

TITLE PROJECT BRIEF – CO-DESIGN PROCESS TO ESTABLISH AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION INTO MOTHER AND BABY HOMES AND MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND

START DATE 4TH MARCH

TIMEFRAME 4 MARCH 2021 TO 30 SEPTEMBER (INCLUDING PREPARATION TIME)

COMMISSIONER DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH (ON BEHALF OF THE INTER-DEPARTMENTAL WORKING GROUP)

BACKGROUND

1. The Executive agreed, in October 2016, to establish an Inter-Departmental Working Group (IDWG) to take forward work on Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries and to examine historical clerical child abuse which fell outside the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI). It was agreed that the IDWG would be independently chaired and jointly sponsored by the Department of Health (DOH) and the Executive Office (TEO). The DoH would be the lead department for the work on Mother and Baby Homes/Magdalene Laundries and TEO would be the lead department for the work on historical clerical child abuse.
2. Ms Judith Gillespie is the current independent Chair of the IDWG; she was appointed in June 2020. In addition to the DOH and TEO, the other Departments represented on the Group include DE, DfE, DfC, DOJ and DoF (DSO). The role of the IDWG is to consider the evidence about Mother and

Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries and historical clerical child abuse and make recommendations to the Executive on the appropriate way forward.

RESEARCH

3. An initial scoping study, completed by Dr Seán Lucey, Queens University Belfast in 2014, concluded that limited information was known about the number of women who were residents within the Mother and Baby Home and Magdalene Laundry institutions or their experiences. A copy of Dr Lucey's briefing paper is provided in Appendix 1.
4. On behalf of the IDWG, the Department of Health commissioned research to examine the operation of these institutions from 1922-1999 and the wider historical and social context within which they operated over that period. The research, which started in 2018 and was undertaken jointly by Queen's University Belfast and Ulster University incorporated: a literature review; an examination of archive records; and an oral history project to include testimony of former residents and other witnesses from the institutions and those who had experience of working with the institutions.
5. The Terms of Reference for the research required the universities to consider:
 - the entry and exit pathways of women in respect of the institutions;
 - the living conditions and care arrangements experienced by residents during their period of accommodation in these institutions;
 - the mortality amongst mothers and children residing in these institutions;
 - the post-mortem practices and procedures in respect of children or mothers who died while resident in these institutions;
 - for children who did not remain in the care of their parents, to examine exit pathways on leaving these institutions;

- oral and written accounts/evidence/testimony from former residents, wider family and employees of the homes/laundries;
 - information in relation to other relevant matters identified during the course of the research which may warrant further investigation in the public interest.
6. The research examined eight Mother and Baby Homes, a number of former workhouses and four Magdalene Laundries. Three of the Mother and Baby Homes were operated by Roman Catholic bodies, four by Protestant denominational groups and social services/charitable bodies also operated similar provision during the relevant period. Workhouses were examined on a sampling basis only. Work was carried out on a number of sample years for Belfast's Union Infirmary; a peak year for 'illegitimate' births in this institution was in 1932 (202 births).
7. Three of the institutions described as Magdalene Laundries were operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters and one by the Salvation Army. It should be noted that the term Magdalene Laundry is an overarching term used within the research report to cover a number of institutions run by religious bodies – both Catholic and Protestant, which were known by a variety of alternative names, such as asylum, penitentiary, refuge and rescue homes.

RESEARCH REPORT

Key Findings

8. The key findings in relation to **Mother and Baby Homes** are summarised as follows:
- It is estimated that between 1922 and 1990 over 10,500 women entered mother and baby homes in Northern Ireland. This is likely to be a conservative estimate as the records relating to mother and baby homes were not complete for all of the institutions;

- The majority of women and girls who entered the mother and baby homes were from Northern Ireland (86%). Smaller numbers of birthmothers crossed the border (11.5%), or had home addresses in Great Britain (2%) or elsewhere;
- The youngest recorded admission to a mother and baby home was that of a 12 year-old girl and the oldest that of a 44 year-old woman. The majority of admissions were of women aged between 20 and 29 (58%). Another 33% were aged under 19;
- While women were referred to mother and baby homes from a variety of sources, the overwhelming factor in admission to them, evident across all the homes, was familial pressure;
- A number of females entered mother and baby homes as the result of a sexual crime, including: incest, rape or unlawful carnal knowledge;
- The oral testimonies indicate that staff in all the mother and baby homes were not trained to attend to the psychological trauma arising from sexual abuse and incest;
- The records are not always clear on the source of referral to the mother and baby homes. It is evident, however, that Protestant and Catholic voluntary organisations and in particular clergy were actively involved in the process;
- Medical professionals, including general practitioners, were also involved in referring and directing women to mother and baby homes. In those cases where data on the source of referrals was located, this group made up 11% of the total;
- The involvement of state welfare authorities in referring women to mother and baby homes was recorded in 23% of admissions. They were also closely involved in financing the institutions;
- It is unclear from the available records the level of state intervention, involvement and oversight of the institutions, with only fragmentary inspection reports available before the 1980s;

