



Panel members Maria Cogley, Mark Farrell and Paul McClarey attended 'My Life, My Records' Conference at University College London in April.

Truth Recovery Independent Panel Newsletter

Seeking the Truth

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- Permanent Archive Consultation Results
- **In the Spotlight** - featured in this issue are Joy Carey (PRONI) and Mark Farrell (Panel member)
- Working Group updates from the Engagement Sessions 27 March

The Communications and Engagement Working Group are pleased to issue the latest edition of our newsletter.

We have been working hard to engage with as large an audience as possible over recent months, implementing the final phase of our communications strategy and managing the increased numbers of people coming forward who wish to give testimony. For this reason, we have combined issues to give you the most up to date progress on our work.

In this edition, we are delighted to share highlights from the Independent Panel Working Groups. These were shared with victims-survivors who attended our online engagement sessions on 27 March and we wanted to share this information with those unable to attend.

This editions 'In the Spotlight' features interviews with Joy Carey from PRONI and Mark Farrell the IP Archivist.

Paul McClarey, Beverley Clarke, Maria Cogley, Steven Smyrl and Sean O'Connell
(Communications and Engagement Working Group)

Permanent Archive Consultation Results

The Truth Recovery Independent Panel is required to contribute to the drafting of legislation to establish a permanent independent archive of records relating to historical institutions and the individuals who spent time in them, this includes adoption records, and other records relating to children in state care.

As part of this process, the Panel presented a series of suggestions for the proposed permanent archive, and requested feedback and opinions from victims-survivors through a survey.



The Panel's suggestions were included in a Consultation Document, published on 12 February 2025. Two Consultation Events were held on 27 February 2025, one in-person and one online. The consultation process closed on 20 March 2025.

A total of **63 responses** were received during the consultation period. A comprehensive report on the results of the consultation has been shared with victims-survivors. Below is a summary of the main points raised in the comments submitted to the Panel.

Scope of the Archive

83% of people agreed with the Panel's suggestions regarding the scope of the archive, i.e. what records should be included.

Many people emphasised the need for a central location for all relevant records, which would make it easier for people to find and access their own personal records in future.



There were also several comments highlighting the need for future generations to be aware of what happened in the institutions (and in related pathways and practices), and how a central archive would help with this.



Several people were keen to see a wide range of records included in the archive, including care files, boarding out files and medical records. A small number of people felt that the scope suggested by the Panel was too wide and that people should be able to choose whether their personal records are retained in the archive.

A common theme was the need for privacy to be maintained so that personal information is properly protected at all times.

Public Ownership of Records

89% of people agreed that records currently held by private organisations and agencies should be taken into public ownership.

Several people stated that they felt it was inappropriate for organisations which had caused harm to people to maintain control of these records.

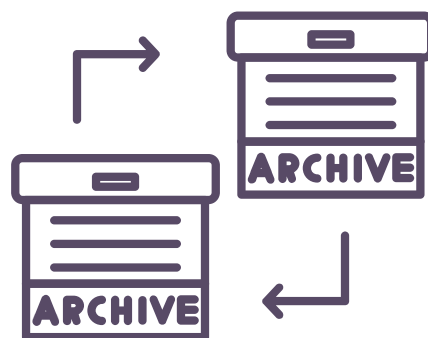
For all respondents, there was a strong emphasis on maintaining confidentiality and ensuring that personal information is not shared inappropriately or without the consent of the person. A small number of people stated that they would not want their personal records included in any archive.



Functions of the Archive

87% of people agreed with the list of functions and activities which the Panel suggested for the archive.

A number of people mentioned the need for clarity relating to certain functions, and emphasised the distinction between archival functions (such as preservation and cataloguing) and support or counselling functions.



Comments also referred to the need for the functions and activities of the archive to be subject to oversight, to ensure legal and ethical standards are observed.

Access to Records



83% of people agreed with the Panel's suggestions regarding future access to records held in the archive.

The most common concern in this regard was the need to protect privacy and confidentiality and to ensure that personal information is not accessed without consent. Many people noted the need for strict policies and protocols, especially if future researchers or historians want to access records held in the archive.

