

Scoping Inquiry into Historical Sexual Abuse in Day and Boarding Schools run by Religious Orders

The Survivor Engagement Process

In response to recent reports of sexual abuse in some schools in Ireland, the Government has launched a Scoping Inquiry into historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders. The Scoping Inquiry has a survivor engagement process at its centre.

The survivor engagement process aims to find out what survivors want the Government to do in response to historical sexual abuse in day and boarding schools run by religious orders. This will be done in a two-stage process. The intention is to reach out to survivors in a way that enables them to come forward without fear.

STAGE ONE: SCOPING EXERCISE

In the first instance the survivor engagement process will endeavor to explore the key matters to be addressed. Survivors will be invited to complete a questionnaire to identify themselves and their experiences. Survivors can choose to do this online using a secure survey tool; they can choose to complete the questionnaire using a printed form, posted out to them; or they can choose to answer the survey over the telephone where they will speak to a trauma-informed facilitator who will record their answers.

Survivors will be asked in this questionnaire about their experiences and if they would be willing to engage further in a one-to-one conversation with a trauma-informed facilitator where they can discuss the responses they would like to see from the Government. This is in recognition of the fact that different people may have had different types of experiences and have differing priorities.

The intention is that this initial questionnaire stage of the survivor engagement process will provide the Scoping Inquiry with the information that will guide Stage Two. It is anticipated that the information will outline:

- An indication of how many complainants there are and how they would like to be contacted;
- What school(s) they attended and when;
- The role of the person(s) they believe was responsible for abuse;
- If their complaints have been made known to An Garda Síochána and/or Tusla or other authorities.

STAGE TWO: DIRECT CONTACT

For survivors who choose to be contacted for the second stage of the process, the Scoping Inquiry will arrange for trauma-informed facilitators to reach out to them and survivors will be able to select the ways in which they are willing to be contacted by these facilitators. This is to give survivors an opportunity to tell their own stories, in their own words. People can participate via:

- On-line interviews
- Telephone interviews
- In-person interviews
- A written submission

The trauma-informed facilitator will agree a verbal summary of the conversation with the survivor at the end of the session to ensure that it is accurate and reflects what they want shared. Survivors will also be given a written summary of what they have told the facilitator shortly after the conversation.

THE VOICES OF SURVIVORS

Participants will have an opportunity to indicate whether they are happy for elements of their story to be used, anonymously, in the report of the Scoping Inquiry.

In particular, the Scoping Inquiry is keen to ensure that survivors have an opportunity to outline what they would like to see happen next in terms of a Government response. It is important that survivors know that they will be contributing to making Irish schools and educational settings safer for children and young people.