

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 29 September 2025 11:55  
**To:** +TEO Consultation Public Email <cteotrconsultation@niassembly.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** Call for Evidence

I would like to formally submit the following as part of the Call for Evidence:

## **1. Workhouses**

Equality Impact Assessment:

"TEO has given careful consideration to including workhouses in the Standardised Payment Scheme but singling out women in Workhouses for Redress may not be considered a proportionate means of achieving a legitimate aim as there is, as yet no conclusive evidence that women suffered mistreatment and discrimination wholly distinct from other residents admitted to a Workhouse"

Evidence of mistreatment:

The testimony in the attached document (received from [REDACTED] of the Donaghmore Historical Society) shows clearly that unmarried mothers and their children in workhouses were treated differently from other residents. Babies labelled "illegitimate" were stigmatised, while their mothers endured harsh labour, neglect, and forced separation. This confirms that they suffered distinct, gendered harm comparable to that experienced in Mother and Baby Institutions.

The Executive Office's line about there being "no conclusive evidence" of distinct treatment is really about the desire for administrative simplicity, not about historical reality.

It is vital that the Bill recognises these women and children, rather than erasing their suffering.

See also a copy of my email to [REDACTED] on this subject - attached.

## **2. Posthumous Redress**

I am also attaching notes on concerns about posthumous payments including how the wishes of deceased survivors can be respected, how conflicts within families will be managed, and whether such payments risk repeating the paternalism and silencing that many unmarried mothers endured in life.

While I am not convinced that financial payments are the best way to recognise those who have died, if they are to be included, they must surely be delivered fairly and consistently across all categories of survivors. The current exclusion of workhouse mothers and children is both unjust and discriminatory.

## **3. Intergenerational impact**

Please also find attached a short note on the intergenerational impact of forced family separation.

The Truth, Acknowledgement and Accountability Report recommended the Inquiry Panel should have expertise in intergenerational trauma, yet the Bill makes no reference to it. Harm has not been limited to survivors themselves - it reverberates through children, grandchildren, and whole families. Without explicit recognition of intergenerational impact, both the truth-telling process and future support services risk being incomplete..

I would also like to draw your attention to who is affected - not only adopted children, but also those who remained with their mothers, and children later born into survivor families.

As just one example of this, I am attaching a panel display version of my experience (created in a recent artbook workshop for Forum members). Please note that the attached document contains sensitive content which may be upsetting to read.

#### **4. Victims and Survivors from private family residences**

Please find attached a copy of correspondence I sent to the Truth Recovery Independent Panel (June 2025) regarding the exclusion of victims-survivors from private family residences in the Panel's public communications and now missing in the Bill.

My concern is that by omitting explicit reference to private homes in the leaflet sent to over 845,000 households, many people who suffered forced separation outside institutional settings were left uncertain whether their experiences were recognised. This omission risks perpetuating the very silencing and invisibility that truth recovery is supposed to challenge.

It is essential that the forthcoming legislation and its communications are inclusive, clear, and consistent, so that all victims and survivors, including those from non-institutional settings, can see themselves recognised in this process.

Best regards,

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## Intergenerational Impact

- The Truth, Acknowledgement and Accountability Report recommended an Inquiry Panel with expertise in intergenerational trauma, yet the Bill does not mention intergenerational impact.
- This omission matters because:
  - Harm reverberated across generations: not only adopted children, but also those who remained with their mothers, and children later born into survivor families, carry psychological, relational, and social impacts.
  - Comprehensive understanding: Issues such as PTSD, attachment disorders, identity struggles, substance abuse, and difficulties with trust and relationships are common across survivor families.
  - Policy relevance: Without acknowledging intergenerational trauma, future support services may fail to meet real needs.
  - Truth and reconciliation: The full “cost” of the institutions can only be understood across generations.
  - International precedent: Other inquiries (e.g. Ireland) have been criticised for failing to address intergenerational harm.

The Inquiry should therefore explicitly recognise, record, and factor in intergenerational trauma for all survivors’ families — both adopted and non-adopted.

