

16th November 2021

To survivors and former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions, their families and advocates

Today I have published ***An Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions*** and details of the ***Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme***. As promised I am sharing this information directly with you before it is published more widely.

The *Action Plan* outlines the Government's response to the legacy of Mother and Baby Institutions, and supports the implementation of commitments made by the Government in January 2021 to respond to the priority needs and concerns of those who spent time in those institutions.

As previously outlined, a fundamental element of the Government's response is a commitment to establish an ex-gratia payment scheme, and today I am announcing the proposals for the ***Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme***. I intend for the Scheme to open for applications as soon as possible in 2022.

The *Payment Scheme* will operate as follows:

- All mothers who spent time in a Mother and Baby Institution will be eligible for a payment, increasing based on their length of stay.
- All children who spent six months or more in an institution, and did not receive redress for that institution under the Residential Institutions Redress Scheme (RIRS), will be eligible for payment based on their length of stay.
- There will also be an additional, work-related payment for women who were resident in certain institutions for more than three months and who undertook what might be termed commercial work.
- An enhanced medical card will be available to everybody who was resident in a Mother and Baby or County Home Institution for six months or more.

Applicants will qualify solely based on proof of residency, without a need to bring forward any evidence of abuse nor any medical evidence. In certain limited circumstances, sworn affidavits may be required.

Those survivors and former residents now living overseas will qualify for a payment on the same terms as individuals living in Ireland, and will have the choice to receive an enhanced medical card or a once-off payment in lieu of the card as a contribution towards their individual health needs.

The legislation required to establish the Scheme will be developed by my Department as a matter of priority. This legislation will facilitate the establishment of an independent Executive Office, situated within my Department, to administer the Scheme.

The Government has recognised that any Scheme for financial recognition must be developed and designed in meaningful consultation with survivors and their representatives. For this reason, the proposals announced today were informed by a comprehensive public consultation process that

sought the views of survivors and interested parties on what should be included. They have been further informed by the lessons which have been learned by the State in its administration of previous similar schemes.

The Scheme will take a holistic and non-adversarial approach to ensure that survivors and former residents are not re-traumatised by their engagement with it.

I want to personally thank all the survivors and their families who participated in the consultation process for the Scheme, both in Ireland and abroad. The depth of your feeling shone through and is reflected in the proposals published today.

The consultation process on the Scheme also illuminated more clearly than ever before that redress is a broad concept that means a range of things to people. For some it is an apology and memorialisation, while for others it lies in access to records or opportunities to avail of support. The Government is committed to delivering substantial responses in all these areas.

We are progressing legislation to enable access to birth certificates and early life information, and to allow for interventions at the site in Tuam. As the Action Plan outlines, work is also advancing on national and local memorialisation, including the National Memorial and Records Centre, and my Department has also opened the Commission's Archive to ensure that survivors of Mother and Baby Institutions can access their records.

I know there is no payment or measure that can ever fully compensate or atone for the harm done through the Mother and Baby Institutions. What I have set out today is the next chapter in the State's response to the legacy of those institutions, and its commitment to rebuilding the trust it so grievously shattered.

The Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions provides a framework for collaboration across Government, State agencies, and broader society to implement the suite of 22 agreed measures across the eight themes. For each action, the plan identifies milestones and timelines, and sets out progress to date and next steps. It also sets out an overarching vision, mission and values, as well as governance and monitoring processes to oversee progress.

A major element of the Action Plan will be the creation of a National Memorial and Records Centre. This will be progressed by a Group chaired by the Secretary General to the Government. The group will develop an overarching vision and proposed approach for the creation of the National Centre which will then be brought to Government for approval. Ring-fenced funding will be made available for the research, stakeholder consultation, expert technical analysis and underlying records management work which will be central to the success of this initiative.

I understand that there is a lot of information to process in relation to this announcement and I look forward to further engaging with you in the coming weeks and months about these wide ranging measures.

What happens next?

Legislation will be needed to establish the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme and an independent Executive Office will have to be set up within the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth to deal with applications to the Scheme. This important work has already commenced.

When will I be able to apply for the Scheme?

You don't need to do anything at this time. Once the Scheme has been established it will be well publicised and clear direction and support will be provided to those who want to apply.

Although work has already commenced, it will take some time to make arrangements for this Scheme and it is hoped that the Scheme will be open for applications before the end of 2022.

Support

The National Counselling Service provides dedicated professional counselling support to former residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. Further information on this service is available on the Department's website [here](#).

Further Information

Further information on the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme and the wider Government Action Plan are available on the Department's dedicated webpage gov.ie/motherandbabyhomes

Hard copies of the documents being published today are also available. If you would like any of these sent to you free of charge, please email motherandbabyhomes@equality.gov.ie, and provide your full name and postal address (including your Eircode).

My Department also maintains a mailing list for updates on all matters relating to Mother and Baby Home and County Home institutions including developments in relation to this Scheme. If you would like to receive these updates you can email: motherandbabyhomes@equality.gov.ie and ask to be added to the mailing list.

Best wishes,

Roderic O'Gorman T.D.

Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth