



Truth Recovery Independent Panel
Seeking the Truth

Participant Information Sheet

Invitation to participate.

The Truth Recovery Independent Panel (the Panel) is investigating Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, Workhouses (and related pathways, practices and institutions) in Northern Ireland, 1922 to 1995. We invite you to contribute to this important work by sharing your testimony. Gathering testimonies is fundamental to the Panel's work. This Participant Information Sheet has been prepared for you to read before you give your testimony.

We recognise that talking about your personal experiences, by giving testimony, requires emotional strength. We understand it can be very difficult. For that reason, the Panel want to ensure you have the best support. This support is available through the Victims and Survivors Service (VSS) and their community partners, WAVE and Adopt NI. These organisations are independent of the Panel. Details of your engagement with them will remain confidential.

If you require this document in an alternative format, such as easy read or braille please contact us.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Sean O'Connell (Panel Co-Chair) & The Testimony Team

Please read this Participant Information Sheet and contact us if you have any questions.

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1. What is this part of the investigation about?

We are gathering lived experiences of Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, and Workhouses in Northern Ireland in the form of testimonies.

Testimonies will also be collected in relation to the pathways and practices related to them as well as other closely linked relevant institutions.

We also want to hear from the relatives of living and deceased individuals who were impacted by the institutions or the pathways and practices. All testimonies are of equal importance to the work of the Panel.

a. What are the institutions?

As well as Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, and Workhouses the Panel would like to hear from participants who had experience of private nursing homes where unknown numbers of unmarried girls and women gave birth. Baby homes and children's homes, where infants were sent after separation from their birth mothers, are also included.

b. What are the related pathways and practices?

These include experiences of adoption, fostering, 'boarding out' and/or cross border movement of children.

c. Can you give me an example of a related pathway and practice?

In the case of Magdalene laundries (the St Mary's homes operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Belfast, Derry/Londonderry and Newry) or Thorndale House Industrial Home (operated by the Salvation Army in Belfast), social services, the courts, and individual families, priests or religious ministers were regularly involved.

Girls or women were moved to these institutions for a variety of reasons. These included being placed in an institution on Probation Orders, under Care Orders, or by private arrangement involving the family of a girl or woman. In other cases, girls and women were placed there after giving birth in a mother and baby institution.

Adopted adults may have knowledge of their birth mother having been sent to an institution in Northern Ireland, with their baby then taken across the border into the Republic of Ireland for adoption.

Pregnant women were sometimes sent to private nursing homes for the purpose of hiding her pregnancy and with the intent that her baby was to be adopted, fostered or boarded out.

2. Who might want to offer testimony to the Panel?

Those we want to gather testimony from include:

a. People impacted by the institutions

- Birth mothers who were placed in any of the mother and baby institutions listed below.
- Adults who were adopted, fostered, boarded / nursed / or placed in a residential setting such as a baby or children's home.
- The relatives of deceased birth mothers or deceased individuals who were adopted, fostered, boarded / nursed / or placed in a residential setting such as a baby or children's home.
- Birth mothers who gave birth in a Workhouse whose baby was adopted or fostered.
- Birth mothers who were placed in a private nursing home to give birth whose baby was adopted or fostered.
- Birth mothers who gave birth at the private address of a midwife and their baby was adopted or fostered.
- Birth mothers placed in another family's home during pregnancy and their child was adopted or fostered.
- Girls/women placed in any of the so-called Magdalene laundries (otherwise known as St Mary's homes) that were operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters.
- Girls/women placed in Thorndale House Industrial Home, which was operated by the Salvation Army.