PRONI

87% of people agreed that the archive should operate within PRONI [the Public Record Office Northern Ireland]. Most people expressed a high level of trust in PRONI.

Those who disagreed did not have specific criticisms of PRONI, but felt that the archive should be established as a stand-alone centre, completely separate from any existing organisation.



Executive Council

89% of people agreed that the archive should be managed by a decision-making body which includes victims-survivors.



Several people made specific suggestions about the membership of such a body, the skills and experience that should be represented and the method of recruitment or appointment.

All agreed that victims-survivors must have a strong role in the management of the archive.

Resources

90% of people agreed that the archive must be properly resourced, and that funding should be ring-fenced.

There was a common emphasis on the need for an appropriate mix of staff to be assigned to the archive; these should include not just archive specialists but also trauma-informed specialists and support staff.



Other Issues



Responses to the consultation document included a wide range of helpful comments on issues such as the possible location of the archive, the mix of facilities to be included (for example, exhibition areas, meeting rooms, quiet areas and outdoor spaces), the need for the archive to collect records on an ongoing basis, and the scope to make improvements in future record-keeping.

The Panel is taking all of these comments on board as it reviews and finalises its recommendations for the permanent archive. We are conscious in particular of the views expressed with regard to access to records, the importance of consent and the need to protect privacy.

The contribution of all those who took part in the consultation process is greatly appreciated and the Panel is grateful that so many people took the time to send us their views.



In the Spotlight

Each Panel member brings their own unique skill set, experience, knowledge and expertise to the overall work of the Panel.

Look out for Panel member biographies in future editions of our newsletter. This edition features Mark Farrell.



Mark Farrell
Archiving

Why did you apply to be on the Panel?

In my work as an archivist, I have been involved in several projects relating to records of institutional care, social care, childcare, health and religious institutions, as well as records of state agencies and public bodies. Through these projects, and my own research, I became increasingly aware of the issues experienced by victims-survivors in identifying and accessing records. I also became familiar with shortcomings in record-keeping across the public and

and private sectors and how this can have a very direct impact on the rights and wellbeing of individuals in a variety of contexts. When I heard that expert members were being sought for the Independent Panel, it seemed like a good opportunity to bring my experience to bear in a way which could have long-term benefits.

How does your experience and expertise add value to the work of the Panel?

In addition to my practical experience of record-keeping, my recent research has developed my appreciation of the important issues being addressed by the Panel. I undertook an MA in Ethics in 2013 and have since completed a PhD on how records and archives impact accountability, human rights and social justice. Central to this is a focus on person-centred record-keeping, which recognises that individuals should have a role in how records about them are created, maintained and accessed.

My practical experience in identifying, surveying and evaluating records is relevant to the Panel's work, along with PRONI, in gathering relevant records from private institutions and public bodies. I hope that my experience, along with input and feedback from victims-survivors, will inform the Panel's recommendations regarding the future management of records and the establishment and operation of the permanent archive of institutional and adoption records and other records relating to children in state care.

What advice would give to victims-survivors starting the journey of applying for records?

The first thing I would say is that you have a right to access records about you. This is your personal information and you are entitled to see it.

Also, you should be aware that not everyone's outcome will be the same – due to inconsistent record-keeping, some people will find detailed information in their records, while others will find much less. This can be challenging and upsetting, as can some of the language used in the records.

I would encourage people to talk to others who have gone through the process of applying for records, and to learn from their experience. Hopefully, the work which the Panel has done in preparing guidelines on accessing records will be of assistance. Our recommendations on the establishment of a permanent archive will also hopefully simplify the entire process, and provide some level of consistency and clarity for those seeking their personal information.

What has your experience of being on the Panel been like so far?

It has been both rewarding and challenging. Working with a range of fellow Panel members from a variety of backgrounds has been an informative and fascinating process. Working with the victim-survivor members of the Panel has been particularly important in keeping us focused on the core purpose and value of our work. My work with PRONI has been equally rewarding, despite some of the frustrations arising from issues relating to poor record-keeping in both the public and private sectors.

