



**Special
Advocate**
For Survivors of
Institutional Abuse

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Tuesday 24 June

DECADES OF STATE APOLOGIES MEANINGLESS AS SURVIVORS STILL EXCLUDED FROM REDRESS AND ACCESS TO THEIR RECORDS

The Special Advocate for Survivors calls on Government to urgently address health needs for all Survivors of institutional abuse – the Health Amendment Act card giving additional health supports is a requirement and should be part of all redress measures.

Patricia Carey was appointed in March 2024 and over the course of her first year has met with over **1,300 survivors of institutional abuse and forced family separation** here in Ireland and overseas.

In her first Annual Report published today she outlines the key issues raised with her by Survivors and Affected Persons and their families

- **Full and unredacted access to all their records - including the need for legislation to compel religious orders and church authorities to hand over all records related to Institutions and forced family separation.**
- **Inclusion of all Survivors in State Redress schemes – extending the Mother and Baby Institutions Redress Scheme to those currently excluded from redress, including people who spent time in the network of mother and baby institutions across Ireland and to all those who were forcibly removed from their families.**
- **Prioritisation of health and housing needs for Survivors**
- **Identification of all burial grounds of those who died institutions and funding for dignified burial and local memorialisation.**

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Ms Carey said the exclusion from redress and the lack of full access to records are causing some Survivors ongoing stress and trauma.

“We must have a Human Rights-based approach to all forms of redress where nobody is excluded because of time spent or the designation of the institution”

The exclusion of people who were boarded or fostered out, such as Temple Hill Children’s Hospital. and Westbank Orphanage (as well as other excluded institutions) from the Mother and Baby Institutions redress scheme and the exclusion of those who spent less than 180 days as a child are arbitrary criteria and perpetuate the harm caused by the State and Church.

“The fact that those boarded out as young as 5 years of age, to work unpaid on farms and as servants have never been included in any redress scheme is a stain on the whole of government response institutional abuse.”

She highlighted further exclusions of those who spent time in industrial and reformatory schools in upcoming **‘so-called’ Support for Survivors of Residential Institutional Abuse Bill 2024**, this legislation refers to those who previously received redress and offers those eligible little in the way of tangible health and housing supports which are badly needed.

In her first year as Special Advocate, Ms Carey said she has heard harrowing accounts of the long term and intergenerational effects of the abuse and lack of care suffered by over 250,000 people who spent time in a range of institutions.

Firsthand accounts of beatings, sexual and physical abuse, forced and unpaid labour as well as hunger, lack of care, education and a family life are recounted to her in her role as Special Advocate.

She said,

“Ministers and officials must now, finally stand up and be counted, listen to the lived experiences of those who suffered, stop counting the cost of redress and make real the various State Apologies given by Taoisigh over the last 3 decades”.



A range of other issues and recommendations are highlighted in her report, which uses direct quotes from Survivors to give voice and urgency to the reality of the issues.

- Establishment of an independent investigation into vaccine trials conducted without consent on thousands of children in institutions in the 1960s and 1970s
- Establishment of an independent DNA and genealogy service for those whose births were illegally registered and for those seeking family tracing.
- Ease of access to Irish passports for those trafficked abroad for the purposes of adoption.
- More supports and resources for those survivors living overseas, particularly in the UK and USA

ENDS

For interviews / comment please contact:

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About the Special Advocate for Survivors

The appointment of a Special Advocate for Survivors fulfils a core commitment in the Government's Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions, which contains a number of measures designed to address broader experiences of institutional trauma and forced family separation. This Action Plan recognises that the response of Government to the legacy of these institutions must be directly informed by the voices of those most centrally affected.

The Special Advocate's remit encompasses Mother and Baby Institutions, County Home Institutions, Magdalene Laundries, Industrial and Reformatory School Institutions, and related institutions, and those adopted, boarded out or the subject of an illegal birth registration.

The role of the Special Advocate for Survivors is to:

- ensure that the views of Survivors and Affected Persons are central to the delivery of the State's response to the legacy of institutional abuse and forced family separation

- promote the collective interests of Survivors and Affected Persons, as expressed by them, and amplify their voices as a central, essential input to Government deliberations on matters which affect them.

The Special Advocate is operationally independent of Government.

About Patricia Carey

Patricia Carey has been in the role as Special Advocate for Survivors since 25 March 2024. Patricia Carey served as the CEO of the Adoption Authority of Ireland from 2014 to 2022, leading the Authority's work on the Birth Information and Tracing Act. Prior to this role she held the position of Director of Services for St Vincent De Paul, and has also held various volunteer leadership roles, including Chairperson of Connect Counselling for Survivors of Institutional Abuse and a founding member of Outhouse resource centre for the LGBT+ community. As an adopted person born in a Mother and Baby Institution, Patricia Carey brings a unique perspective and dedication to her work.