- The living conditions and care arrangements for women in the mother and baby homes are difficult to determine from the archival records as very little was recorded about this;
- Inspection reports on Marianville in the 1980s offered a generally positive commentary on the living conditions within the home. However, as the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (HIAI) discovered, the home did not have in place the mandatory system of monthly visitors as required by the then Ministry of Home Affairs Voluntary Homes Regulations (1952) in 1984.
- The oral testimonies from women who spent time in the various mother and baby homes provide a greater insight into the lived experiences with strenuous physical labour being expected of pregnant women. Numerous testimonies recounted experiences that involved cleaning, polishing floors and laundering, with no concession for women who were often in their final trimester of pregnancy.
- Women provided vivid accounts of being made to feel ashamed about their pregnancy and suggested that the atmosphere was authoritarian and judgemental.
- A minority of testimonies offered a more positive assessment of life in the mother and baby homes.
- A frequent element of the testimony was that there was little preparation for birth and that antenatal classes were non-existent or limited.
- It should be noted that, in the vast majority of cases, trauma and, often, mental health issues have been an outcome of birth mothers' experiences around their pregnancy. This appears most acute in cases where adoption was the outcome.
- This issue is also prevalent in the testimony of the children of birthmothers. Many have offered criticism of the difficulties placed in their way by the institutions that have access to their birth records. This testimony should be read alongside that from the retired social workers who provided their

accounts of what is called 'origin work' with birth mothers and their adopted children.

- Many of the birth mothers also related negative experiences of giving birth in hospital and many described their sense that they were being judged morally by medical staff.
- The testimonies also reveal the vulnerability, particularly of the younger women or girls. A number of testimonies include details of what the women described as predatory sexual behaviour and/or malicious actions that they experienced either in one of the homes or as a patient in a maternity hospital.
- Data assembled from the available mother and baby home records suggests that 4% of babies were either stillborn or died shortly after birth (across the entire period). This figure can be compared with broadly equivalent statistics collected by the Registrar General between 1961 and 1980, which indicate a combined figure of 7.8% for deaths of 'illegitimate' neonatal babies (who died under one month) and stillbirths.
- A more detailed overview of the mortality rates for babies born in mother baby homes will require scrutiny of the records for those baby homes to which an estimated 32% of infants were sent following separation from their birth mother. Further research is needed to draw full conclusions about the outcomes for children born in mother and baby homes who then moved to a number of other baby homes/units.
- Detailed information on where birthmothers went when they left a mother and baby home was only accessible for two homes (Marianvale and Marianville). In the records for many of the other mother and baby homes, it was often the case that details were not recorded, or an address was given with no identification of where it might be.
- In relation to babies, the available records indicate 32% of babies were placed in institutional homes; in 26% of cases, babies left the 'mother and baby homes' with their mother; a further 23% were recorded as adopted, with another 15% listed as going to foster parents.

- As the records only record a baby's immediate destination, it is not possible to assess what proportion of those children who were sent to baby homes were ultimately adopted or fostered. Further research using adoption records and the records of baby homes would allow for a greater understanding of this very complex situation.
- A number of the oral testimonies raise concern over the issue of 'informed consent' for adoption. Most commonly, these testimonies featured discussion of the traumatic and highly pressurised circumstances in which often very young women were asked to make decisions about adoption. In a smaller number of cases, testimony included allegations of irregularities around the signatures on consent forms.
- There is evidence that babies were moved across the border from mother and baby homes to baby homes, and that babies were then adopted in other jurisdictions including the USA and Britain. Without access to individual adoption files held by adoption agencies, Health and Social Care Trusts or the Courts, at this point it cannot be confirmed that these adoptions were carried out following due legal process.
- It is calculated that 551 babies from mother and baby homes in N.I. were moved across the border. It must be noted that this figure only takes account of where a reference was made to a baby's initial destination after leaving the mother and baby home.
- There were differences in Mother and Baby Homes in Northern Ireland and those in other jurisdictions, for example the length of stay in those institutions.

9. The main findings in relation to **Magdalene Laundries** are summarised as follows:

- 2,808 girls and women estimated to have entered the three Good Shepherd St Mary's homes.
- Girls and women entered the Good Shepherd laundries via a variety of routes. Referrals were made by welfare authorities, probation/the courts,

police, parents (or other family members), priests, Catholic organisations and mother and baby homes.

- Testimony from two Good Shepherd Sisters and a priest, who was familiar with one of the St. Mary's homes, maintained that many entrants had learning disabilities or related conditions and that their families placed them in the laundry for this reason. In cases, where the various St. Mary's home admissions records indicate this was the case, there is no corroborating medical statement: the admissions registers provide only jotted handwritten notes on individual cases.
- Significant numbers of girls and young women were sent from mother and baby homes to the Good Shepherd laundries. In several cases, from the 1950s and 1960s, the Good Shepherd records indicate that girls and young women who were the victims of sexual assault and incest were placed in a St Mary's home at the direction of the courts. Some young women were placed in one of the St Mary's homes by a family member following incestuous abuse. Other women and girls entered a St Mary's home due to personal crises of various types and the circumstances behind these changed over the decades.
- By the onset of the Troubles/Conflict, there were a number of cases in Belfast, the North West and Newry of teenage girls and women being sheltered from forms of community rough justice by the Good Shepherd Sisters.
- The HIAI assumed that girls under 18 years old represented a small proportion of those confined in the St. Mary's homes. However, the data revealed in this report indicates that under-18s represented a very significant proportion.
- The HIAI report concluded that it was unacceptable for such young girls to be expected to do industrial work of this type and considered this 'amounted to systemic abuse'.
- The available evidence gives an impression of the three Good Shepherd laundries as austere environments, with a great emphasis on regimented routine.