In a wider context, meeting with victims-survivors and their advocates in a variety of online and in-person events has served to drive home the importance of the Panel's work and has added to our understanding of the relevant issues and how they have impacted on so many people.

Why is it important to have the voice of victims-survivors heard in your work?

As an archivist, I am very aware that records can only tell part of the story. Poor record-keeping means that, in many cases, limited information was created in the first place, while poor management means that records can be disorganised, lost, damaged or, in some cases, inappropriately disposed of. It is also important to remember that records are created to tell a particular story from a particular perspective. Most records reflect an official, institutional viewpoint, not the experiences of the people mentioned in the records. For that reason, testimonies of victims-survivors are vital in providing a more complete understanding of what happened.

The voice of victims-survivors helps to fill the gaps and provides an essential complement to the written record. Without that, there cannot be an accurate record and understanding of what happened.

What value will the Panel's work bring to victims-survivors from your point of view?

The Panel will help to give a voice to victims-survivors in a way that has been lacking up to now. By gathering testimonies, preserving them, and providing access in a manner consistent with the wishes of individual victims-survivors, we can help to ensure that there is a more complete and more balanced record of what happened.

The permanent archive will, in time, provide a central home for all relevant records, with the testimonies and other records provided by victims-survivors forming an essential part of the overall historical record. By increasing awareness and appreciation, and by giving victims-survivors an ongoing role in the management of the archive, the Panel's work can hopefully contribute to addressing injustices and giving a voice to those who have been marginalised up to this point.

In the Spotlight



Joy Carey

Senior Archivist, PRONI

Joy Carey is a senior archivist at the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). Joy manages the PRONI team working on identifying, gathering, and preserving all surviving records relating to the institutions and related pathways and practices.

This specialist archival work supports the Panel's investigation and also ensures that the historically, and highly personally significant documents relating to Truth Recovery are safely stored, and looked after with care, into the future.

Joy has worked at PRONI for over fourteen years. Prior to leading the Truth Recovery Records project, she managed the Reprographics Unit and digitisation programme there. Her favourite records are historic photographs, and she loves finding examples of rare early, 19th Century, photographic processes.

Joy initially studied History of Art in Scotland as an undergraduate, after which she worked in the libraries sector for over ten years before moving back home to Northern Ireland and securing her post at PRONI. She also has postgraduate degrees in Information Systems and in Preventive Conservation.

Joy is committed and passionate about her current work, particularly regarding the ongoing preservation of unique, vulnerable and fragile documents, which can unlock vital information about birth family for individuals and their families.

Please reach out to Joy's team if you have any documents which may be of interest to PRONI and the Panel. All communications will be treated respectfully and in confidence.



access@communities-ni.gov.uk

Working Group Updates from Engagement Sessions 27 March 2025

Testimony Gathering and Analysis Working Group

The deadline to register an interest in giving testimony was Thursday 1st May 2025.

The Independent Panel wish to acknowledge the bravery of those who have come forward and sincerely thank everyone who has engaged, and those who have expressed an interest in engaging with our testimony team. We fully appreciate how difficult the decision to come forward is and want to assure you that your words will form the heartbeat of our final report.



In order to effectively respond to the number of participants who have recently come forward, as a result of the Panel's communications strategy, the team has increased in numbers in recent months.

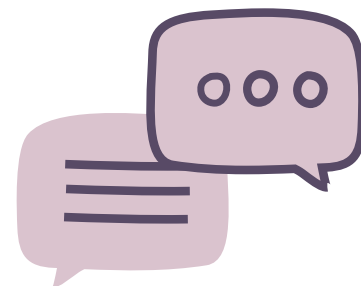
There are now seven testimony facilitators: Livi Dee, Lucy Newby, Megan Kelly, Ruth Duffy, Beverley Clarke, Sean O'Connell and Sam Manning.

Supported by a secretariat providing administration function including: Yvonne Worthington (full time) and Emma McConville (part time).

To support the analysis work of Panel member, Patricia Canning (Sociology of Discrimination and Gender-Based Violence), 2 analysts have been appointed along with 3 transcribers.

