**Statement by the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman TD, on the report of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation**

**30 October 2020**

The Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O’Gorman TD, has this afternoon received the final report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters.

As required by law, the Minister has immediately referred the report to the Attorney General for his legal advice as to whether publication of the report could prejudice any criminal proceedings that are pending or in progress. The Office of the Attorney General has been provided with additional resources to expedite this review, and the Government has committed to publication as soon as possible.

The Minister will meet with the Commission in the coming days to discuss the report, its findings and recommendations.

Speaking on behalf of the Government, the Minister said:

“*I want to firstly acknowledge the participation of those who shared their personal experiences with the Commission. In particular, I would like to pay special tribute to the survivors of these institutions, and their families, for the courage and determination they have shown in coming forward and recounting their experiences of Mother and Baby Homes to the Commission*.

“*I hope that, by having the opportunity to recount their experiences, former residents and their families feel that they have a voice; that they have been heard, that their hurt is acknowledged and their experiences are now documented. Difficult though this report will be, I hope that this can assist the healing process*.

*“I would also like to thank the Commission and their staff for the thorough and detailed work undertaken by them over the past five years in compiling this report. The report received today is amongst the longest reports yet produced by an inquiry of this nature. The work of the Commission will no doubt shed an important light into a dark and difficult chapter of very recent Irish history – a history that is living memory for so many of our citizens today.”*

“*I understand the expectations for early publication of this report and I want to emphasise that I will seek Government approval to publish the report as soon as possible*.”

Earlier this week, the Government committed to a series of measures in response to the needs of survivors, including:

* Advancing Information and Tracing legislation in 2021
* Legislation to provide for sensitive and appropriate actions at the burial site at the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, Co Galway, and at any other sites where this is appropriate.
* Engagement with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner and Tusla to ensure that the rights of all citizens to access personal information about themselves, under data protection legislation and the GDPR, are fully respected and implemented.
* Work to establish, on a formal, national basis, an archive of records related to institutional trauma during the 20th century, including archiving relevant records and witness testimony by victims and survivors.

The Department wishes to highlight that counselling supports are available, the details of which are set out below.

**Counselling supports**

For any former residents of Mother and Baby Homes seeking counselling support, the **HSE National Counselling Service (NCS)** is available to provide a counselling service from Monday to Friday between 9.30 and 5pm.

The National Counselling Service has 20 years of experience in providing counselling and psychotherapy to a wide range of clients including those who have experienced psychological difficulties due to time spent in institutions. It employs qualified, accredited and experienced Counsellor/Therapists and its services are available free of charge across the country. The service aims to support clients to improve their quality of life and reduce their psychological distress through the provision of evidence based, professional, client centred counselling.

Access to the National Counselling Service for former residents may be made by direct self-referral. You can do this by referring yourself to the service that is nearest to you. Written referral can also be made by health care professionals such as GPs.

Details of the National Counselling Service and contact details for each area are listed below.

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| **HSE REGION** | **AREA COVERED** | **TELEPHONE NO.** |
| CHO Area 1 | Donegal, Sligo & Leitrim | **1800 234 119** |
| CHO Area 2 | Galway, Mayo & Roscommon | **1800 234 114** |
| CHO Area 3 | Limerick, Clare & North Tipperary | **1800 234 115** |
| CH Cork, Kerry | Cork & Kerry | **1800 234 116** |
| CHO Area 5 | Waterford, Wexford, Kilkenny, Carlow & South Tipperary,  | **1800 234 118** |
| CH East | South Dublin, South East Dublin & East Wicklow | **1800 234 111** |
| CH Dublin South, Kildare & West Wicklow  | South West Dublin, Kildare & West Wicklow | **1800 234 112** |
| CHO Area 8  | Midlands**:** Laois, Offaly, Longford & Westmeath | **1800 234 113** |
| CHO Area 1/8 | Louth, Meath, Cavan & Monaghan | **1800 234 117** |
| CHO Area 9 | Dublin North & Dublin North City | **1800 234 110** |

Outside of office hours, Connect Counselling provides telephone support. This service is available between 6pm and 10pm Wednesday through to Sunday on 1800 477 477. To support survivors following completion of the report, it will also be available November 2nd-4th (inclusive).

A new webpage with information specifically for former residents of Mother and Baby Homes has been set up at:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/mental-health-services/national-counselling-service/counselling-service-for-former-residents-of-mother-and-baby-homes/>

Additional mental health supports provided/funded by the HSE are also available to former residents. Details of these supports are available on [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5CGibbsJ%5CAppData%5CLocal%5CMicrosoft%5CWindows%5CINetCache%5CContent.Outlook%5CO2EVTHVA%5Cwww.yourmentalhealth.ie)

**General Information from the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth**

For those seeking general information on mother and baby homes issues, the following contact numbers are available:

Office of the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth:

Tel: (01) 6473000 or email: Minister@dcya.gov.ie

The Mother and Baby Homes Investigation Unit:

Tel: (01) 6473200 (Monday to Friday from 09:00 – 18:00) or motherandbabyhomes@dcya.gov.ie

ENDS