## Posthumous Redress

- I have concerns about posthumous payments, as they may not align with the wishes of the survivors who have died.
  - How can it be guaranteed that the wishes of the deceased will be respected?
  - How will a claimant know whether the survivor would have wanted them to receive this payment?
  - If the mother's wishes aren't taken into account, then any posthumous payment scheme risks being paternalistic, deciding *for* her, again, instead of respecting her voice. This repeats the same silencing that many unmarried mothers experienced when their children were taken from them.
  - Will claimants (who had the opportunity) be required to declare that they had a meaningful connection with the deceased?
  - What provision will be made to deal with conflicts within families?
  - What safeguards will be put in place against opportunism?
- The State's interference (albeit well intentioned) may complicate or even distort family narratives.
- At the same time, the absence of recognition for those who have died can feel like another injustice for families.
- I am not convinced that posthumous financial redress is the best way to recognise deceased victims/survivors. Alternative forms of recognition should be explored, for example, ongoing supports for families, or symbolic gestures such as the Canadian Truth and Reconciliation keepsake:  
(<https://www.mint.ca/en/shop/coins/2022/truth-and-reconciliation-keepsake?srltid=AfmBOoqoPX8z5HnCJfG0HzSxcHbqcyidHtDcjPpBrSWPwOsLNSsQ6q3m>)
- However, if posthumous payments are to be included in the scheme, it is essential that they are applied fairly and consistently.
- The current exclusion of women and families connected with workhouses is deeply unjust. It risks creating a hierarchy of suffering and causes real harm.
- The exclusion of workhouse victims is both legally questionable and ethically indefensible.
- Any approach to posthumous redress must respect equality across all categories of survivors.

I do not fully agree with the policy of posthumous payments. However, if such payments are to exist, they must be delivered in a way that is fair, consistent, and non-discriminatory.

Patricia Mulhern remembers visiting the workhouse in the 1940s with the Legion of Mary:

We mostly visited the nursery in the workhouse. It had a big turf fire in the middle of the room with a fireguard. A Mrs Robinson (*Alfie's wife*) looked after the children. She was very good to them, she wore an nurses uniform, and sometimes brought them sweets from town. Their mothers had to work scrubbing floors and washing clothes. A lot of the children at that time were illegitimate and their mothers were treated badly.

I had eight children born in the workhouse after it closed. The old hospital was turned into a maternity ward, because of lack of space in the old County Hospital.

My second son Sean was the first baby born in this ward. The workmen were still moving in wardrobes and lockers, and the place was a bit of a shambles. Mr Johnston who was Mayor of Enniskillen at the time visited me and brought me flowers. I was a VIP for the day, but couldn't help thinking of the poor girls who had gone before me. They hadn't been shown much kindness when their babies were born.

## THE WORKHOUSE GHOST

It seems appropriate that a building like the workhouse, which had seen death and human misery on such a colossal scale, should have its ghost. During the demolition of the Fever Hospital in the 1950s the following events occurred.

A worker employed by a Belfast firm was working in the cellar when he saw a lady approaching dressed in "old time" nursing uniform. She passed within six feet of him without speaking and disappeared. When he told his workmates what had happened, they laughed at him. Then several days later the lady returned. A young plumbing apprentice called Claud came running from the cellar screaming that he had seen a ghost. He described in detail the lady in old time nursing uniform. Claud claimed he had seen the lady several times and refused to work in the building. Finally he had to be brought back to his home in Belfast in a state of shock. None of the other men on the site apart from these two ever saw the apparition.

Joe Towner as a young boy rowed people to the workhouse to collect birth certificates. He remembers hearing the story of a nurse who took an inmate from the lunatic ward for walks. The inmate in a violent fit is reputed to have strangled the nurse in the vicinity of the old Fever Hospital. Her ghost was supposed to haunt this area.

One of the most unusual events in the 108 year old history of the workhouse took place on the 8th May 1945, V.E. day. On that date the male voice choir from R.A.F. Killadeas visited the workhouse. This was the only time since December 1895 that the house had echoed to the sound of music. On that occasion a Mr W. Davis *A.L.C.M.* gave a recital to the inmates in the schoolroom, which had been decorated for the event. On this occasion it had taken a war to make it happen!

On the 5th July 1948 the new Health Insurance Act came into being. This act was the beginning of the end for Enniskillen workhouse and the Board of Guardians. They were informed that from that date the Board was officially abolished. Prior to this, on the 1st April, the inmates in Enniskillen Union became the responsibility of Fermanagh Welfare Committee. At that time there were 30 inmates, comprised of children, unmarried mothers and old people. It was decided to send them to Armagh workhouse, as it was the policy of the Ministry of Health to close as many workhouses as possible, pending the building of other accommodation. The last meeting of the Enniskillen Board of Guardians was held on 3rd September 1948. The building was turned into a general hospital, before being finally torn down to make way for the new Erne Hospital which opened in 1964.

The greatest fear that befell anyone in their twilight years, was to be committed to the workhouse to die. This often happened through lack of friends or family - the workhouses in latter years, became the old people's home of their area. For those who passed through its doors it was simply somewhere to die. Many of them lie in the paupers' graveyard at Cornagrade which was finally closed in 1943. The only reminder of the Enniskillen Union workhouse to be seen today is the former entrance lodge, which housed the boardroom and the offices. It still stands at the back of the Erne Hospital - a grim reminder of the years of the Great Famine and of the Poor Law system.