Testimonies Taken

The numbers of testimonies taken, quoted below, are testimonies directly taken by the Panel. They do not include previous testimonies taken for the Queen's University / Ulster University Academic Report in January 2021.



Up to **27 March 2025** the Independent Panel had taken testimonies from **119 people**.



A further 27 testimonies were scheduled to be taken.

Table 1: Participants by Experience

Participant's experience	Number	Percentage
Birth mother	39	24%
Adopted person	81	49.6%
Birth father	1	0.006%
Adoptive mother	1	0.006%
Relatives	7	4.3%
Spent time in a Laundry	3	1.84%
Other testimony on Laundries	12	7.36%
Workhouse	3	1.84%
Baby Home	1	0.006%
Private Nursing Homes	6	3.68%
Social worker	5	3%
Midwives	4	2.45%

Table 2: Locations Identified by People Who Discuss Birth / Family Separation

Location	Number	Percentage
Malone Place	2	1.8%
Marianvale	27	23.2%
Marianville	41	35.3%
Mater Dei	9	7.6%
Mount Oriel	-	-
Thorndale	9	7.6%
Workhouse / Maternity	6	5.1%
Private Nursing Home	10	8.6%
St Joseph's Baby Home	2	3.68%
Social Workers	5	1.8%
Private home	1	0.9%
RoI Institutions	4	3.4%

Access to Records, Advocacy, Genealogy, and Legal Services Working Group



Access to Records

The Panel have put together and published a comprehensive access to records guidance, available in print, upon request.

The guidance is also available online on the Independent Panel's website, linked below:



[Access to Records | Independent Panel Truth Recovery NI](https://www.independentpanel.truthrecoveryni.co.uk/access-to-records)

The guidance covers:

- 1** Where to start
- 2** Your Rights
- 3** Assistance and Support
- 4** Institutional Records
- 5** Adoption Records
- 6** Civil Records - Church Records

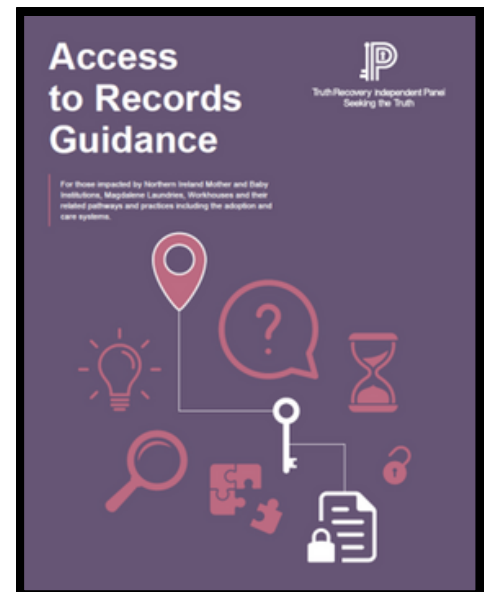
Step-by-step guides to:

- 1** Making a SAR (Subject Access Request)
- 2** Seeking Adoption Records
- 3** Appeals

To request a free hard copy of our Access to Records Guidance, please email us at:

secretariat@independentpanel.org.uk

Please include your name and address on the email and we will send a copy out to you by post.



Up-to-date inserts will be released as guidance develops in the future

New guidance coming

The Working Group are in the process of developing new guidance which will cover:

- Court records
- Medical records
- Other suggestions welcome from affected people.