- The family members of all the above, both adoptive family members and birth family members, including adoptive parents and siblings.
- b. Staff employed in the institutions / or volunteers working in them (see a representative list below)
- Members of religious orders who worked in the institutions listed below.
 - Priests
 - Religious ministers, pastors, Salvation Army officers with knowledge of Thorndale
 - Staff of any Private Nursing home that was used as a location in which to place single girls and women during pregnancy.
- c. Workers whose duties brought them into contact with these institutions (see a representative, but not exhaustive, list below)
- Social workers (qualified and unqualified) with historical experiences of these institutions and/or working with children including in adoption or fostering
 - Family welfare officers
 - Education welfare officers
 - Individuals employed by adoption agencies
 - Trust Board Inspectors
 - GPs
 - Midwives
 - Psychologists
 - Psychiatrists
 - Paediatricians
 - Dentists
 - Police officers
 - Probation officers
 - Delivery drivers (e.g. taking laundry to and from a Magdalene laundry)
 - Domestic Staff (e.g. cleaning staff, cooks, gardeners)

3. Why is the Panel doing this research?

Establishing the Panel is part of a three-stage Truth, Acknowledgement and Accountability process.

The other separate stages are:

- A Public Inquiry
- A Redress Service

The Panel has been asked to carry out its work by The Executive Office, as recommended in the Truth, Acknowledgement and Accountability Report (2021).

The Panel follows the terms of reference set out by that report.

The Panel's work forms part of an Integrated Truth Recovery Investigation. When the Panel's work is completed, it will hand over to the second phase of work. This is the Public Inquiry. The Panel will provide detailed testimony and archival evidence to assist that Public Inquiry in its work.

The final element of the Truth Acknowledgement and Accountability Process involves the Redress Service. Like the Public Inquiry, the Redress Service will be established by legislation drawn up by The Executive Office.

a. Does providing testimony to the Panel impact my ability to offer testimony and other forms of evidence to the Public Inquiry or to the Redress Service?

Providing testimony to the Panel does not impact your ability to offer testimony and other forms of evidence to the Public Inquiry or to the Redress Service.

If you consent, your testimony will be made available to the Public Inquiry for its consideration. It will be for the Public Inquiry to decide how it wants to use the testimonies and what legal status it accords them.

If you consent, your testimony will be made available to the Redress Service for its deliberation of your case. If you do so, your identity will have to be made known to the Redress Service so that your testimony can be matched with your Redress application.

b. Who is on the Panel?

The Panel consists of ten members of equal standing who bring their own experiences to the role. The Panel is independent of The Executive Office. Panel members were appointed on merit having demonstrated the skill sets required for their roles. These appointments followed a rigorous application process.

The Panel members are:

Patricia Canning, Beverley Clarke, Maria Cogley, Mark Farrell, Paul McClarey, Leanne McCormick (co-chair), Roisin McGlone, Sean O'Connell (co-chair), Colin Smith, and Steven Smyrl.

c. Who does the Panel report to?

The Panel is independent and is co-chaired by Leanne McCormick and Sean O'Connell. The Panel's work is facilitated by The Executive Office. The Panel provides updates on its work to the Victims and Survivors' Consultation Forum.

4. What is going to come out of this work?

Your testimony will be used in accordance with your wishes when you sign a Consent Form. Consent is about whether you agree, or not, to different ways in which your testimony is used. These are listed below.

- a. Report of the Truth Recovery Independent Panel. The Panel will write and publish a detailed report at the end of its two-year investigative programme. All Panel members will be involved in evaluating findings and reaching conclusions. The testimonies will be at the heart of the Panel's report. The report will make recommendations to the Public Inquiry.
- b. The Panel's website. The purpose of the website will be to inform the public about the hidden history of the institutions and the related pathways and practices.