- Girls and women carried out a full week's work in the laundries without payment between the 1920s and the 1970s. From the 1970s, modest amounts of 'pocket money' were paid to the women. For those women who spent many years confined to the laundry before leaving, their status as unpaid workers has left them with concerns about related issues such as national insurance payments and their entitlement to a pension.
- The financial records made available to the researchers by the Good Shepherd Sisters were limited in extent. They suggested that the laundries did not make extensive profits and often operated close to, or at, a loss.
- Oral testimony collected by the researchers, as well as that for the HIAI, suggests that physical punishment was rare in the context of the Good Shepherd laundries in Northern Ireland. Instead, discipline was instilled by the regimented regime and other forms of punishment.
- Until the late 1960s, the Good Shepherd Sisters discouraged those in the Order's care from leaving their premises. The HIAI described this 'a practice of containment', which was a 'poor and outdated practice'.
- Girls and women received 'class names'. Discussing this policy, the HIAI concluded that it 'caused considerable distress and confusion to those affected.'
- Some of the evidence given to the HIAI suggested the food in the St. Mary's homes was not very good quality or that there were insufficient amounts.
- The testimony of the Good Shepherd Sisters indicated that there were leisure activities in the evenings and that this included board games, table tennis and television. Local entertainers made occasional visits to the St. Mary's homes. The women had access to books but not newspapers and there was no telephone. According to the Sisters, many St. Mary's women did not receive visitors.
- Using details in the admissions register, the researchers identified a number of individuals who died while resident in the three St. Mary's homes: 34 for Belfast 29 for Derry/Londonderry and 3 for Newry.

However, there were a number of individuals for whom no departure details were recorded. The burial lists provided by the Good Shepherd Sisters contain the names of many more deceased former laundry women than are recorded by the admissions register. On the burial lists are 80 women for Belfast, 49 women for Derry/Londonderry and 1 woman for Newry.

- Burials took place in four cemeteries. According to the Good Shepherd Sisters, requiem masses took place in the appropriate convent chapel for each of these women and, in some cases, relatives of the deceased woman were present. This is corroborated by oral testimony from relatives.
- Between 1922 and 1955, it is estimated that **707** women and girls entered Thorndale Industrial Home. It operated as a 'girls' training home' and also as a probation home for women sent by the police, courts and social services.
- Individuals were referred from a range of sources. The pattern shifts from one that featured a large number of women and girls being referred to Thorndale by named individuals, in the 1920s, to one that was more heavily dominated by welfare authorities, social workers, probation officers and the police by the 1950s.
- Women with learning disabilities and mental health issues also entered Thorndale Industrial Home. Sometimes they were sent by their parents who were unsure how to care for them.
- Unlike the Good Shepherd institutions, women did not work in a commercial laundry but labour of some kind was carried out.
- No former resident of the Thorndale Industrial Home came forward to offer testimony to the researchers and unlike the equivalent Good Shepherd homes, it was not investigated by the HIAI.
- The majority of women who stayed in Thorndale Industrial Home for longer than for few days, spent several months in the industrial home rather than several years.

10. In relation to Mother and Baby Homes, the research report identifies two main areas where further research is required to be able to draw definitive conclusions. They are:
- *Adoption*: Without access to adoption records it is difficult to conclude that legal and procedural requirements were followed in all cases. Given that some children were transferred to other jurisdictions, it would also require access to adoption records held in those jurisdictions;
 - *Infant Mortality*: Mothers and their babies did not remain in Mother and Baby Homes for long periods of time and left the institution together. We know that around one third of babies were placed into institutional care. To be able to determine whether there were higher rates of infant mortality in those institutions to which babies were sent, a full examination of those institutions would be required. In the time available to the researchers, they considered one baby home, St. Joseph's Baby Home Belfast, run by the Sisters of Nazareth, where more than 800 children were admitted from Mother and Baby Homes over the period.

REFERENCE GROUP

11. A Mother and Baby Home and Magdalene Laundry Reference Group was established in October 2020. The members of the Reference Group include: women who were resident in Mother and Baby Homes; are the children of women who were resident in Mother and Baby Homes; or their advocates. A solicitor from Phoenix Law, attends meetings of the Reference Group at the specific request of two members.
12. As yet, there is not clear consensus agreement among the members of the Reference Group on the form the independent investigation should take.

CALLS FOR AN INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATION AND/OR PUBLIC INQUIRY

13. There have been a number of calls made for an independent investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries here, including some calls

for a statutory public inquiry. The UN Committee Against Torture's concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of the UK (CAT/C/GBR/CO/6) in 2019 includes a recommendation relating to historical Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries.

- *Section 45 (b) Expedite the process of carrying out an impartial and effective investigation into the practices of the Magdalene Laundries and Mother and Baby Homes in Northern Ireland that is capable of resulting in the prompt identification of victims of ill-treatment inflicted at those institutions and the provision of redress to them.*¹

14. In November 2020, Belfast City Council passed a motion in relation to the sealing of records of mother and baby homes for 30 years by the Irish Government. As part of that motion, the Council resolved *“to write to the NI Executive to express dismay at their refusal to conduct a human rights compliant public inquiry into near-identical institutions in this jurisdiction”*.

15. Similarly, in November 2017, Derry and Strabane District Council passed the following motion:

“That this Council recognises the Citizens of this District’s commitment to human rights and will therefore support those seeking a human rights compliant public inquiry into allegations of forced labour, arbitrary detention, ill treatment and the illegal adoption of babies in former mother and baby homes in this district and across the six counties and expresses support for those seeking similar justice in the rest of Ireland.”