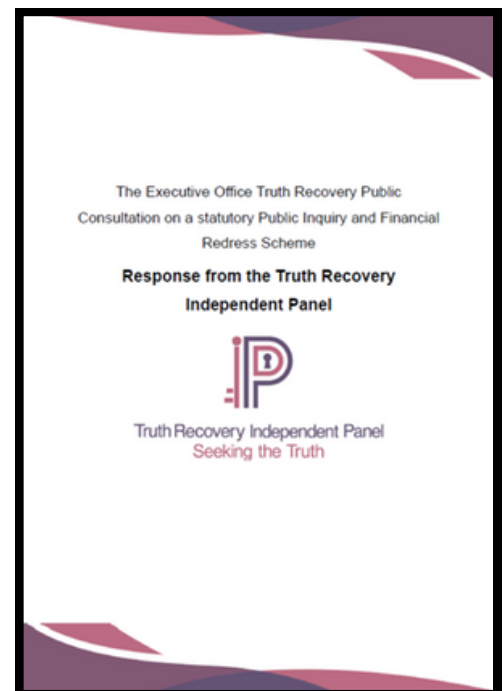


Advocacy

The Panel submitted a response to The Executive Office (TEO) public consultation on a statutory Public Inquiry and Financial Redress Scheme.

Included in the Panel's response were recommendations around:

- Victim-survivor representation on the Public Inquiry
- The early appointment of a chair (within the timeframe of the Panel)
- No waiver for redress
- Standardised payments for deceased victim-survivor family



The Working Group are keen to understand how guidance is being used and to benchmark peoples experience and outcomes against expectations.

As a result, the Working Group published a survey in May 2025. A summary report of the survey results will be shared with you when all responses have been collected and analysed.

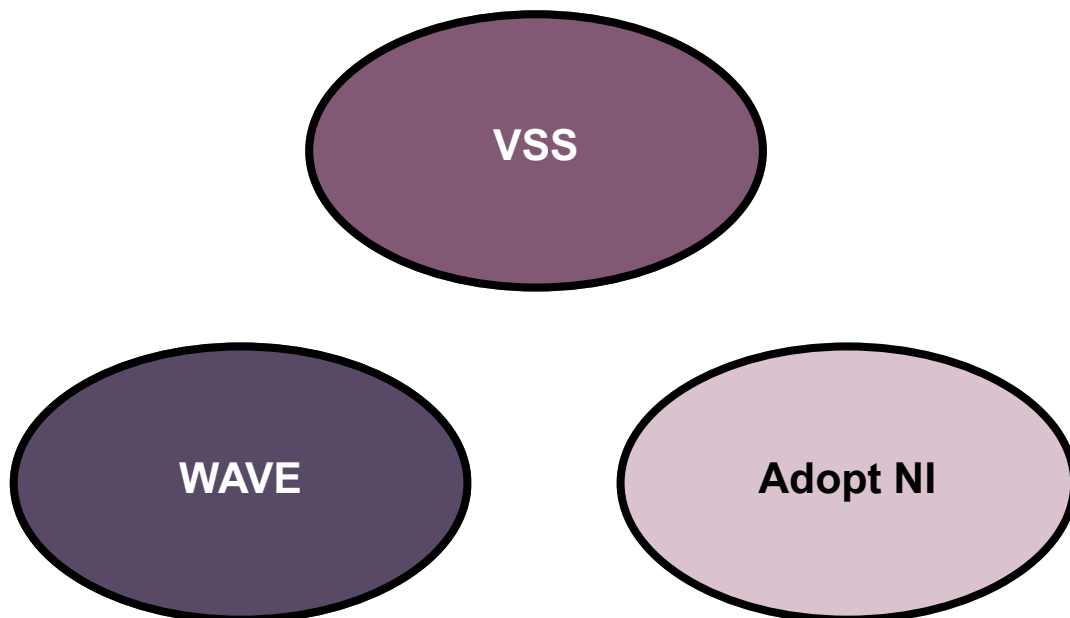


Other analysis and advocacy has included:



- Liaison with service providers.
- Recommendations to Government on areas such as legal advice and assistance, and on resources for Health and Social Care Trusts.

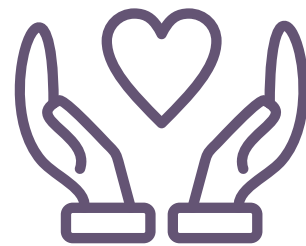
The Panel has also been connecting participants with support and advocacy services provide by:



Legal

The working group has been proactively working to ensure that guidance on the Panels' legal advice is shared appropriately including:

- Methodology
- Identifying context and human rights issues such as;
 - Measures affecting human dignity
 - Family separation, especially consent
 - Deprivation of liberty



Research and analysis for Final Report

- Applicable legal standards 1922
 - 1995, for example:
 - Deprivation of liberty
 - Family law

- Applying a feminist approach, for example:
 - Law in context
 - Reproductive Justice
- Engaging with legal queries



Genealogy

In the area of Genealogy, the Working Group have been working on:

- Identifying civil death registrations for adult woman in the institutions.
- Identifying civil birth and death registrations for babies and infants in the institutions.