- c. The testimonies along with your Consent Form will be part of an Independent Archive, which in the future will be made available to the Public Inquiry for its own research and deliberation. This Independent Archive will be housed in a location still be decided. However, the Panel is currently working closely with the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) to discuss how to establish the Independent Archive and PRONI has experience of managing independent archives (such as the Prisons Memory Archive). The archive will be available to the public after a twenty-year closure period. The archive will be a permanent resource for the study of the history of Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, Workhouses and the related pathways and practices.
- d. The Public Inquiry. You have the option to allow your testimony to be made available to the Public Inquiry for its consideration. It will be for the Public Inquiry to decide how it wants to use the testimonies and what legal status it accords them. If you decide that you are not content with any decision made by the Public Inquiry about the use of testimony, you can withdraw your consent for the use of your testimony.
- e. The Redress Service. You have the option to allow the Redress Service to review the transcript of your testimony if you choose to make use of that service. You can add further information to your testimony if you do decide to apply for Redress.

5. Will taking part in this investigation be confidential?

Yes. Confidentiality and the secure storage of your personal information is very important. The co-chairs will oversee the storage of your personal information and testimony. We will keep your identity secure by following the procedures explained below.

a. How will my details be kept confidential when I first make contact?

A small team of people will have responsibility for contacting individuals. Names and identifying information will only be shared with the Panel's co-chairs (Leanne McCormick and Sean O'Connell) and the other panel members responsible for collecting and analysing testimony (Beverley Clarke and Patricia Canning) and the Testimony Team, which includes the Facilitators and administrators.

b. How are my personal details kept separate from my testimony?

If you choose to have your testimony recorded this will be typed to produce a transcript.

If you wish to conceal your identity, we will redact (i.e. 'black out') personal information in your testimony that may identify you or people connected to you, for example, if you say where you lived or mention a relative's name. You will be assigned a code to protect your identity. We also need to comply with any legal requirements when decisions are made. Any additional information we record will be kept separately and securely. This ensures that nobody's name will be used in any output from this research (unless the individual explicitly expresses a wish to reveal their identity).

A transcriber will produce a typed copy of your recorded testimony. The transcriber will sign a confidentiality agreement to ensure they cannot talk about their work to anyone other than the Panel Co-Chairs and members of the Testimony Team.

c. Is my testimony kept securely by the Independent Panel?

All formats of testimony will be stored securely. This includes audio and/or video, the written transcripts produced from them, or written testimonies. The secure management system we use is called Box. Relevant documents such as copies of significant letters or birth certificates can also be stored on Box. In this case, names of any third parties will be redacted from those documents before they are stored.

d. What happens to my testimony after the work of the Panel is complete?

The Panel will retain all recorded, written, and transcribed testimonies until its Report is completed. After this, all testimonies will be archived in the Independent Archive (except those by participants who have not consented to this). Each participant will be given a code to conceal the participant's identity, unless they have opted to reveal their identity. The archivists managing the Independent Archive will receive the code so that they can address any queries anyone has about their testimony in the future (for example, taking a decision to withdraw their testimony from the archive). The Panel will make transcripts available to the Public Inquiry, but you can opt out of this element of the process if you want to. You can also opt out and not allow the Redress Service to have access to your transcript.

6. Can I withdraw my testimony or change how it is used?

a. How can I withdraw testimony or change it before the Panel writes its report?

Yes. This is your testimony and you can withdraw it at any stage before the Panel publishes its Final Report. We will email all participants when the Report is published to alert them to this. If you request this, your testimony and any recording/transcript related to it will be destroyed. All individuals who provide testimony will receive a copy of their transcript (sent by secure means) and will have the opportunity to delete or clarify any information contained in it. The final version of the transcript will also be sent to you by secure means.

b. What happens if I agree to put my testimony on the Panel's website but then change my mind?

If any individual opts to include their testimony on the Independent Panel's website but then changes their mind, the testimony will be taken down. In the first instance, by contacting the Independent Panel, and when the Panel ceases to exist, by contacting the Independent Archive that will be established to manage the Panel's archive. Note, however, that your testimony may have been read and quoted by journalists or others before your decision to remove it from the website.

c. In what other way can I restrict the use of my testimony?

