

# 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: [REDACTED]

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### **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.

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## 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*.

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## 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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**Submitted by:**

Adoptee and Advocate for Birth Mothers and Adoptees

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