At its meeting of 4 December 2020 the Council renewed its call for a public inquiry into Mother and Baby Homes.

16. Amnesty International has made repeated calls for a public inquiry into what it has described as ‘systemic human rights abuses’ at these institutions. It renewed this call recently, following the publication of the Commission of

¹ <https://www.cypcs.org.uk/ufiles/UNCAT-conclusions.pdf>

Investigation's report, saying 'these distressing findings echo the serious concerns we have long held about how women and babies were treated in near-identical institutions'.

EXECUTIVE AGREEMENT – PUBLICATION OF RESEARCH REPORT AND IDWG NEXT STEPS RECOMMENDATION

17. On 26 January 2021, the Executive agreed to the publication of the research report on the operation of historical Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland. The research report can be accessed via the link <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/publication-research-report-mbhml>.
18. On 26 January 2021, the Executive also agreed to the recommendation of the IDWG on the way forward: to undertake a victim-centred independent investigation, co-designed with victims and survivors. It was agreed that the co-design process will be expertly facilitated and completed within six months. Six months will start from the date of the appointment of the co-design team.

PROJECT BRIEF - OUTCOME BEING SOUGHT

19. The outcome being sought is: recommendations to the NI Executive via the IDWG, setting out options for an independent investigation/ inquiry into Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland. The recommendations should identify a preferred option, providing a robust rationale and should be developed in conjunction with victims and survivors of the institutions through a co-design process.

THE INVESTIGATION CO-DESIGN PROCESS

20. The co-design methodology is a matter for the Co-design Team. The process should be inclusive, drawing participants with experiences of, or directly affected by all forms of institution, which fall within the broad definitions of Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries. Recognising that those who were resident in Mother and Baby Homes were not necessarily resident in Northern Ireland and/or may no longer be resident in Northern Ireland,

participation by those from outside the jurisdiction should be sought, encouraged and accommodated. The Department of Health will assist with the initial call for participants. Victims and survivors will participate in shaping the call for participants. It is acknowledged that the co-design process will be undertaken during a public health crisis, and participation will be accommodated accordingly.

21. Specifically, the co-design process will establish the Terms of Reference of the investigation to include:

- *What* the independent investigation/ inquiry should achieve, specifically the questions to be answered (purpose);
- *How* it should be conducted (method);
- *Who* should be involved, including chairing and those with relevant expertise to assist the chair-person (participants);
- *Support* for the investigation/ inquiry (researchers/administrative staff)
- Whether it should be *statutory or non-statutory* (status);
- *In addition* to making recommendations at its conclusion, whether it should be able to make evidence-based recommendations to Ministers at any stage of the investigation.

A PARALLEL SUPPORT SERVICES CO-DESIGN PROCESS

22. A process to co-design support services for victims and survivors of Mother and Baby Homes/Magdalene Laundries, led by the Victims and Survivors Service, will run alongside the Investigation Co-design Process. It is essential that each process, while retaining independence, should co-ordinate and minimise what is required of individual participants in terms of time and emotional commitment.

KEY ACTIVITIES

23. Key activities will include:

- a. Agreeing the co-design methodology; in part, this will be determined by the number of participants particularly given potential public health restrictions;
- b. Establishing a timetable of events/activities within the agreed timeframe;
- c. Undertaking preparatory work including the development of a media strategy;
- d. Determining the necessity of external advice/expertise and how this will be sourced. Where this requires additional resource, this should be brought to the attention of the Commissioner;
- e. Liaising with the lead researchers at QUB/UU where necessary;
- f. Working with victims and survivors throughout, in line with the agreed methodology;
- g. Bringing gaps in support service provision to the attention of the Commissioner as soon as they are identified;
- h. Developing a media strategy to raise awareness of the Investigation Co-design process and to facilitate participation;
- i. Providing a report on progress to the Inter-departmental Working Group at mid-point (June 2021). This should be provided through the Commissioner;
- j. Providing advice (options and preferred option) to the NI Executive via the Inter-departmental Working Group by end September 2021. This should be provided through the Commissioner.

CO-DESIGN TEAM

24. Core members of the Investigation Co-design Team are:

- Deirdre Mahon (Chair)
- Professor Phil Scraton
- Dr Maeve O'Rourke
- Survivors/victims

25. The Team will be facilitated by the Commissioner. This will include the provision of finance, business support and legal and media advice if required. Contractual / Secondment arrangements will be put in place by the Commissioner as appropriate. Any proposed changes to contractual agreements will need to be negotiated with the Commissioner.

MOTHER & BABY HOME CONTROVERSY: RAMIFICATIONS FOR NORTHERN IRELAND'

BRIEFING PAPER: DR SEÁN LUCEY, SCHOOL OF HISTORY & ANTHROPOLOGY, Q.U.B.

Executive Summary

- Mother and Baby Homes operated for much of the 20th century in Northern Ireland/ North of Ireland (N.I./N.O.I.).
- The Tuam Mother & Baby Home controversy in the R.O.I. has brought issues into focus that are also relevant to N.I./N.O.I. These include the coercive confinement of women; burial practices, infant mortality rates, and standards of care in institutions, along with the cross-border institutionalisation of children and women.

There have been serious allegations of abuse in N.I./N.O.I. 'Mother and Baby Homes' and Magdalene Laundries and calls have already been made for a thorough and effective investigation (Amnesty International, 2013). However, there remains a lack of research on the extent of female institutional incarceration in the province.