You can request that your testimony be used only by the Panel. In this case, it will not be archived, nor made available to the Public Inquiry or Redress Service. The Panel will also provide an option to allow access by the Testimony Team only, and not the full Panel.

d. What can I do if I have a complaint about the collection of my testimony?

If you have a complaint about the way in which the Panel engages with you or the way in which the interview is facilitated, you can contact:

secretariat@independentpanel.org.uk

7. How will my testimony be collected and what do you want me to tell you about?

a. How can I give my testimony?

Testimony can be given in several ways. Some individuals will want to have their testimony recorded by a testimony facilitator. Others will decide to submit written testimony to the Panel. In the case of written testimonies, there will be an option to take part in a follow-up session with a Panel member to make sure that your testimony offers all the detail that you want to provide.

All testimony will be collected in a sensitive and non-adversarial way. We will always prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all participants, so as not to risk adding to the trauma of those involved. You will always be given a choice, and the Panel will offer flexibility in how you want to share your testimony. You will always be asked if you want to engage with a female or male testimony facilitator. You may also wish to know the professional background of the person who will take your testimony and you will always be provided with this information.

b. In what location will I give my testimony?

Your engagement with the Panel can take place in a variety of locations. It can be given in convenient locations (such as Equality House, in Belfast, one of the WAVE offices in Northern Ireland or we can hire a discrete meeting room in a hotel to take confidential testimony). It can also be given in your own home, if required.

Alternatively, testimony can be recorded online (via Teams or Zoom). It is our intention that all testimony sessions will be captured as audio, but we will only do this with your informed consent. Those taking part in online recordings can consent to having their session video recorded also.

You can also engage in a testimony session by phone if this is your preference. The testimony audio will be recorded but we will only do this with your informed consent.

Alternatively, your preference may be to share your testimony with the Independent Panel in writing.

c. Will support be available if I give testimony?

The Panel's testimony facilitators are trained to ensure their work is person-focused and disability, gender, and trauma informed. Support is also available from Victim and Survivors Services (VSS), Adopt NI, and WAVE to those giving testimony if they are registered for this service. The Panel's testimony facilitators can forward your contact details to these service providers if you consent to this.

d. What does the Panel want to hear about?

You can tell us about any aspect of your experience of time spent in any of the institutions or places listed in this document or your associations with any of the institutions. You can tell us how the practices and pathways associated with these institutions and places impacted on you and your family. Some people will also want to provide testimony for family members (or a partner) who cannot speak for themselves because they are deceased or are unwell.

Examples of the issues the Panel want to learn about are:

- The circumstances that led to a person entering the institutions;

- Daily life in the institutions;
- Long term impact of being in one of the institutions;
- Long term impact of involvement with the pathways and practices associated with the institutions;
- Impact on other family members of someone in the family spending time in one of the institutions;
- Getting access to information;
- Trying to reunite with family members after a baby had been adopted/fostered or boarded out;
- These are just some of the issues you might want to discuss. If you want to contact the testimony facilitators, they can offer more detail on the types of questions we will ask.

e. Can I submit other evidence alongside my testimony?

Yes. The panel can accept copies of significant documents that are relevant to the questions we have been set in our Terms of Reference. We will discuss this with each individual. One example would be the case of a person who has more than one birth certificate with different birth dates and/or names on it.

f. How will the Panel use my testimony?

The testimony that is collected will provide a detailed account of how these institutions operated. It will explain the circumstances that led to people's admission. It will provide evidence on how people were treated within the institutions and the impact on their family members and relationships. It will provide evidence on the practices of adoption, fostering and boarding out.

The Panel will use all this information to write its report and make recommendations to the Public Inquiry about issues that they should investigate in more detail. The Panel will analyse the collected testimonies to offer a detailed account of the common themes expressed in the testimonies. This will enable the Panel to identify the extent and types of harms/abuses, the various pathways, and the practices connected with the institutions. The analysis will allow us to identify patterns within

and across the testimonies (e.g. the types of harms experienced as a consequence of time spent in an institution; how adoptions/fostering/boarding out was arranged; the different impacts on birth mothers, adult adoptees, 'kept' children and other family members of the institutions and pathways and practices).

