

Q1/2025

# Quarterly Update

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

## A message from Minister Foley

This is the first quarterly update of 2025, and my first as Minister for Children, Disability and Equality.

I am conscious that nothing that we could say or do would actually wipe away what was endured by Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions.

But it was important that a suite of actions be taken by the previous government and that it has been given a renewed focus in the new Programme for Government.

I want to let you know that we continue to progress delivery on those commitments in the Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions.

Developing the Action Plan was an acknowledgment by the State of the deep and enduring impact of past institutional failures on those who spent time in these institutions, and their families. In delivering on these commitments, the Government's ambition is to address survivors' needs and concerns and rebuild a relationship of trust between the State and those who have been so profoundly wronged.

In this communication you will find an updated report on the Payment Scheme. With over 6,300 applications to the Scheme, the Payment Scheme Office is busy processing applications through to an offer of benefits under the Scheme, and 86% of those who have applied so far have received a notice of determination. We have also included some recent frequently asked questions, including specific questions in relation to the enhanced medical card, which you may find helpful.

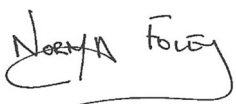
Further updates are included on the National Centre for Research and Remembrance, the Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam (ODAIT) and from the Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse as well as regular updates and useful contacts.

I want to ensure that all this work is very much informed by the views and the thoughts and the experiences of survivors themselves. This has been very helpful, for example, in the work to design the new National Centre for Research and Remembrance.

A series of events were held in late last year and early this year in Dublin, Galway, Cork and London, as well as an online event, so that survivors and affected persons, and their family members and advocates, could hear about and feed back on the National Centre.

I hope you find this latest update useful, and please do continue to contact the Department with any feedback you may have.

With warm regards and good wishes,



Norma Foley,

Minister for Children, Equality and Disability



An application for planning permission for the National Centre for Research and Remembrance was submitted by the Office of Public Works in November 2024. The Final Grant for Planning Permission was received by the OPW from Dublin City Council on the 28th February. It is expected that construction can begin on site in late 2025.

It is important to note that the planning application relates to the overall, high-level, building design and structure. Detail on what will be contained in the main National Centre buildings is not yet decided and work with survivors and affected persons is ongoing in relation to what they would like to see as part of museum exhibits.

Related to this, engagement events took place in Dublin, Galway and Cork in October and November 2024, followed by an online event on 19 February and an event in London on 25 February this year. The aim of these events was to hear from survivors and affected people, their family members and advocates, in relation to their views on the National Centre for Research and Remembrance.

All feedback gathered will be compiled and published on the dedicated website, [www.gov.ie/nationalcentre](http://www.gov.ie/nationalcentre). This feedback will help to inform the ongoing work on the National Centre, and future engagement.



There is a dedicated mailing list for those with an interest in the National Centre project. If you would like your email address to be included to receive future updates related to the National Centre, please send an email to [nationalcentre@equality.gov.ie](mailto:nationalcentre@equality.gov.ie) requesting that your details be included.





### **Oifig an Stiúrthóra um Idirghabháil Údaraithe, Tuam** **Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam**



2025 will mark a significant year for the Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam (ODAIT) with the excavation and Identification Programme both in line to get underway.

#### **Site**

The preliminary groundworks, which are crucial to informing the approach of the excavation, were completed at the site in Q4 2024. Given the complexity of the site, these preliminary works were necessary to allow ODAIT learn more about the soil types, underground anomalies such as utilities or old foundations, the water table levels and more.

ODAIT is in the final stages of tendering for the forensic experts (including forensic archaeologists, osteoarchaeologists, forensic anthropologists) needed to deliver the excavation which is on track to begin in the first half of 2025. Procurement for the building contractor who will work alongside the forensics team is also underway. All procurement practices are focused on meeting international standards and best practice and delivering value for money.

#### **Identification Programme**

ODAIT is continuing its preparation for the Identification Programme and related public information awareness campaign, which are expected to begin in the first half of 2025. Meanwhile elderly and vulnerable family members can still provide DNA samples under the Department's Administrative Scheme.

