

Briefing Paper for Stakeholder Roundtable

Inquiry (Mother and Baby Institutions, Magdalene Laundries and Workhouses) and Redress Scheme Bill

Submitted by:

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Date: ██████████

1. Context and Ethical Foundation

This Bill must uphold the vision established in the **2021 Truth Recovery Design Panel Report** (*Professor Phil Scraton & Dr Maeve O'Rourke*), which called for truth, accountability, and remembrance through a survivor-centred and human-rights-based process.

The Design Panel emphasised:

- *Full inclusion of all affected persons, living and deceased;*
- *Transparent access to institutional and state records;*
- *A trauma-informed, fair, and equitable redress scheme; and*
- *Permanent memorialisation of all institutional sites across Northern Ireland.*

These principles must guide every clause of the current Bill.

2. Posthumous Eligibility – Clause 31

The proposed posthumous cut-off date of **29 September 2011** excludes many mothers and children whose suffering predated public acknowledgment. This contradicts the Design Panel’s principle that *no person should be excluded by reason of death or date*.

Recommendation:

Extend posthumous eligibility **back to 1921–1922**, the establishment of Northern Ireland, ensuring **every woman and child affected is recognised**.

Recognition must not depend on the date of death.

3. Siblings of Deceased Adoptees and Institutionalised Children

Siblings often carry the intergenerational burden of separation, secrecy, and loss. They are the last living links to fractured family histories.

Recommendation:

Amend the Bill to include **siblings of deceased adoptees and institutionalised persons** as eligible relatives.

This aligns with the 2021 Report’s recognition of *family networks as sites of enduring trauma*.

4. Baby Graves and Institutional Burials

The unmarked infant graves at **Milltown Cemetery** and elsewhere remain a searing legacy of institutional neglect. The 2021 Report called for these grounds to be treated as **“sites of conscience and remembrance.”**

Recommendation:

- Grant the Inquiry explicit powers to **investigate burial practices** and oversee **archival and archaeological work**.
- Guarantee **DNA identification and open record access** for families seeking truth.
- Recognise these burial sites as **national memorials**, safeguarded for remembrance and education.

5. Memorialisation and the Marionvale Site

The **proposed commercial and retail development on the site of the former Marionvale Mother and Baby Institution in Newry** represents a moral and cultural failure.

Building a shopping complex on a site of documented suffering makes a mockery of truth recovery and remembrance.

Recommendation:

- The Executive Office must **protect all former institutional sites** from commercial development.
 - Establish a **National Memorial and Education Programme** to honour every Mother and Baby Institution, Magdalene Laundry, and Workhouse in Northern Ireland.
 - Affirm that **all sites should be memorialised and acknowledged** — not selectively remembered, but collectively honoured as part of the nation's moral history.
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6. Redress Payments and Prioritisation

The **standardised redress payments of £10,000 for survivors and £2,000 for relatives** appear to have been **benchmarked against the 2019 Historical Institutional Abuse (HIA) Inquiry**.

However, six years have passed. Inflation and rising costs mean these figures **no longer reflect their real-world value or purchasing power**.

Moreover, survivors are ageing. Many live with **life-limiting conditions** and may not live to see the Inquiry's conclusions.

Recommendation:

- Adjust the proposed redress amounts **in line with inflation since 2019** to maintain fairness and parity with the HIA scheme.
- Introduce a **priority fast-track payment mechanism** for elderly survivors and those with **terminal or life-limiting health conditions**.
- Supplement financial redress with **ongoing psychological, medical, and genealogical supports** as part of the holistic redress process.

7. Closing Reflection

The 2021 Truth Recovery Design Panel called for *truth, justice, and memorialisation without exclusion*. If this Bill is to meet that vision, it must deliver inclusion not only in law but in legacy.

No one gets left behind — not the mothers, not the children, not the siblings, and not those whose resting places call us to remember.

Every site must be memorialised. Every life must be acknowledged.

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(With reference to the Truth Recovery Design Panel Report, Prof. Phil Scraton & Dr Maeve O'Rourke, 2021)