DCEDIY became the data controller for all the personal data contained in the Commission's archive of records and databases. This includes the institutional records and related data which the Commission accessed in the course of its investigations. An Information Management Unit has been established in the Department and is managing access to this archive for individuals who are seeking their personal information, in accordance with GDPR.

15. How can I access any personal data about me in this archive?

There are two main ways to access any personal data about you which may be in the archive. The main method is by submitting what is called a Subject Access Request (SAR) to the Department. You can also access information through the Freedom of Information (FOI) process. Detailed information on how to submit both types of request can be found [here](#).

If you have any queries, please call our SAR Information Line on 01-2376001 from Monday to Friday 9.00am to 5.00pm. You can also contact us by email at sar@equality.gov.ie.

16. What action is the Government taking to ensure access to birth information and tracing?

Government is committed to legislating for the right of access to a full and unredacted birth certificate and other birth and early life information. Minister O’Gorman published the General Scheme of the Birth Information and Tracing Bill in May 2021. It is currently undergoing Pre-Legislative Scrutiny by the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

Both the Minister and the Joint Oireachtas Committee have engaged extensively with people affected by these issues. Once the Committee completes its Pre-Legislative Scrutiny, the Minister hopes to publish the final Bill before the end of 2021 so that it can be enacted as soon as possible. An implementation group has already commenced work to plan for putting the legislation into operation once enacted.

17. What steps is Government taking to ensure GDPR access to health information?

Government is aware that current constraints on access to the health data contained in the Commission’s archive is causing distress. The Minister for Health is progressing new Regulations as a matter of urgency to resolve this.

As an alternative option to receiving health data under GDPR, DCEDIY is advising relevant applicants of the option to apply under FOI to seek to access their health data and is providing support. This is to ensure that requestors are made aware of all the options to access their health data and to provide data to requestors more quickly. If you have any questions about this option, please contact DCEDIY via phone or email at the address/number above.

18. Are records being centralised by the proposed Birth Information and Tracing legislation?

The proposed legislation does not provide for mandatory centralisation of records, as ensuring timely access to the records is the Government’s immediate priority.

However, the legislation will require that holders of relevant records must safeguard and preserve them. It also provides a mechanism for the Adoption Authority to direct a holder of such records to transfer them to the Authority.

This approach recognises the need to move ahead urgently with Birth Information and Tracing legislation, while working in the medium-term towards the creation of a centralised archive which may sit within a National Memorial and Records Centre (see below). This approach also facilitates immediate access to records, on enactment of the legislation, without the necessity to wait until after a process of centralising and indexing those records.

Memorialisation

19. What are the plans for a National Memorial?

Government will work towards establishing a National Memorial and Records Centre related to institutional trauma during the 20th century. This Centre will be designed in cooperation with professional archivists and historians, as well as with victims, survivors and their advocates to ensure information is presented in a clear and considerate manner.

The Government has decided to progress this commitment by establishing a cross Government group which will be chaired by the Secretary General to the Government. This initial work will develop a proposed vision and approach to the project which will then be brought to Government for approval.

20. How will the Government support local memorials?

Since the publication of the Commission's final report, a number of Local Authorities have publicly indicated their support for local memorialisation projects and some have commenced work to action these local commitments.

To support the process, the Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage has established a Working Group of officials from Government Departments and Local Authorities to scope relevant policy considerations with a view to assisting local authorities to support local memorialisation initiatives.

Separate to the above work, financial support is currently available from DCEDIY for local groups who wish to organise a commemorative event. See below.

21. I would like to organise a commemorative event. What support is available?

A Commemorative Grant Scheme was introduced in 2019 and is open to applications. It aims to support survivors in commemorating their experiences in a manner which fits their own specific needs. This scheme is funded and administered by DCEDIY. You can find details on the scheme and how to apply [here](#).

22. What plans does Government have for survivors' accounts to be recognised as part of the official record and how will this form part of memorialisation?

Government has acknowledged that elements of the Commission's report did not live up to survivors' expectations and recognises the deep hurt which this has caused. Many survivors remain frustrated and angered that deeply personal accounts given to the Confidential Committee, and which they expected to stand as a permanent record of what happened in their own words, have not fulfilled that potential. In seeking to resolve these concerns, the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth is working to bring forward a new mechanism to allow personal accounts be recorded, acknowledged and stand as part of the official record of the lived experience of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. This process will feed into the creation of a National Memorial and Records Centre.