#### **Additional Updates**

ODAIT continues to update stakeholder groups, including families, survivors, advocates and residents. A Family and Survivor Liaison person will join ODAIT in March 2025 and will play a key role in the Identification Programme.

#### **Website**

ODAIT continues to update its website, [www.odait.ie](http://www.odait.ie), on a regular basis. ODAIT can also be contacted by phone (+353 1 5391777), email ([info@odait.ie](mailto:info@odait.ie)) or post to Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention Tuam, Customs House, Flood Street, Galway, H91XV2C.



#### Overview

The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme has been open since 20 March 2024 and we have provided a snapshot of current progress below.

If you are planning on applying to the Scheme, or know someone that is thinking of applying, we have provided some helpful frequently asked questions below.

- The Payment Scheme website can be found [here](#).
- The Portal for online applications can be found [here](#).
- Paper versions of the application form can be found [here](#)

[Payment Scheme - English Form](#) or [Payment Scheme - Irish Form](#)

#### The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme - Key Highlights (position as of 23/03/2025)



6,311 Completed applications received



58% Portal applications



42% Postal applications



5,448 Notices of Determination issued



4,077 Payments paid or being processed

86%

Notice of Determinations issued as a % of completed applications received

## **What is the enhanced medical card provided by the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme and what is the eligibility criteria for this?**

One of the benefits available under the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme is what is termed an “enhanced medical card”. It is a life-long non-means tested medical card.

If you are an applicant to the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme you may qualify for this medical card if you spent 180 days or more in a relevant institution as a mother or as a child or both.

If you qualify for the medical card, you will be told about this in your Notice of Determination, which is the decision letter on your application. Once you accept your offer, the Payment Scheme Office will inform the HSE of your eligibility for the medical card. The HSE will then issue the medical card directly to you.

## **What am I entitled to under the medical card provided through the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme?**

The medical card provided by the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme works in the same way as a medical card that is provided by the HSE based on means or age. Importantly, the card provided under the Payment Scheme is a life-long, non-means tested card. The medical card provides an entitlement to the following:

- General Practitioner (GP) services
- Approved prescribed drugs, medicines, aids and appliances
- All inpatient public hospital services in a public ward (including consultant services)
- All outpatient public hospital services in a public ward (including consultant services)
- Maternity and infant care services
- Certain dental/ophthalmic and aural services – please contact your HSE local office
- No prescription charges (for the person named on the card only)
- Home nursing - please contact your HSE local office
- Home support - please contact your HSE local office
- Counselling (following a referral made in that regard by a registered medical practitioner or registered nurse)
- Chiropody/podiatry (following a referral made in that regard by a registered medical practitioner or registered nurse)
- Physiotherapy (following a referral made in that regard by a registered medical practitioner or registered nurse)

You must notify the Eligibility Unit, HSE (phone: 0818 22 44 78) immediately of any change in circumstances, such as a change of address. You should show this card every time you visit your doctor, pharmacist or any other health service covered by your Medical Card.

As the card is a lifelong, non-means tested card, the HSE will automatically issue a new one to you after 10 years.



## **I already hold a medical card, should I still apply for one under the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme?**

Yes. The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme medical card is provided on a lifelong basis and is not subject to ongoing means testing. It entitles the holder to access all services in the medical card scheme with the extra addition of exemption from prescription charges. Therefore, even if you already have a general medical card, the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme medical card will be more beneficial to you if you are deemed eligible for this card.

Please note, if you are provided with a Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme medical card by the HSE and already hold a general medical card, your general medical card will be cancelled by the HSE in favour of your new card and it will no longer be usable.

## **How will I get my medical card from the Payment Scheme?**

If you accept an offer from the Payment Scheme and this includes a medical card, we will notify the HSE about this and they will issue the medical card to you directly.

## **What does the medical card from the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme look like?**

The medical card for the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme looks the same as a general medical card. It will not be known to anyone looking at the card that it has been provided to you as a benefit from the Payment Scheme.