To do this:



- Approximately 310 death certificates have been obtained to date.
- Identifying records of burial for each deceased person.

Records and Archives Working Group

Working closely with project partners PRONI (Public Records Office NI), the Working Group reports the following progress:

Records from private institutions transferred to PRONI:

- Approximately 4,000 items catalogued and digitised so far.
- Data sharing agreements in place for Panel access.



- Government departments asked to identify records which they still hold.
- PRONI visited Health and Social Card Trust sites where adoption records are stored.
- Meetings took place with Northern Ireland Courts and Tribunals about adoption records held by courts.

- Carried out a consultation regarding Permanent Archive.
- Results are included in this edition of the newsletter.



- Ongoing engagement with private institutions regarding making records available.
- Ongoing work by PRONI to catalogue, digitise and research relevant records.

Communications and Engagement Working Group

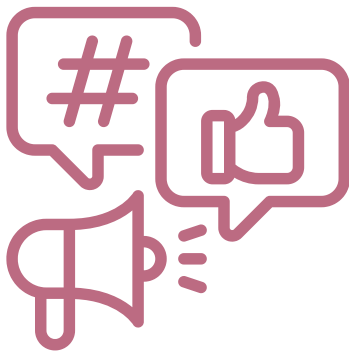
Working alongside the Secretariat and agency partners, the Communications and Engagement Working Group has focused on and prioritised the final communication plan on the run up to the 1 May deadline for participants to register their interest in giving testimony.

Receiving updates and the Panel bi-monthly newsletter:

- 181 subscribers and 2 victim-survivor peer support groups



Social Media Platforms



Facebook:

- 378 followers
- Viewed 112,000 times by over 30,000 people

X:

- 224 followers
- Total reach of 91,450

Website Analysis

During the period Nov 2024 – March 2025:

- 4,000 unique users visited the Panel Website
- 3,900 of these were new users
- Website content has been viewed 11,500 times



Distribution of A4 Posters to over 300 GP Surgeries and over 100 libraries across the North / NI



Truth Recovery Independent Panel
Seeking the Truth

The Truth Recovery Independent Panel, appointed by the Executive Office, is carrying out an independent investigation into **Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses in Northern Ireland from 1922 - 1995**, and their related pathways and practices, including the adoption and care systems.

We wish to hear from:

Any person who has been directly impacted ✓

Relatives of those directly impacted ✓

Any person who has worked or volunteered in, or lived close to one of these institutions ✓

**If you would like to share your experience, please get in touch by
Thursday 1st May 2025**



Phone us on: 028 9052 0263



Email us at: testimony@independentpanel.org.uk



Write to us at:

Truth Recovery Independent Panel, 4th Floor, Equality House
7 - 9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DB



Visit our website: www.independentpanel.truthrecoveryni.co.uk

Find us also on:



Stakeholder Engagement

427 stakeholder groups have been contacted through a range of methods (email, telephone, post etc.)

Groups including:

- Victim-survivor peer support groups
- Women's groups / networks
- Age sector networks
- Community groups / networks
- Rights-based organisations
- Northern Ireland Government Departments
- Local councils
- Public bodies
- Legal organisations and associations
- Health and social care organisations and associations
- Religious orders
- Adoption agencies
- Research institutions
- UK elected representatives (MLAs, MPs, MSPs, MSs – identified as one stakeholder group but over 300 individual elected representatives have been targeted)

Stakeholder Breakdown by Geographical Area	
The North / Northern Ireland	220
The South / Republic of Ireland	13
Great Britain	66
United States of America	25
Canada	20
Australia	28
Europe	25
Wider World	30
Total	427

Social Media Messaging

The messaging escalated in frequency as we approached the 1 May deadline to register an interest in giving testimony.