Front lodge at Enniskillen Union



Dear [REDACTED],

As I've previously said - My mother was admitted to the workhouse as an unmarried mother, unfairly judged by society. Her baby was placed with her adoptive parents within two days of birth. My mother was 91 when she first met her daughter, and my sister in her 70s when she first met her mother. The shame and stigma attached to my mother's admittance were gender-specific and systemic.

Even if workhouses are eventually included in the Individual Assessed Payment (IAP) scheme, I assume there will be no scope for posthumous redress for families like ours, because my mother is excluded from standardised redress to which you have linked posthumous redress. Can you confirm if this is the intention?

As for memorialisation, it will be focused in Northern Ireland. None of our family live there; my mother left the country and I can only guess at why. So, where is the meaningful acknowledgement for workhouse victims and their families?

I think TEO has adopted a particular interpretation of the law that reflects a desire to limit liability and is contestable by other lawyers. I definitely got this impression listening to James Gallen.

These omissions risk causing real harm to families like ours. I hope you will consider how this exclusion continues to harm, and what can be done to make acknowledgement real.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]



**8 June 2025**

**To:** Co-Chairs, Truth Recovery Independent Panel

**Subject:** Concerns Regarding the Exclusion of Victims-Survivors from Private Family Residences in Public Communications

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your response to my letter of complaint.

While I appreciate your confirmation that individuals affected by forced family separation in private homes have been heard, I remain deeply concerned by the implications of the Panel's public communication strategy - specifically, the omission of private family homes from the leaflet campaign distributed to over 845,000 households.

The assertion that the Panel's definition of "pathways and practices" implicitly includes private homes does not resolve the issue. What matters is not only the Panel's intention, but how the message was received, particularly by those who already feel marginalised or uncertain whether their experiences are recognised.

Although you note that some individuals from private homes have come forward, many others may not have, simply because they did not see their experience reflected in the public messaging. The absence of any mention of private homes risks reinforcing the very silencing and exclusion this process seeks to address.

In the absence of an explicit reference to private homes in the public leaflet, individuals affected by separation within the family setting had little reason to assume they were included. That omission has real consequences. This group of victims and survivors needed to see themselves *named*, not inferred, in the most widely distributed communication. Failing to do so perpetuates their historical erasure.

Given that this group was acknowledged in the Participant Information Sheet, the inconsistency between internal and public-facing communications is significant. It is worth noting that private nursing homes, also falling under "pathways and practices", were explicitly mentioned in the leaflet. The simple addition of the words "and private homes" could have signalled inclusion. This absence would seem to suggest a bias, conscious or not, against those from non-institutional settings. It might also suggest there wasn't a shared understanding of the scope of the Independent Panel's investigation. The omission of private homes from the leaflet warrants further scrutiny, possibly through an independent review of the communications strategy.

No single narrative should dominate the stories of forced family separation in Northern Ireland. Bias, whether structural or individual, in key roles risks the marginalisation of some victims-survivors.

While I welcome your confirmation that testimony from those affected in private homes will be included in the final report and recommendations, it remains unclear how the

underrepresentation of this group will be addressed, especially when many may have been deterred from coming forward due to a lack of visibility in the communications.

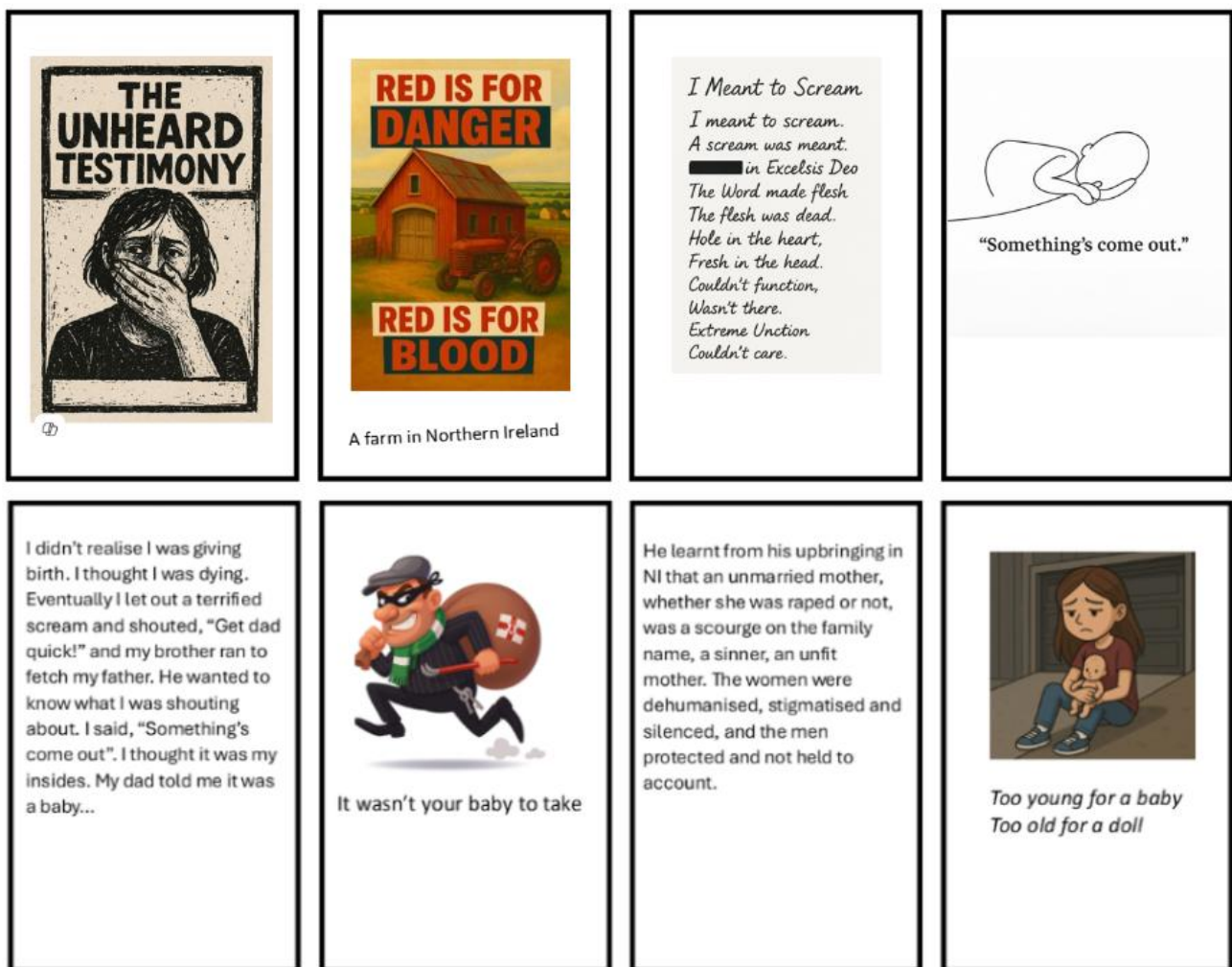
I hope the Panel will take a proactive approach in acknowledging and addressing these exclusions, particularly where they stem from how communication was framed. I also hope the forthcoming Public Inquiry will be fully informed of these concerns, and that a recommendation will be made to ensure this group is actively reached.

I ask you to consider how this experience might feel for someone affected by family separation in their home reading a leaflet and finding no mention of their experience at all.

This process is about truth recovery, so it must include *all* victims and survivors, not only those whose experiences occurred in institutions.

Yours sincerely,

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## Reclaiming My Voice: A Zine Rooted in Silence, Trauma, and Resistance

In my previous artbook, I used metaphor to express the challenges I faced after the birth and adoption of my baby. That work helped me begin to speak, but this zine goes further. Here, I speak more directly. This shift from metaphor to more explicit testimony reflects where I am now.

My zine artbook is both a deeply personal and political act. Through it, I am reclaiming my voice and my space, something denied to me for far too long. It is an assertion of agency within systems that sought to silence me. I have carried stories that were too heavy, too complex, or too inconvenient for others to hold. Now I'm contributing them to a public archive of lived experience and hope to place them in the public record on my own terms.

By way of context: my mother was an unmarried woman in a Northern Ireland workhouse who lost her baby to forced adoption. She was reunited with her daughter at the age of 91; her daughter was in her 70s. I am one of my mother's non-adopted children. In this zine, I focus on my own experience of being an unmarried mother in a Northern Irish family living in England, a family shaped by intergenerational trauma, secrecy, and control.

These intergenerational experiences are often overlooked or dismissed. Yet they are crucial to understanding the broader legacy of institutional and familial abuse. This zine aims to raise awareness of how cruel practices were culturally transmitted across generations and jurisdictions.

It also sheds light on the misogyny and gender discrimination that underpinned these practices, influenced how I was treated, and contributed to the silencing of my voice. By naming and challenging this, I begin to emerge from the erasure imposed by patriarchy.

By telling my story, I am reclaiming my narrative and repositioning myself within the power structure. It is an important part of my recovery; a way to restore autonomy and dignity through creativity.

I hope this zine contributes to a wider body of testimony and resistance. It is offered as a resource for research, education, and advocacy, so that the patterns of harm it describes are better understood, rigorously challenged, and never repeated.