## **I live abroad, can I still apply for the medical card from the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme?**

In order for the HSE to be able to issue a medical card to you, they will require you to have a PPSN, an address in Ireland, and you will need to be linked to a registered GP in Ireland. If you do not live in Ireland, and/or cannot provide an address in Ireland, the medical card from the Payment Scheme will not be of any value to you as it can only be used in Ireland. If you live abroad, you may wish to instead opt for the once off Health Support Payment of €3,000 in lieu of the medical card to use towards your own individual health needs.

## **If I receive a medical card from the Payment Scheme, will I be prioritised when it comes to waiting times for services?**

The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme medical card does not carry an advantage regarding waiting times for services. Services within the HSE are prioritised on clinical need and resource availability.

## **Will appliances such as hearing aids and glasses be free?**

You should contact your Local Health Office, who will advise you on your entitlements. There may be extra costs not covered under the medical card scheme.

The link below will bring you to the HSE website and the list of HSE local health offices.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/>

## **How will my pharmacy know that I am exempt from prescription charges?**

An attribute will be added to your medical card details on the HSE system. Your pharmacy will have access to your card details and will know that you are exempt but will not know why you are exempt and will not be given this information. You do not need to disclose this information if questioned by your pharmacy

## **My GP/Dentist doesn't accept medical cards but I wish to stay with them?**

Your GP of choice must hold a General Medical Services contract with the HSE to provide Medical Card services. Please contact your local health office for lists of dentist and other health professionals who accept medical card holders.

The link below will bring you to the HSE website and the list of HSE local health offices.

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/1/lho/>

## **Do I need a solicitor to apply?**

The Payment Scheme Executive Office advises that there is no requirement to engage with a solicitor to apply for the Scheme. There are call centre agents on hand and many other helpful resources to assist an applicant through the applicant journey.

Furthermore, the Payment Scheme Office would advise that general costs for the provision of services by a solicitor are not covered by the Scheme.

The Office will provide you with financial support if it asks you to swear an affidavit or if you wish to obtain legal advice on signing the legal waiver.

The Office can provide a support payment of €200 in respect of an affidavit and €500 excluding VAT in respect of advice received on the signing of the legal waiver.

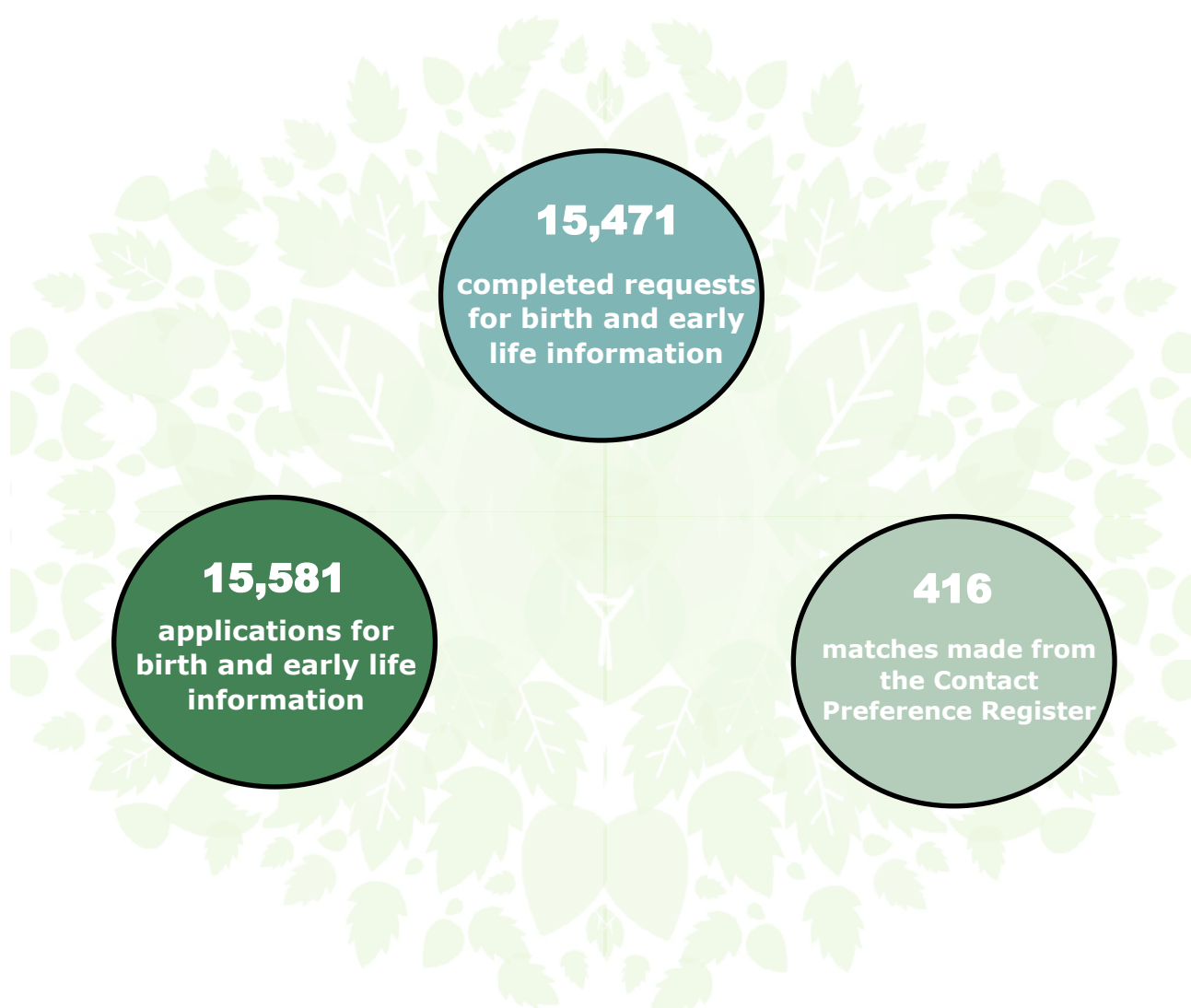
There is no other facility to provide for financial support towards the costs incurred for applying on behalf of an applicant by a solicitor.

The Payment Scheme Executive Office are happy to provide the necessary assistance to applicants while applying.



Since the start of the new Birth Information and Tracing services, established under the 2022 Act, over 15,500 applications for birth and early life information have been received by the Adoption Authority of Ireland and the Child and Family Agency Tusla. As of 24 March, over 15,400 of these applications have been completed, with all applications now being processed within the statutory timeframes. 402 matches have been facilitated through the Contact Preference Register, and we continue to encourage all adopted persons and birth parents to make an application to the Register to express their preferences for contact, exchange of information, or for no contact.

The Statutory Review of the Operation of the Act is underway, with a Steering Group established to oversee its delivery. As part of the review process, there will be significant consultation with persons that have availed of the new services under the Act, including those residing outside the State. The consultation phase of the review will take place in 2025, with details on how to participate to be publicised closer to the time.



### Funding available for survivor-centred events

The Commemorative Grant Scheme provides financial assistance to survivor-centred advocacy groups to support them in organising a social event commemorating those who were resident in Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. Up to €2,500 (or equivalent) is available per event, and this funding is available to survivor groups both in Ireland and overseas.

The goal is to assist groups to organise the types of events which they believe to be most beneficial to those most centrally affected. Examples of the type of events that have received funding to date include: film screenings; a virtual representation/artistic display; and in-person social occasions which included speakers, poetry, music, and refreshments.

Applications for the scheme for 2025 are now open. If you have any questions about the scheme you can email [commemorativegrantscheme@equality.gov.ie](mailto:commemorativegrantscheme@equality.gov.ie) or call +353 1 6473200 (Monday to Friday between 9am and 5pm GMT)

Further details on the scheme, including the application form, can be found at the following link: <https://www.gov.ie/commemorativegrantscheme/>



### A message from the Special Advocate's office

The Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse is Patricia Carey.

In this role, Patricia's focus is to ensure a strong and amplified voice for affected persons. This includes people living in Ireland and abroad.

Patricia links with those who have spent time in:

- Mother and Baby Institutions
- County Home Institutions
- Magdalene Laundries
- Industrial and Reformatory School Institutions
- People who were adopted, boarded out, the subject of an illegal birth registration or sent abroad to be adopted

Patricia and the Special Advocate team of three staff, Alissa, Ruth and Rachel, are committed to ensuring the collective voices of Survivors and Affected People are heard.

We encourage people to get in touch with the office to:

- Raise issues of concern
- Share your experiences, if you wish
- Seek further information
- Request a meeting with the Special Advocate for Survivors
- Join our mailing list and hear about updates, events and key information. The first community event took place in Dublin earlier this month, and further events will follow.

We will endeavor to assist in any way that we can, and where possible, guide & signpost you, to the information you are looking for.

You can contact the Special Advocate team in a number of different ways:

- By **Email:** [info@specialadvocate.ie](mailto:info@specialadvocate.ie)
- By **Phone:** +353 (0)1 511 7660
- By **Post:** Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse,  
First Floor, Holbrook House,  
Holles Street, Dublin 2, D02 EY84,  
Ireland
- **Website:** [www.specialadvocate.ie](http://www.specialadvocate.ie) (the full website is due to launch in early 2025)



### Payment Scheme Office Helpline

The Payment Scheme Office operate a Helpline on **+353 (0)1 522 9992**. This Helpline is open between 9am and 6pm GMT, Monday to Friday or email [info@paymentscheme.ie](mailto:info@paymentscheme.ie)

For information on Christmas arrangements for the Payment Scheme, please visit the website

<https://www.gov.ie/en/campaigns/2938d-the-mother-and-baby-institutions-payment-scheme/>

### DCEDIY mailing list

The Department maintains a mailing list for people with an interest in these issues. If you would like your email address to be added to this list to receive future updates, please email [motherandbabyhomes@equality.gov.ie](mailto:motherandbabyhomes@equality.gov.ie) requesting that your details be included.

### Special Advocate for Survivors

The primary role of the Special Advocate is to amplify the voices of survivors as a central, essential input to Government deliberations on matters which affect them. To contact the Special Advocate's Office, please email:

[info@specialadvocate.ie](mailto:info@specialadvocate.ie) or call:

**+353 (0)1 511 7660**

### Counselling Support

If you feel that you need to talk to a counsellor, you can contact the HSE National Counselling Service. If you decide to call, please identify yourself as a survivor of the institutions and you will be prioritised for the next available counselling place. Information about the service

and contact details can be found on the HSE website, or by calling **1800 817 517** (Monday to Friday 8am – 8pm, Saturday 9am – 5pm).

Outside of these hours, you can also contact the CONNECT free telephone counselling and support service at **1800 477 477** (6pm – 10pm Monday to Sunday).

For more support options, including phone, text or online, visit [yourmentalhealth.ie](http://yourmentalhealth.ie) or call **1800 111 888**.

### The Adoption Authority of Ireland

The Adoption Authority of Ireland can be reached by phone at **+353 (0)1 230 9300**, or by post to Shelbourne House, Shelbourne Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4, D04 H6F6. Further information is available at [www.aai.gov.ie](http://www.aai.gov.ie).

### Tusla – The Child and Family Agency

Tusla - Child and Family Agency can be reached by phone at **+353 (0)1 771 8500**, or by post to The Brunel Building, Heuston South Quarter, Saint John's Road West, Dublin 8, D08 X01F. Further information is available at [www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)

### Birth Information and Tracing Services

If you want to make an application for access to information, for tracing services or to register preferences to the contact preference register, this can be done on [birthinfo.ie](http://birthinfo.ie). This website also contains more information on the Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022 and the services it established.