- Allegations of forced adoptions from Mother & Baby Homes during the 1970s have surfaced. This has a significant contemporary relevance and between 1970 and 1986 2,839 illegitimate children were taken into care by state and voluntary organisations. Some homes may have been involved in child migration schemes to Canada and Australia.
- This briefing paper recommends that an initial study based on oral testimony and archival evidence be undertaken before establishing what further action is needed.

(A) Introduction

In June 2014 it was reported that the remains of 800 babies – later unverified – were found in the ‘septic-tank’ of the Tuam Mother & Baby Home in County Galway. Issues relating to the conditions of women in these homes, infant mortality rates and burial practices were subsequently brought into focus. The Republic Of Ireland’s (R.O.I.) government responded by publishing an initial inter-departmental report in July 2014. This recommended the establishment of an inquiry of investigation for which the terms of reference will be set in the autumn.² The ‘Tuam Mother & Baby Home’ story was reported at length worldwide and caused much damage to the R.O.I.’s international reputation. The United Nations Committee on Human Rights recently criticised the country’s response to allegations of institutional abuse of women and children.³

- (1) The R.O.I.’s experience provides a cautionary note to N.I./N.O.I. and demonstrates the repercussions of a piecemeal response to institutional abuse claims.⁴ Institutions for unmarried mothers existed in Northern Ireland and allegations of abusive experiences have emerged. Furthermore, Magdalene Laundries – the focus of the 2013 R.O.I.’s McAleese Report – also existed in Northern Ireland. There have been calls for an investigation in Northern Ireland although there remains a lack of research on many of these institutions.

- (2) The exact number of women that may have been in N.I./N.O.I. institutions remains unknown. However, there have been persistent allegations of abuse in these homes. In 2013 Amnesty International highlighted three sample cases. There have been

² Report of the Inter-Department Group on Mother and Baby Homes, <http://www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/publications/20140716InterdepartReportMothBabyHomes.pdf>

³ <http://static.rasset.ie/documents/news/un-document.pdf> see p. 4.

⁴ Commission to Inquiry into Child Abuse (Ryan Report, 2009) and the Report of the Inter-Department Committee to Establish the Facts of State Involvement with the Magdalene Laundries (McAleese Report, 2013).

claims that hundreds of women could come forward in any investigatory process.⁵ In June 2014 Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness informed the Committee of the OFMDFM meeting he had received deputations from various groups of survivors.⁶ Similarly, on 23 June 2014 Barry McElduff MLA stated that he was in regular contact with a ‘number’ of women who were in such institutions.⁷

- (3) This briefing paper highlights that a preliminary study is needed to establish the facts and gather oral evidence relating to the institutionalisation of women in Northern Ireland.

(B) What were Mother & Baby Homes in ROI?

(5) Mother & Baby Homes emerged in the Irish Free State during the 1920s and 1930s under the reform of the poor law and workhouse system. They were intended to provide separate institutional accommodation for unmarried mothers; many of their children were adopted. Based on principles of redemptive morality, the institutions had strict disciplinary regimes and women were expected to remain for one-to-two years. Three institutions were established by the Catholic Sisters of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary; two other homes including Tuam were on local authority property but run by religious orders. The Bethany Home acted as a Mother & Baby Home for the Protestant churches. Many unmarried mothers also ended up in county homes – former workhouses – and Magdalene Laundries. On the 31 Mar. 1943 1,136 unmarried mothers were recorded as being in such institutions.⁸ Recent controversies have related to the coercive confinement of unmarried mothers, high

⁵ Amnesty International, *Briefing: Magdalene Laundry-Type Institutions in Northern Ireland*; ‘Call for Magdalene Laundry inquiry in NI’, *UTV Live News*, 29 May 2013, <http://www.u.tv/news/Call-for-Magdalene-Laundry-inquiry-in-NI/b2996ad0-3d0c-49bc-b467-7fc808c419de>

⁶ Deputy First Minister McGuinness, ‘Programme for Government’, p. 7, *Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, Official Report (Hansard)* 25 June 2014,

⁷ Barry McElduff, ‘Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam’, *Northern Ireland Assembly Official Report (Hansard)*, vol. 96, no 5, 23 June 2014, p. 18, <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/Documents/Official-Reports/Plenary/2013-14/Revised%20Monday%2023%20June%202014.pdf>

⁸ See Sean Lucey, ‘County Homes took harsh toll on “unmarried mothers”’, *Irish Times*, 18 June 2014

infant mortality rates, burial practices, vaccine trials, and adoption/boarding-out practices in these homes.

(C) Mother & Baby Homes in the North

(6) It should be noted that women who became pregnant outside of wedlock were often stigmatised, ostracised and treated as outcasts regardless of background. Harsh attitudes towards unmarried mothers were demonstrated in the N.I. 1927 *Commission on Local Government Administration*, which recommended the reform of the poor law and workhouse system. This called for local authorities to be legally empowered to detain women with their first illegitimate child for six months in voluntary or local authority homes. Women that 'lapsed more than once' were considered 'depraved', 'immoral' and 'mentally deficient'. Segregation, hard work and strict disciplinary regimes in local authority homes was recommended for such women.⁹ These recommendations demonstrate that N.I./N.O.I. attitudes towards unmarried mothers in the 1920s could be unforgiving; however, plans to reform the poor law didn't come to fruition and no new legislation was introduced and some unmarried mothers continued to end-up in workhouses until the disbandment of such institutions in 1948. This contrasted with the Irish Free State where the state's systematic placing of unmarried mothers in newly established Mother & Baby Homes was a direct result of poor law reform in the 1920s.

