

From: [REDACTED]

Date: 24 June 2025 at 15:02:20 BST

Subject: Submission of Evidence: Draft Bill on Truth Recovery and Redress

[REDACTED]
Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to express my deep concerns regarding the draft bill, specifically its approach to addressing forced adoption and mistreatment beyond the main institutions, particularly in private nursing homes and non-institutional settings.

While I appreciate the efforts to uncover injustices experienced by many mothers, children, and families, I am increasingly concerned that the bill does not fully address cases that occurred outside Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries, and Workhouses. The experiences of many victims who suffered abuse and coercive adoption practices in private nursing homes or other domestic settings risk being side-lined.

My Family's Experience

For context, my family has been directly impacted by these events. My older (full) brother was coercively adopted in [REDACTED] from a private nursing home called [REDACTED] in [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Our mother endured severe mistreatment before, during, and after her stay. Before her admission to [REDACTED], my mother was hidden away in the family home to keep her pregnancy secret. This form of social concealment—though not within the walls of an institution—was no less traumatic or coercive. She was isolated from friends, her education, and any semblance of normal teenage life. The emotional toll of being treated as a source of shame by her own community, combined with the constant fear of discovery, left lasting psychological scars. This concealment was not a private family decision alone; it was heavily influenced by prevailing societal norms and reinforced by religious authority. Presbyterian clergy were involved from the earliest stages, advising the family on how to “manage” the situation and ultimately playing a central role in the adoption process. The moral judgment, stigma, and manipulation my mother endured while hidden at home reflect the same oppressive culture that operated inside formal institutions. To imply that her suffering was somehow less because it occurred in a domestic setting and a private nursing home rather than a mother and baby home is both inaccurate and deeply unjust.

While at [REDACTED] she was treated coldly, isolated within the building, and left alone for most of the birth. She was cruelly handed a walking stick by a nurse to bang on the floor if she needed help, and then left alone. Her baby was taken immediately after birth—she was not allowed to see or hold him. When naming her child, a social worker cruelly told her it “wouldn’t matter,” as his name would be changed anyway. She was denied the right to name her own child. My brother remained nameless for at least the first [REDACTED] of his life. His birth certificate has a blank space next to his first name, and throughout the adoption file, he is simply referred to as [REDACTED] Months later, my mother was taken by a Presbyterian minister to a pub in the [REDACTED] to meet an unknown man. As a vulnerable [REDACTED] unaccompanied, she was made to sign papers she did not understand—papers she has only recently learned were likely the adoption consent forms.

█████ years later, my parents married and had █████. My father was also a victim of coercive adoption practices and completely excluded from decisions. My brother's existence was kept secret from my sisters and me until █████ when, at age █████, I learned about him following my father's progress in tracing him. A reunion took place but was poorly handled by the WHSCT, causing immense harm to our family. The emotional toll led to my brother leaving the country and cutting contact for █████. Eventually, he returned, and while our relationship strengthened, the trauma of his forced separation was always evident. He had multiple foster placements before adoption, an unstable start, and later estrangement from his adoptive family.

In █████ he returned to the country he had fled after our reunion. Tragically, he died months later in sudden and traumatic circumstances, leaving many unanswered questions and resurfacing unresolved pain from his forced adoption. The same social worker involved in my brother's adoption was also involved in cases from Mother and Baby Homes and other institutions, linking private nursing homes to the broader system of coercive adoption.

Discrepancies & Financial Transactions in the Adoption File

█████ after my brother's passing, we applied for Mum's file and later my brother's adoption file. Both revealed serious discrepancies and strong evidence of forced adoption practices. One alarming detail is a payment of 18 guineas (about £300 today) exchanged between a Presbyterian minister and a government social worker two days after my brother's birth. The next day, the same social worker began arranging foster care and adoption placement. The Western Health and Social Care Trust admits this payment is highly unusual but cannot clarify its purpose. Additionally, my brother was baptized in his adoptive name months before the adoption order was finalized.

