

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

Legal Framework and Terms of Reference

- The Commission was established by Government Order in February 2015 to investigate concerns related to the institutional care of unmarried mothers and their babies during the period 1922 to 1998 (S.I. No 57 of 2015). The Commission is tasked with providing a full account of what happened to vulnerable women and children in these institutions.
- The three person Commission comprises Judge Yvonne Murphy (Chair), Dr William Duncan, and Professor Mary E Daly. The Commission has been tasked with reporting on its findings by 17 Feb 2018 (a three year period).
- These matters came to public attention following the disturbing reports of high mortality rates and possible mass graves on the grounds of the former Mother and Baby Home in Tuam Co. Galway.
- The scope of the Commission's remit includes several specific areas of practice and procedure in the care, welfare, entry arrangements and exit pathways for the women and children who were residents of 14 named institutions and the representative sample of County Homes identified by the Commission.
- The Commissions of Investigation Act 2004 provides an effective mechanism to investigate complex and sensitive matters of significant public concern. The Act gives the Commission robust powers to compel persons to produce information and answer questions. It is important to recognise that a statutory Commission is fully independent in the conduct of its investigations. The precise timing and approach to the gathering and examination of evidence are matters for the Commission to decide and progress.
- The Government is satisfied that the Commission has sufficient scope and powers to examine the broad range of public concerns, and to make a determination on their relevance to the central issues in question, and where appropriate to make any recommendations to Government which the Commission deems necessary.

What specific concerns is the Commission investigating?

- The primary focus of the investigation is on the experiences of women and children who lived in Mother and Baby Homes over the period 1922-1998.
- The following matters are being investigated:
 - Entry arrangements and exit pathways of single women;
 - Living conditions and care arrangements in these institutions;

- Mortality among mothers and children; causes, circumstances and rates;
- Post-mortem practices and procedures; reporting, burial arrangements and the transfer of remains for anatomical examination;
- Compliance with relevant regulatory and ethical standards in relation to systemic vaccine trials conducted on children in these homes;
- Entry arrangements and exit pathways for mothers and children leaving institutions, patterns of referral and relevant relationships with other entities, and
- The extent to which any group of residents may have systematically been treated differently on any grounds including race, religion, traveller identity or disability.
- In addition to the main investigation methods, the established **Confidential Committee forum** allows former residents to provide accounts of their experience in private. Alongside this, the **Social History module** is being progressed to provide context through an analysis of key issues.

What Institutions Are Included?

The list of 14 named Mother and Baby Homes is as follows:

1. Ard Mhuire, Dunboyne, Co Meath;
2. Belmont (Flatlets), Belmont Ave, Dublin 4;
3. Bessboro House, Blackrock, Cork;
4. Bethany Home, originally Blackhall Place, Dublin 7 and from 1934 Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6;
5. Bon Secours Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, Co. Galway;
6. Denny House, Eglington Rd, Dublin 4, originally Magdalen Home, 8 Lr Leeson St, Dublin 2;
7. Kilrush, Cooraclare Rd, Co. Clare;
8. Manor House, Castlepollard, Co Westmeath;
9. Ms. Carr's (Flatlets), 16 Northbrook Rd, Dublin 6;
10. Regina Coeli Hostel, North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7;
11. Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea, Co Tipperary;
12. St. Gerard's, originally 39, Mountjoy Square, Dublin 1,
13. St. Patrick's, Navan Road, Dublin 7, originally known as Pelletstown; and subsequent transfer to Eglington House, Eglington Rd, Dublin 4, and
14. The Castle, Newtowncunningham, Co. Donegal.

County Homes

The Commission was also asked to choose a representative sample of those County Homes which provided similar type of services as a considerable focus of their operations. Four County Homes have been selected by the Commission as a representative sample:

- 1) St Kevin's Institution, Dublin (aka Dublin Union)
- 2) Stranorlar County Home, Co Donegal (aka St. Joseph's)
- 3) Cork City County Home (aka St. Finbarr's)
- 4) Thomastown County Home, Co Kilkenny (aka St Columba's)