(7) However, in N.I. an ad hoc network of local authority/state homes and voluntary homes for unmarried mothers and their children existed throughout the twentieth century.

(D) Local authority homes: workhouses/ hostels

(8) Unmarried mothers continued to be maintained in Northern Irish workhouses pre-1948 run by local authorities. These were multifunctional welfare and healthcare institutions which provided institutional relief to a range of groups including children, elderly, chronic sick, mentally ill and intellectually disabled along with unmarried mothers. There wasn't any legal basis for incarceration in workhouses and the length of stay of women greatly varied. However, the wider social, cultural and religious

⁹ *Report of the Departmental Commission on Local Government Administration in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1927), pp 80-1

environment gave unmarried mothers few options and many were forced to turn to workhouses.

(9) The number of workhouses in N.I. reduced from circa 30 in 1920 to around 15 in 1940. The exact number of unmarried mothers in these institutions annually is unknown. However, the number of women with children in workhouses on 31 March ranged from 88 in 1926 to 72 in 1936.¹⁰

(E) Post-1948

(10) After 1948 all workhouses were closed. In some instances Local Authority Welfare Committees continued to provide institutional provision for unmarried mothers in Welfare Hostels or placed them in voluntary institutions. On 31 Dec. 1953, 19 unmarried mothers and their children were maintained in the Belfast and Coleraine Local Authority 'Welfare Hostels'; these authorities also maintained 24 women in voluntary institutions.¹¹ By the 1970s the Belfast Welfare Hostel was replaced by the Mount Oriel Home run by the East Belfast & Castlereagh Social Services District. The social services in Belfast also provided the Deanery Flat-lets (6 flats) which were intended to provide unmarried mothers with 'independent living'.¹² According to the official publications, there was also limited social service accommodation outside of Belfast and in 1974 there was local authority accommodation for 11 women in the rest of the North/Northern Ireland.¹³

(F) Voluntary Homes for Unmarried Mothers

Throughout the twentieth-century the Northern Irish government relied on voluntary organisations to provide the majority of institutional accommodation for unmarried mothers.

¹⁰ *Annual Reports of the Ministry of Home Affairs: Local Government Administration.*

¹¹ *Report on Health and Local Government Administration in Northern Ireland during the year ended 31st December 1953* (Belfast, 1954).

¹² *Personal Social Services and Day Care Facilities in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1977).

¹³ *Personal Social Services Statistics for Northern Ireland, 1974* (Belfast 1974).

Catholic

(11) The Good Shepherd Sisters Catholic Religious Order ran the Marianville Mother & Baby Home in Belfast and the Marianvale Mother & Baby Home in Newry. The former's stated objective in 1977 was to 'provide a service for unmarried mothers giving maximum privacy in a caring and concerned atmosphere'.¹⁴

(12) Allegations have emerged that as late as the 1980s unmarried mothers were incarcerated in these homes, suffered abusive regimes and forced to give-up their children for adoption.¹⁵ In 2013 Amnesty International highlighted cases of abuse from the Marianvale Home.¹⁶ Notwithstanding such cases, there is limited knowledge of these institutions and the records haven't been made available to researchers by the religious authorities.

(13) The Belfast Mater Dei Hostel for unmarried mothers was established by the lay-Catholic Legion of Mary Organisation. Recent historical research, based on the organisation's archives, argues that this institution wasn't as punitive as other Catholic institutions.¹⁷ However, no accounts from former residents have emerged and the experiences of women in this home remain unknown.

Institutions Related to Protestant faiths

(14) There were also a number of homes related to Protestant faiths. Recent historical research on one such home in inter-war Belfast – Thorndale House – indicates that women

¹⁴ *Personal Social Services Statistics for Northern Ireland, 1974* (Belfast 1974).

¹⁵ 'Face the Facts: A Thousand Philomenas', 13 July 2014: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b048n3fj>; Amnesty International, *Briefing: Magdalene Laundry-Type Institutions in Northern Ireland: The case for a human rights response by the Northern Ireland Executive* http://www.amnesty.org.uk/sites/default/files/doc_23218.pdf

¹⁶ Amnesty International, *Briefing: Magdalene Laundry-Type Institutions in Northern Ireland*

¹⁷ Christopher Shepard, 'The Legion of Mary, Unmarried Mothers and the expansion of the Welfare State in Northern Ireland, 1945-55'

often voluntarily left the home, and that it wasn't as punitive or carceral as other institutions.¹⁸ However, there remains a lack of knowledge about these homes, and the voices of the women who went through them in the latter twentieth-century have yet to be heard. Such oral testimony is vital to determine whether women suffered from abusive regimes in these homes. For a list of homes related to the Protestant faiths, see Tables A & B in the Annex.

