

**Recommendations from the First Report of the  
Collaborative Forum of Former Residents of Mother and  
Baby Homes**

**December 2018**

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## MEMBERSHIP OF THE FORUM

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## FOREWORD

On behalf of the Collaborative Forum of former Residents of Mother and Baby Homes we present the Forum's recommendations in relation to

- a) Identify/Information, Terminology and Representation
- b) Health and Well-being supports
- c) Memorialisation and Personal Narratives.

These reflect the output of the deliberations of the Forum and its subcommittees who worked tirelessly throughout the second part of 2018, so as to fulfil our mandate to provide a report to the Minister on these matters within six months of our establishment.

It is a matter of genuine regret to all members of the Forum that, following advice conveyed by the Minister from the Attorney General, the full report cannot be published at this time. It is our deepest wish that the report will be published at the earliest opportunity. Only in this way do we feel that the basis for the recommendations, as well as the witness of Forum members, can be heard and understood.

Susan Lohan  
*Subcommittee (a) chair*

Conrad Bryan  
*Subcommittee (b) chair*

Samantha Long  
*Subcommittee (c) chair*

## THE COLLABORATIVE FORUM - BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The establishment of the Collaborative Forum should be seen in the context of the establishment of a Commission of Investigation and consultation initiatives previously undertaken.

### **Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters)**

The Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters ([www.mbhcoi.com](http://www.mbhcoi.com)) was established by Government in 2015 to provide a full account of what happened to women and children in these institutions during the period 1922 to 1998. The backdrop to its establishment was a deepening public awareness and concern about these Institutions, in response to emerging harrowing narratives, as reflected in the film “Philomena” (2013) and allegations concerning the burial of around 800 babies and children’s bodies in a sewer within the boundaries of the former Tuam Mother and Baby Home.

The scope of the Commission’s remit includes several specific areas of practice and procedure in the care, welfare, entry arrangements and exit pathways for the women and children who were in the named 14 institutions, including the Bethany Home. A representative sample of County Homes is also within the Commission’s remit.

The Commission has delivered 3 interim reports to date (December 2018). The Minister has committed to take appropriate actions to address issues which emerge from the work of the Commission.

### **Consultation process by the Minister**

The Minister invited those formerly in Mother and Baby Homes, along with their representative groups, to consultation meetings in Dublin and Cork in June and September 2017. The aim of the meetings was to enter into open dialogue and to explore whether there were particular supports in areas that could be of value. The focus was on those who lived for a time in a Mother and Baby Home or County Home as a mother or as a child, with or without their mother. This approach sits within the framework of a model of transitional justice which can support and empower, alongside the independent statutory investigation.

Having listened carefully to the views expressed at the consultation meetings, the Minister made arrangements to establish a Collaborative Forum to support such persons in developing solutions to the issues of concern to them.

### **The Collaborative Forum**

The Minister secured Government approval for a Charter for the Collaborative Forum. Strongly influenced by the concerns at the consultation events, the Charter mandated the Forum to review and bring forward recommendations across three areas identified. These comprise:

- Information, Identity, Terminology, and Representation
- Health and Well-being Supports
- Memorialisation and Personal Narratives

The Forum is a progressive response to the theme of “nothing about us without us” which emerged from the facilitated consultations. It is intended that the recommendations of the Collaborative Forum will be a significant input to Government’s approach on addressing issues identified.

Selection of members of the Forum was undertaken by an independent selection panel drawn from persons formerly in such Institutions, advocates and academics and followed a public information campaign inviting expressions of interest. The Forum consists of 19 representative members and a Chairperson.

The Forum commenced work in July 2018 and has held five plenary meetings. In addition, its subcommittees, established to address these themes and develop draft recommendations for consideration by the full Forum, have held a further 18 meetings.

Consistent with its Charter, the Forum is required to provide the Minister with its first report within six months.