Burials

23. What progress has been made on the proposed interventions at the Tuam site?

The Government is committed to advancing burials legislation to allow lawful intervention where there have been manifestly inappropriate burials. Children interred in such circumstances deserve an appropriate burial and the Minister is determined to achieve this dignity for them and their families through the enactment of legislation. The General Scheme of a Certain Institutional Burials (Authorised Interventions) Bill has undergone extensive pre-legislative scrutiny by the Oireachtas. Many survivors contributed to the deliberations of the Joint Oireachtas Committee.

The issues raised and the recommendations made by the Joint Oireachtas Committee are being carefully considered in the course of the legal drafting process. The legislation is unavoidably complex by virtue of the sensitive issues addressed within it. These include property rights, data protection and privacy, handling of sensitive personal information, and the structures necessary to manage and oversee the proposed intervention.

This legislation is a priority for the Government. Minister O’Gorman intends to publish the Bill by the end of the current Dáil session and to bring it through the legislative process and commence works as quickly as possible.

24. What steps is Government taking to preserve burial sites associated with former Mother and Baby Institutions?

The *Planning and Development Act 2000* currently enables local authorities to protect potential burial sites from possible harmful development. The Minister for Housing, Local Government and Heritage is preparing a circular to issue to all planning authorities, advising them of the precautionary approach to be taken in statutory development plans for the proper safeguarding of burial sites from potentially harmful development.

Education and Research

25. What steps has Government taken on the education and research commitments made in response to the Commission’s report?

Government recognises the importance of education and research in seeking to acknowledge, understand and learn from our past. For this reason Government has taken action in three particular areas related to Education and Research.

- The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment is considering ways to support schools in enabling school students to learn about and understand this important and sensitive aspect of Ireland’s recent history. The Council is considering in particular the inclusion of a short video prepared by the Commission of Investigation into the curriculum for second level. Work in this area is being led by the Department of Education.
- DCEDIY, in partnership with the Irish Research Council, is funding a new Postgraduate Scholarship in Childhood Disadvantage, in memory of all the children who died in Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions.
- DCEDIY, in partnership with the Irish Research Council, has also commissioned NUI Galway to conduct research on language and terminology. The aim of the project is to examine the stigmatising language that has been used towards survivors in the past, and to provide guidance on to how we can do better in the future. This work is expected to be completed in early 2022.

26. Are there any Actions which will directly benefit the children of today?

Government has approved the creation of a Children's Fund which will support children experiencing disadvantage in the present day. Funding of €3.5m per annum has been secured from 2023 onwards for this fund. Subject to the development of the scheme, applications are expected to open for funding in mid-2022.

The development of the Children's Fund will be informed by learning on the impact of existing programmes, and needs emerging from implementation of the EU Child Guarantee, recommendations of the UNCRC, and direct consultations with children.

Further Information

27. Where can I find the 'Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions'?

The Action Plan is available on the Department's website [here](#). Hard copies are also available. If you would like one sent to you free of charge, please email motherandbabyhomes@equality.gov.ie, and provide your full name and postal address, (including Eircode).

28. Who can I contact if I have any questions about this Action Plan?

There is a dedicated telephone information line available for people seeking further information about the State's response to issues related to Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. The Department's Information Line can be contacted on 01-6473200 from Monday to Friday 9.30am to 5.30pm or via email motherandbabyhomes@equality.gov.ie.

At a Glance— Status of the 22 Government Commitments

Theme	Actions	
A Survivor Centred Approach	1. Development of a Strategic Action Plan and Engagement with Former Residents	Ongoing
	2. Immediate Counselling Support	Achieved
Apology	3. Apology by An Taoiseach	Achieved
Access to Personal Information	4. Information and Tracing Legislation	Ongoing
	5. GDPR Right of Access to Commission Records	Achieved
	6. Central repository of institutional records	Medium/Longer term
Archives and Databases	7. National Memorial and Records Centre	Ongoing
	8. Public Access to Original State Files	Ongoing
	9. Expansion of the database	Medium/Longer term
	10. Appointment of an archivist	Achieved
Education and Research	11. Second level curriculum	Ongoing
	12. Research Scholarships	Achieved
	13. Research on Terminology	Ongoing
	14. Further Research on Death Registration Records	Medium/Longer term
Memorialisation	15. National Memorial	Ongoing
	16. Local Memorials	Ongoing
	17. Survivor-led annual commemoration	Achieved
	18. Children's Fund	Ongoing
Restorative Recognition	19. Health Supports	Ongoing
	20. Financial Support	Ongoing
	21. Inheritance Tax	Ongoing
Dignified Burial	22. Burials Legislation	Ongoing