(G) State Involvement in Voluntary Homes

(15) It is evident that Northern Irish local and central government authorities were involved in voluntary mother and baby homes. Pre-1948 local authorities gave maternity and child welfare grants to voluntary homes for unmarried mothers. In the 1950s unmarried mothers and their children were routinely transferred from state maternity hospitals including the Royal Maternity Hospital and the Jubilee Maternity Hospital to these homes.¹⁹ The health services including general practitioners and health centres often provided the first referral of an unmarried mother-to-be.²⁰

(16) By the 1950s the National Assistance Board paid weekly benefits to women in homes which went towards the cost of their stay.²¹ In the 1970s the Health and Social Services Board granted the 'Supplementary Benefit' of women and their children in six voluntary mother and baby homes.²² Also, in the 1970s social studies students from Queen's University Belfast went to the Marianville Mother & Baby Home for 'observation visits'.²³

¹⁸ Leanne McCormick, *Regulating Sexuality: Women in twentieth-century Northern Ireland* (Manchester University Press, 2009), see chp. 2.

¹⁹ Belfast Corporation Welfare Committee: Reports on adults admitted to and discharged from residential accommodation, 1956-60 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, LA/7/3/E/25/166).

²⁰ J. Moffett, *Personal Social Services in Northern Ireland: Social Work in a Health Centre* (Belfast, 1978).

²¹ Shepard, p. 138.

²² Supplementary Benefit Code: Homes for Unmarried Mothers, 22/10/1976 (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland, HSS/13/33/10).

²³ *Personal Social Services Statistics for Northern Ireland, 1974* (Belfast 1974).

- (17) The state was heavily involved in the funding, maintenance and running of these institutions and homes.

(H) Magdalene Asylums/Laundries and Other Institutions

- (16) All institutions in which women over the age of seventeen may have been incarcerated and abused should be considered in any investigatory process. In Northern Ireland Mother and Baby Homes also acted as Magdalene Asylums. Magdalene Asylums originated in 18th/19th century rescue work for ‘fallen’ women such as prostitutes and ‘immoral women’; by the early twentieth-century these homes often received women from the criminal justice system. While it remains difficult to give an exact number of Magdalene Asylums in N.I. – many appeared to have operated at different times – Tables A & B in the Annex provide a list of known institutions.
- (17) The 2013 R.O.I.’s *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to Establish the Facts of State Involvement with the Magdalen Laundries* (McAleese Report) investigated Magdalene Laundries. The report highlighted that they were austere with a rigid and uncompromising regime of physically demanding work and prayer; the female inmates were heavily stigmatised and suffered loss of freedom, and emotionally and psychologically traumatic experiences. This led to an official state apology from An Taoiseach Enda Kenny and a reparation scheme.²⁴

(I) Children

²⁴ *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of state involvement with the Magdalen Laundries* [McAleese report] (Dublin: Department of Justice and Equality, 2013) <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/MagdalenRpt2013>; For an official state apology by An Taoiseach Enda Kenny, see *Dáil Debates*, vol. 793, book 1, 19/02/2013, [http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/\(indexlookupdail\)/20130219~HH?opendocument#HH00200](http://oireachtasdebates.oireachtas.ie/debates%20authoring/debateswebpack.nsf/(indexlookupdail)/20130219~HH?opendocument#HH00200).

- (18) The treatment of illegitimate children is another issue related to the institutionalisation of unmarried mothers. This has direct relevance to the ongoing Northern Ireland Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry which has statutory power to investigate historical cases of child abuse in residential institutions. Issues relating to children in Mother and Baby Homes that have come to the fore in the R.O.I. include high infant mortality rates, burial practices, the standard of care of children, and vaccination trials. The extent that these controversies are relevant to Northern Ireland needs further examination.
- (19) Another issue of importance relates to the giving-up of illegitimate children by unmarried mothers. Mother and Baby Homes were involved in the institutionalisation, boarding-out and adoption of illegitimate children. Also, these homes may have engaged in child migration policies to countries such as Australia and Canada. Also, there is evidence that children were sent to institutions across the border.
- (20) This issue has much contemporary relevance and affects many citizens living in Northern Ireland today. Between 1970 and 1985 2,839 illegitimate children were taken into care by state and voluntary bodies and subsequently institutionalised, boarded-out and adopted.²⁵ Allegations have emerged of forced adoptions and that unmarried mothers were coerced into giving up their children in Mother and Baby Homes in the 1970s.

Child welfare policies of Mother and Baby Homes – particularly relating to the consent of birth mothers to boarding-out and adoption – need further examination.

(J) Infant Mortality and Burial Practices

- (21) The burial of deceased infants sparked the ‘Tuam’ controversy. Subsequently it was revealed that R.O.I. Mother and Baby Homes had extremely high infant mortality

²⁵ K. McCoy, *Personal Social Services in Northern Ireland: Child Care Trends: A Review of Statistical Returns, 1970-79* (Belfast, 1982); J. Pinkerton, *Personal Social Services in Northern Ireland: Patterns of a Decade: Personal Social Services Child Care States for Northern Ireland 1976 to 1985* (Belfast, 1989).

rates. Many of these infants were buried in unmarked graves. One babies' home in 1920s Belfast – St Joseph's – had an extraordinarily high infant mortality rate. The infant mortality rate of other institutions remains unclear although it seems that they weren't as high as in the R.O.I.. High infant mortality rates raises questions regarding standards of care in such homes and need further examination in a Northern Irish context.

- (22) The burial practices of infants that died in these homes remain problematic. Recent allegations have claimed that infants that died in the Marianville Home were buried in Belfast's Bog Meadows in the 1970s. This resonates with the much larger issue of burial practices of unbaptised children who were not entitled to Christian burials: it's estimated that the remains of tens of thousands lie in the Bog Meadows Catholic Bog Meadows site in Belfast. It should be stated that the vast majority of these cases were not related to Mother & Baby Homes. While such practices were a feature of Christian societies, controversies remain relating to the marking and memorialisation of these graves. To date this is largely a problem related to Catholic burial practices.