The Panel have deployed social media assets, including video appealing for testimony in relation to forced family separation outside the institutions.

In addition, a comprehensive range of ‘call to action’ communications have been deployed across the Panel’s social media platforms. These have included a call for testimony from health professionals, clergy, local neighbours, trades people, laundry customers and volunteers.



Leaflet Drop

One of the most significant communication activities was the distribution of an information leaflet to every household in the North / Northern Ireland.

Total of 845,055 households

1

From 17th Feb in Belfast, Derry / Londonderry and Newry
• 254,577 households

2

From 3rd March to rest of the North / Northern Ireland
• 590,478 households

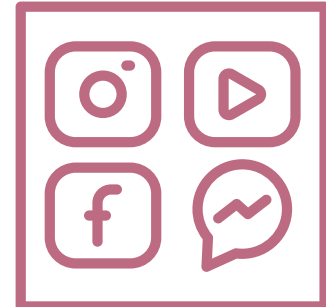
Leaflet design:



Digital Advertising Campaign

Deployed across UK and Ireland (17 February – 31 March). It included a range of communication activities across multiple platforms including:

- Facebook ads viewed 6,884,538 times
- Youtube ads viewed 1,131,578 times
- Google display ads viewed 3,929,705 times
- Paid searches (placing our ads high on Google search)
- 3,075 'clicks' on our ads taking people through to Panel's website



Classified Advertisements

In March and April, the Panel took out classified advertisements in targeted publications across Great Britain, and in America, Canada and Australia.

The publications in Great Britain are:

Media Chanel	England	Reach
The Metro	London	Circulation 670,197
Liverpool Echo	Liverpool	Circulation 12,106
Manchester Evening News	Manchester	Circulation 21,334
Birmingham Mail	Birmingham	Circulation 5,074
Birmingham Post	Birmingham	Circulation 844
Coventry Telegraph	Coventry	Circulation 3,213
Coventry Observer	Coventry	Circulation 4,711

Media Chanel	Scotland & Wales	Reach
Glasgow Herald	Scotland	Readership 65k
The Courier	Scotland	Circulation 46,500
South Wales Echo	Wales	Circulation 4,574
Western Male	Wales	Circulation 5,271

Below is the advertisement used in the publications in Great Britain.



iP

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The Truth Recovery Independent Panel, appointed by the Executive Office, is carrying out an independent investigation into **Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses in Northern Ireland from 1922 - 1995**, and their related pathways and practices, including the adoption and care systems.

If you would like to share your experience, please get in touch by Thursday 1st May 2025.

We wish to hear from:

- ✓ Any person who has been directly impacted
- ✓ Relatives of those directly impacted
- ✓ Any person who has worked or volunteered in, or lived in close proximity to one of these institutions
- ✓ Any person who experienced forced family separation in a private nursing home or private home

Contact us:

☎ **Phone us on:** 028 9052 0263

✉ **Email us at:** testimony@independentpanel.org.uk

📍 **Write to us at:** Truth Recovery Independent Panel, 4th Floor, Equality House, 7-9 Shaftesbury Square, Belfast, BT2 7DB

The publications in America, Canada and Australia are:

Media Chanel	Country	Reach
The Boston Globe	Massachusetts / USA	Readership 520,240
The West Australian	Perth Australia	Readership 355,000
The Toronto Star	Ontario / Canada	Readership 1,297,000

Below is the advertisement used in the publications in America, Canada and Australia.



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**KNOW SOMEONE WHO WOULD LIKE
TO RECEIVE UPDATES?**

If you are aware of anyone who would like to receive updates on our progress and receive further newsletters, please ask them to register their interest and be added to our mailing list by emailing:

secretariat@independentpanel.org.uk

You can also get in touch with us by:



Writing to:

Truth Recovery Independent Panel,
4th Floor, Equality House
7 - 9 Shaftesbury Square,
Belfast, BT2 7DB

Find us also on:

