

To survivors, former residents, their families, advocates and affected persons,

I hope you are keeping well.

I want to let you know that later today, I will publish a number of reports of relevance to survivors and affected persons. These are:

The first Annual Report from the Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse, Patricia Carey; The Survivor Feedback Report on the National Centre for Remembrance and the Steering Group's Response to that Feedback; and The third Annual Report on the implementation of the Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions.

The Special Advocate was appointed to her role in March 2024. Since then, she has embarked on a substantive engagement process, meeting and engaging with survivors and people affected, with survivor groups, as well as with partner and support organisations in Ireland and overseas. I want to thank those of you who have engaged with Patricia and her team in their first year and this report which will be provided annually, gives a detailed account of those engagements and the feedback you have shared.

The Special Advocate's report also outlines recommendations to address the issues raised by you, the survivors, and I am pleased to share an initial response that outlines the progress that has been made so far to address the recommendations, where possible to do.

I want to thank Patricia and her team for their excellent and extensive work to date. She has approached the task with drive, integrity and compassion, and her full report is testament to that.

Patricia also worked with other members of the National Centre Steering Group on a series of engagement events in relation to the National Centre. Today, I am publishing the feedback received from survivors at those engagement events. I am also publishing a series of important commitments to address the feedback received. The following are some of the key commitments:

The Steering Group – which is responsible for developing the overall vision of the Centre - will be expanded to include four survivor representatives. These representatives will be full members of the Steering Group, alongside the Special Advocate for Survivors and members from Government departments and agencies. An open call for expressions of interest to join the Steering Group will be issued shortly.

The National Museum will establish dedicated panels of survivors and affected persons, to inform the development of the museum element of the National Centre. There will be a central role for survivors in the governance of the National Centre, once it opens.

A process will be finalised to allow survivors and affected persons to share their lived experience – and/or physical items - with the National Museum, if they wish to do so.

A programme will be designed to capture and gather survivor's personal statements or records as part of the institutional records of the National Archives or to deposit them as private papers.

There will be engagement with local museums and community spaces, like libraries, and travelling exhibitions to ensure people can access museum content from different locations.

Work is ongoing on the digitisation of records, to allow those who can't visit the National Centre to access their records.

These commitments come as the project moves from the planning into the detailed design and construction phase, following the grant of planning permission in February 2025. More details on this can be found by clicking the link below.

As you know the work of the Special Advocate is just one important element of the Government's response to the country's complex legacy of Mother and Baby Institutions as set out in the Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions. Today, as mentioned above I am also publishing the Third Annual Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan, which details the progress made so far on crucial issues like access to information and records, dignified burial, memorialisation and the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme. Some of the significant progress which has been made includes:

The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme opening to applications on 20 March 2024, since then over 6,600 applications have been made and the value of financial payments to date totals over €66 million.

Over 16,000 applications for information have completed to date as a result of the The Birth Information and Tracing Act 2022. In addition, the Adoption Authority of Ireland has successfully identified over 430 matches for relatives on the Contact Preference Register for whom they are facilitating contact and reunion.

Part 3 of the Maternity Protection, Employment Equality and Preservation of Certain Records Act was enacted in November 2024 and provides for the preservation of privately-held administrative and other records that relate to Magdalen Laundries, Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions, industrial schools, orphanages, adoption agencies and boarding out arrangements, as well as the bodies that ran or oversaw these institutions and placement arrangements.

Following extensive preparations, works to forensically excavate the Tuam site began on 16th June.

In February 2025 planning permission was granted by Dublin City Council for a National Centre for Research and Remembrance on Sean McDermott Street in Dublin 1.

In the year ahead, I can assure you, that as committed to under the new Programme for Government, we will continue the intensive work necessary to progress the remaining actions.

The First Annual Report of the Special Advocate Report and the response to the recommendations within it are available to view on the website.

The Survivor Feedback Report on the National Centre and the Response to the Feedback are available to view on the website.

The Third Annual Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan is available to view on the website.

Please remember that support is available and details of that support can be found here [gov.ie - Counselling and Health Supports](https://www.gov.ie/counselling-and-health-supports).

With warm regards and good wishes,

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