## RECOMMENDATIONS BY THE COLLABORATIVE FORUM

The recommendations by the Collaborative Forum are as follows:

### **1. Identity, Information, Terminology & (Mis) Representation Recommendations**

#### **Identity & Information**

- 1.1 A statement from government vindicating all citizens' rights to their own identity irrespective of their status at birth;
- 1.2 The creation of a new One-Stop-Shop to house records from across State, religious orders, county and other sources so as to enable access to identity, personal and institutional information by any person separated from their family of origin, or detained in State funded or regulated Institutions;
- 1.3 Pending the establishment of this new body, an immediate overhaul of related policies and procedures within State agencies such as TUSLA and AAI;
- 1.4 A special task-force, to include those previously detained in the relevant Institutions, to quantify and verify records currently held by TUSLA;
- 1.5 Replacement of 2016 Adoption Information and Tracing Bill with an alternative "Identities and Personal Information Bill";
- 1.6 Expert DNA testing to be made available free of charge to persons wishing to recover their identity;
- 1.7 The re-launching of the National Adoption Contact Preference Register (NACPR) on an independent and statutory basis to record the contact wishes, details and health histories of persons detained in Mother & Child and similar Institutions;
- 1.8 Financial (including the withdrawal of charitable status) and criminal sanctions, to be taken against any interests found to have destroyed or altered identity, personal or institutional records in this context.

#### **Terminology**

- 1.9 Establishment of an expert group to deliver an approved template of terms and language to be used to describe the reality of Ireland's treatment of certain groups of mothers and children;
- 1.10 This group would also identify labels and language which need to be withdrawn from contemporary use because they are offensive and/or inaccurate;
- 1.11 It would also conduct research into the mis-use of language across the relevant institutions so as to arrive at an accurate and era specific glossary of terms;

#### **(Mis) Representation**

- 1.12 Era-specific narratives on each of the homes under investigation to also be assembled under the leadership of the expert group;
- 1.13 Personal accounts from living mothers to be recorded to form part of a national collection of eye-witness accounts. This resource to be used in national educational

- programmes and permanent exhibitions;
- 1.14 Personal narratives of children who spent time in the various institutions to be similarly collected, recorded, and applied.



## **2. Health and Well-being Supports**

### **Healthcare**

- 2.1 Health care programmes should reflect the dignity, privacy and human rights of survivors and the delivery of recommended health services should be expedited;
- 2.2 Provide comprehensive health care to all survivors of Mother and Child Institutions;
- 2.3 Survivors to be transferred to HAA Card;
- 2.4 Free access to private health services including any associated costs;
- 2.5 Free private health insurance with pre-existing health conditions covered;
- 2.6 Life time stipend for survivors living outside Ireland to cover health insurance costs;
- 2.7 Funding for academic research into the health of survivors to identify measurable health indicators to inform health policy and improve health outcomes of this group;

### **Health assessment and screening**

- 2.8 Free comprehensive private health assessment and screening for survivors by an accredited health organisation of their choice;
- 2.9 Funding for academic research into the long term health effects and psychological impact of vaccine trials on survivors;
- 2.10 Tailored health screening and assessments to cover any specific findings of the research for survivors;
- 2.11 DNA genetic screening for survivors to identify medical history and family history;
- 2.12 A national repository for DNA screening;
- 2.13 Funding for legal process to identify or prove paternity for survivors to have amended birth certificates;
- 2.14 Immediate family of survivors to be included in family health care package;

### **Wider Policy including a New Healthcare Organisation**

- 2.15 Develop a new National Survivor Strategy in collaboration with survivors under the remit of a single Minister;
- 2.16 Create properly resourced divisional structures within a central Department to ensure delivery of key health and well-being services and other wider objectives relating to this Institutional legacy;
- 2.17 A new Communications Strategy to inform survivors about the availability of health and well-being services, particularly those living overseas;
- 2.18 Support and provide sustainable funding for survivor led organisations and regional centres to deliver health and well-being services to their specific survivor groups;
- 2.19 Funding for education and training of survivors in the specific area of health, counselling, therapy, management and other areas related to health and well-being;
- 2.20 State policies and actions to be put in place to ensure that no survivor is treated unfairly on account of their gender, religion, race, traveller ethnicity or disability;
- 2.21 An independent review into the operations and governance structure of Caranua and its impact on survivors to help inform decisions to be made on any future health and well-being organisations/structures developed for survivors of other institutions, such as Mother and Child Institutions.

### **3. Memorialisation and Personal Narratives**

#### **National and local monuments**

- 3.1 A national monument to commemorate, respect and honour mothers and children held in these Institutions.
- 3.2 Memorials to be erected at each Mother and Child and similar institutions.

#### **A Living Memorial**

- 3.3 A living memorial of Mother and Child Institutions. This could be in digital, audio or visual presentation of information and individual narratives.

#### **Local and National Commemorations of Mother and Child Institutions**

- 3.4 An annual commemoration day to honour and remember all survivors of Mothers and Child Institutions. This can have both a national and a local focus. Government funding should be provided to support, in particular, local groups organising such events.