Trauma Is Not Determined by Financial Circumstance

It is extremely concerning that socio-economic background or perceived 'middle class' status could be considered relevant in determining whether women suffered trauma or coercion. The financial circumstances of a woman's family did not, and do not, dictate the harm that occurred. Many women sent to private nursing homes were subjected to the same systemic practices of secrecy, shame, isolation, and forced separation from their babies. Private nursing homes like █████ functioned as de facto mother and baby homes—operating within the same culture of moral judgment and social punishment that drove the wider system of forced adoption. To imply that trauma was any less severe because a woman gave birth in a private facility rather than an institution is both unfounded and deeply offensive. This perpetuates a class-based erasure of victims and runs contrary to the goals of truth recovery, redress, and restorative justice.

Lack of Transparency and Urgency in Recognising Institutions

There is growing concern about the opaque and inconsistent process by which institutions are being considered for inclusion in the forthcoming inquiry and redress scheme. Victims have already submitted credible evidence to the Truth Recovery Panel regarding abuses in private nursing homes, including detailed testimonies, documents, and contemporaneous records. The Panel has publicly acknowledged receiving this evidence. Yet these homes are not yet formally recognised. There is no clear, timely, or transparent mechanism for adding

new institutions—especially when harm is well documented and testimony continues to be submitted. Survivors are repeatedly forced to re-live trauma and engage in good faith, only to be met with silence or exclusion. The draft bill must explicitly establish clear criteria, decision-making authority, and meaningful survivor involvement for recognising and adding institutions. Without this, many victims' experiences risk exclusion, undermining the goals of truth recovery and restorative justice.

Intergenerational Trauma and Continuing Harms

The trauma inflicted by forced adoption and coercive practices does not end with the immediate victims; it extends across generations. My family continues to suffer the lasting impacts. The secrecy, shame, and fractured relationships have affected not only my brother and parents but also my siblings and me. An entire branch of our family tree has been irrevocably severed. I have nieces and nephews I will never know, and my own children have cousins they will likely never know. These are not distant relations - they are direct family, connected by blood and history, yet kept apart by decades of secrecy, systemic failings, and the enduring impact of forced adoption. The emotional and relational consequences of this loss are incalculable, and they continue to shape our lives in quiet, painful ways every day.

The ongoing psychological and emotional harms, including struggles with identity, trust, and loss, persist decades later. The draft bill must acknowledge intergenerational trauma and provide mechanisms for recognising and addressing continuing harms. This includes access to appropriate mental health support, counselling, and restorative justice measures that reflect the complex and enduring nature of the trauma experienced by survivors and their families.

What I have shared here represents only a brief overview of my family's experience. The reality is far more complex, painful, and ongoing than can be fully conveyed in a single submission. There are layers of trauma that span decades—emotional, psychological, and relational harms that continue to reverberate through our family to this day. From the secrecy and shame that shaped my mother's youth, to the breakdown of relationships following a mishandled reunion, to the unresolved grief of losing my brother in tragic circumstances. Even now, the ongoing mishandling of historical and more recent records by the WHSCT — including those from as recently as [REDACTED] — and their continued refusal to provide transparency, only compounds the trauma and prevents accountability — each chapter has left deep scars. There are questions we will likely never have answers to, and wounds that will never fully heal. These are not isolated events frozen in the past; they are living, breathing legacies of forced adoption and social control, still shaping who we are today. This is why it is so vital that the draft legislation fully recognises and responds to the reality of these harms in all their forms and settings.

In conclusion, while the draft bill is a step forward, it urgently needs to address the gaps around recognising all affected institutions, reject any class-based distinctions of trauma, and properly recognise and respond to intergenerational harms. Only with these measures can it truly uncover the what happened, why it happened, and who was involved - and support survivors and their families on the path to truth and healing.

Thank you for your attention to these critical concerns.

Yours sincerely,

[REDACTED]