8. What institutions have the Independent Panel identified so far?

This is our list of institutions but is not an exhaustive list:

a. Magdalene Laundries

- Good Shepherd Sisters convent / St Mary's Home, 511 Ormeau Rd, Belfast
- Good Shepherd Sisters convent / St Mary's Home, 132 Armagh Rd, Newry
- Good Shepherd Sisters / St Mary's Home, Dungiven Road Derry / Londonderry

b. Industrial Home

- Salvation Army / Thorndale Industrial Home, Duncairn Avenue, Belfast

c. Mother and Baby Institutions operated by voluntary/religious bodies/charities

- Belfast Midnight Mission / Malone Place Rescue and Maternity Home - Malone Road, Belfast
- Good Shepherd Sisters (Marianville) - 511 Ormeau Rd, Belfast
- Good Shepherd Sisters (Marianvale) - 132 Armagh Rd, Newry
- Hopedene Hostel - 55 Dundela Avenue
- Kennedy House - 8 Cliftonville Ave, Belfast
- Mater Dei Hostel - 298 Antrim Rd, Belfast
- Thorndale House (Salvation Army) - Duncairn Avenue, Belfast
- Deanery Flats (Banardo's), Windsor Avenue, Belfast.

d. Mother and Baby Institutions / Operated by the State / the Trusts

- Belfast Welfare Hostel - Lisburn Rd, Belfast
- Coleraine Welfare Hostel
- Mount Oriel Hostel - 4 Mount Oriel, Belfast

e. Workhouses

Workhouses were all closed in 1948. Prior to that they operated in Armagh, Ballymena, Banbridge, Belfast, Castlederg, Coleraine, Cookstown, Derry / Londonderry, Downpatrick, Dungannon, Enniskillen, Kilkeel, Larne, Limavady, Lisnaskea, Lurgan, Magherafelt, Newry, Omagh, Strabane

f. Baby homes that received infants from Mother and Baby Institutions

i. Voluntary Homes

- St Joseph's Baby Home, Belfast / Nazareth Homes
- Nazareth Homes, Derry / Londonderry
- Nazareth House Baby Home, Portadown
- Our Mother of Mercy Home, Newry
- Dr Barnardo's, Manor House, Ballycastle
- Glendhu Children's Hostel, Hollywood Road, Belfast

ii. State / Welfare Homes

- Coleshill, Enniskillen
- Connywarren, Omagh
- Clogrennon, Larne
- DhuVarren, Portrush
- Glenerye, Portadown

g. Other institutions

Testimony is also sought from any individual with experience or knowledge of the placement of pregnant girls or women in private nursing homes, private addresses of midwives or private family homes where the intention was that their babies be adopted or fostered.

Testimony is also sought from any individual with experience or knowledge of institutions in the Republic of Ireland which received girls, women, babies or children associated with any of the institutions in Northern Ireland that are listed above.

There are also many individuals from the Republic of Ireland, the UK, and elsewhere across the world who have experience or knowledge of the Northern Ireland institutions because they or someone they know was placed in one of them at some time in the past. The Panel also wants to hear their testimony. We want to invite anyone who has had contact with any of the institutions to offer their testimony. All observations and reflections will add value to the Panel's work.

9. Referenced Definitions:

a. Institution - an organisation, establishment, foundation, society, or the like, devoted to the promotion of a particular cause or program, especially one of a public, educational, or charitable character.

b. Pathways and practices – The pathways and practices used by the institutions including the adoption system, related institutions such as “baby homes” and private nursing homes and cross border and international transfers of children and women.

c. Voluntary Homes – A voluntary organisation is defined as ‘a body, other than a public or local authority, the activities of which are carried on otherwise than for profit’.