#### **Protection of burial sites, data research and related matters**

- 3.5 Planning Regulations under the Planning and Development Act, 2000 to be adopted/amended to as to protect the sites against interference pending surveys for burial places.
- 3.6 Archaeological surveys to be undertaken at Mother and Child Institution sites to ascertain location and scale of burials of non-religious in such grounds.
- 3.7 Primary legislation to enable the State oversee and control the management of private burial sites and their associated records.
- 3.8 A research project to be mandated to match records of deaths held by GRO with contemporary records of residents in local Mother and Child Institutions.

#### **Telling the reality of Mother and Child Institutions through our education system**

- 3.9 Inclusion of a module on Mother and Child Institutions in the National History Curriculum for schools and as well as such material to be included across appropriate programmes in universities and third level colleges.

## CHARTER ESTABLISHING THE FORUM

### CHARTER FOR A COLLABORATIVE FORUM OF FORMER RESIDENTS OF MOTHER AND BABY HOMES AND RELATED INSTITUTIONS

Minister Katherine Zappone established a Collaborative Forum to facilitate dialogue and action on issues of concern to former residents of the institutions which historically focused on services for unmarried mothers and their children.

The Minister recognises that a significant number of people have been deeply affected by the experiences which they, or family members and relatives, may have had in these institutions. The establishment of the Collaborative Forum is a new approach in the State's response to the theme of "nothing about us without us" which has emerged from the former residents who have participated in consultations to date. Open and consistent engagement between the State and former residents will provide a strong voice for former residents in the decisions which affect them.

This Forum is separate from the independent Commission of Investigation which is investigating the issues of significant public concern in relation to these institutions.

#### **The purpose of the Collaborative Forum is to:**

- Build upon the process of engagement and consultation with former residents commenced through the facilitated meetings hosted by Minister Zappone in June and October 2017;
- Enable former residents to identify, discuss and prioritise the issues of concern to them;
- Facilitate the active participation of former residents in recommending actions and solutions to address their concerns, including those issues raised in the reports of the facilitated meetings;
- Focus on persons who were resident for a time in a Mother and Baby Home and those with comparable experiences in a County Home;
- Have a role in monitoring the implementation of measures designed to support former residents;
- Enhance public understanding and appreciation of the impact of their experiences on the lives of former residents and their families;
- To provide reports to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs in relation to these matters;

#### **Membership:**

- Will consist of 20 representative members including a Chairperson appointed by the Minister;
- An independent panel will select representative members from those persons who express an interest in participating in this process;

## **Sub-committees:**

- Three sub-committees, each with a unique focus, will be tasked with examining specific issues on a modular basis to facilitate the Forum in making recommendations to the Minister. In addition to its members, the Forum may nominate additional persons to sit on these subcommittees. The three sub- committees are as follows:

### ***a. Terminology, Identity, and Representation:***

Develop respectful and inclusive language which represents former residents and their experiences; develop strategies to undo stigma and raise awareness around the use of appropriate language; design an awareness programme for public bodies to assist service providers in their interactions with former residents; examine the arrangements for the provision of information and communication with former residents;

### ***b. Health and Well-being Supports:***

To examine how best to assist the advocacy and support work of national and local groups; identifying and sharing good practice in peer to peer support activities; providing safe spaces to discuss and reflect on experiences; examine the type of professional counselling support required and how best to enhance access to such support; consider the separate needs of different groups and make recommendations to facilitate access to specific health and personal social services;

### ***c. Memorialisation and Personal Narratives:***

Examine the potential use of memorialisation in its various forms to acknowledge and recognise past events, and most significantly to inform how people perceive these matters; to consider the development of a scheme to fund permanent and lasting local memorials to honour and commemorate the children who died in each of the named institutions; to consider the establishment of oral and digital memories projects to ensure an archive of material is created and preserved. This could include interviews with mothers, children and others with relevant knowledge.

## **In conducting its work the Forum will:**

- Be a participant-centred process which adopts a consensus-oriented decision making approach in its deliberations;
- Ensure consistent communication and meaningful engagement with former residents, their families and advocates during this collaborative project;
- Develop a strategy to facilitate wider public communication of its work;
- Facilitate the full and equal participation of all members;
- Ensure the specific and separate needs of different groups are identified;
- Have access to expertise and advice through an Inter-Agency Support Panel;
- Have access to administrative resources through the Department of Children and Youth Affairs;

- Conduct its activities in a manner which does not impact upon or pre-empt the outcome of the statutory investigations being conducted by the Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and certain related Matters);
- Provide its first report and recommendations to the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs within 6 months of its establishment.