(K) Conclusions, Recommendations and Next Steps

- (23) Little is known of the experiences of women in these state run-institutions. A full examination of the records of these homes and relevant government authorities, combined with the oral testimony of former residents, is needed before these homes can be determined to be punitive or if women had abusive experiences.

- (24) Allegations of abusive regimes in Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries have emerged in Northern Ireland/ North of Ireland. This briefing paper strongly recommends that that any investigatory process should include all institutions that maintained unmarried mothers and illegitimate children. If during the course of inquiry, other institutions emerge as abusive these should also be included in any investigation.

(25) In order to fully assess the issues above around prevalence, practice and potential of abuse / mistreatment of unmarried mothers and babies a purely historical examination will not suffice. The concerns of living survivors must be placed at the forefront of any research process. Many of these events occurred in the recent past and directly affect living people. Furthermore, the explanation that these practices were the 'societal norms' of the day is problematic and Amnesty International has highlighted that the alleged abuses were violations of international law of the period.

(26) However, it remains difficult in the absence of any concrete evidence to determine what the terms of reference, extent or nature any potential inquiry would take. It's also not evident that abuse occurred in all institutions for unmarried mothers. The limited evidence suggests that a preliminary study is advisable. Such a study would enable the Executive to decide on further courses of action. It would also allow for a fully-informed and accurate decision-making process on any inquiry. This would also undertake much of the ground work of any such inquiry.

Annex

Tables and References

Tables

Note on Tables: It is estimated that these list make up the vast majority of institutions.

However, it's also possible that some have been missed.

Note on Tables: M&BH: Mother and Baby Home. MA: Magdalene Asylum

Table A: List of known Mother & Baby Homes, Magdalene Asylums, and residential facilities for single mothers that were operational for most of the 20th century

Institution	Address	Type	Denomination / State	Operational	Places
Good Shepherd Sisters/ Marianville	511 Ormeau Rd, Belfast	M&BH/ MA	Catholic	1840s— 1980s/90s?	23
Good Shepherd Sisters/ Marianvale	132 Armagh Rd, Newry	M&BH/ MA	Catholic	1900- 1980s/ 90s?	22
Mater Dei Hostel	298 Antrim Rd, Belfast	M&BH	Catholic Legion of Mary/Lay	1940s-80s/ 90s?	14 for mothers, 2 for families
Good Shepherd Sisters	Derry/ Londonderry	MA	Catholic	Closed 1980s?	?
Belfast Midnight Mission/ Malone Place Rescue and Maternity Home	Malone Road, Belfast	M&BH/ MA	Protestant (Non-denomination, lay)	Closed 1940s	
Thorndale House (Salvation Army)	Duncairn Avenue, Belfast	M&BH	Protestant	Closed 1980s/90s?	10 unmarried mothers; 6 others
Hopedene Hostel	55 Dundee Avenue	M&BH	Protestant	1950s-80s/ 90s?	7 unmarried mothers

Belfast Welfare Hostel	Lisburn Rd, Belfast	Local authority former workhouse	state	1940s-50s/60s?	9 unmarried mothers
Coleraine Welfare Hostel		Local authority former workhouse	State	1940s-50s/60s?	
Mount Oriel Hostel	4 Mount Oriel, Belfast	M&BH	State	1960s?-80s?	6
Deanery Flatlets		Independent accommodation of unwed mothers	State	1970s-1980s?	6 flat-lets
Pre-1948 Workhouses	Existed across N.I. Went from c.30 in 1921 to c.15 in 1940s	Multifunctional institutions that catered for various groups including unwed mothers	State	1838-1948	On 31 Mar. 1926 88 women with children were in N.I. workhouses. On 31 Mar. 1940 there were 51.

Table B: List of institutions which closed in the early twentieth-century or knowledge of remains scarce

Institution	Address	Type	Denomination / State	Operational	Places
Sisters of Mercy	Strabane	MA	Catholic	1911. Unknown closure	?
Rosevale Home	Lisburn	MA	Church of Ireland	1982-1917	?

Ulster Magdalen Asylum	Donegall Pass, Belfast	MA	Church of Ireland	1842-?	?
Ulster Female Penitentiary	Belfast	MA	Presbyterian	1820-1926	
St Joseph's Babies Home	Chichester Park, Belfast	Home for illegitimate babies	Catholic (Lay-run)	Closed in 1930s	20 babies
Derry Women's Penitentiary	Hawkins St, Derry/ Londonderry			1862-unknown closure	
Prison Gate Mission for Women	Tudor Lodge, Belfast	Belfast Ladies Temperance Association		Closure unknown	
Church of Ireland Rescue League	Belfast		Church of Ireland	1940s	4 unmarried mothers

Table C: Institutions and residential settings for women that were not Mother and Baby Homes or Magdalene Asylums

Institution	Address	Type	Denomination / State	Operational	Places
Ashmore Hostel	Belfast	For Homeless women and their children	State	Latter 20 th century	8 family places

Mayflower Hostel	Belfast	initially bail hostel for women and their children, later battered wives homeless and single women	Salvation Army/ Voluntary	Latter 20 th century	5 family places
Moyard Hostel	Belfast	Women and children become homeless because of emergency		Latter 20 th century	

