

# NEWSLETTER

AUGUST 2025

**Hello from the Special Advocate for Survivors,  
Patricia Carey**

**Hello all,**

I am delighted to send you our third Newsletter and hope that many of you will find the information enclosed helpful.

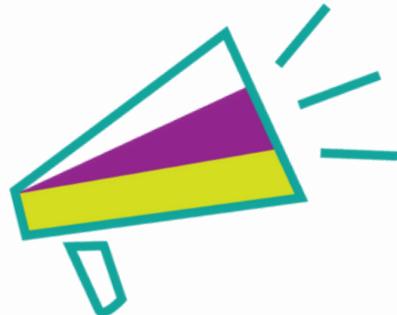
This Newsletter highlights some of our recent activities and gives updates and information about other organisations and their work.

I enclose details of my first Annual Report and documents related to serious concerns I have raised about the Survivors Supports legislation with all members of the Oireachtas. The ongoing exclusion of Survivors from supports proposed in this legislation as well as less than adequate provisions in the legislation are matters which I will continue to raise and lobby on.

We have also recently launched our website, and we will continue to provide key information on supports both in Ireland and abroad on this site.

As always, we can post any information to you to ensure that those without access to digital devices can receive timely and up to date factual information.

Finally, and as always, I want to thank all those who have been in touch with myself and the team and encourage you to continue to link with myself and Alissa Ruth and Rachel.



## Updates from the office of the Special Advocate

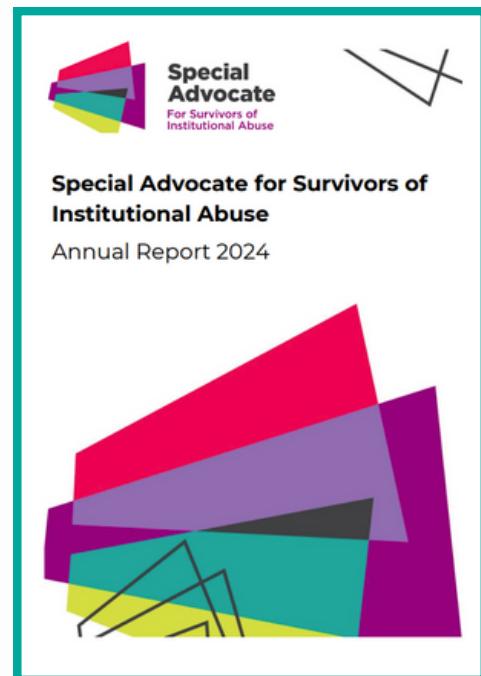
### 2024 Annual Report

In June, the Special Advocate published her 2024 Annual Report.

The report compiled the issues and insights that were shared with Patricia when meeting with Survivors and Affected Persons throughout 2024 and included Patricia's recommendations to Government in response to the issues raised with her.

The Annual Report was submitted to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality and was shared with the Special Advocate mailing list on 24 June 2025.

You can download or read a copy of the Annual Report on the website, by clicking on the link below. You can also request a hard copy from the office, please contact us by phone or by email to request a copy.



**Email:** [info@specialadvocate.ie](mailto:info@specialadvocate.ie)  
**Phone:** +353 (0)1 511 7660



**Read the Special Advocate Annual Report here**



**Listen to Patricia discuss the 2024 Annual Report on RTÉ**



## Annual Report

### Annual Report- Key Issues

The Annual Report discussed the key issues that have emerged following Patricia's engagements over the year.

Thank you to everyone who has been in contact with the Special Advocate office. The insight and experiences that were shared with the Special Advocate have directly informed the Annual Report and the work of the Special Advocate.

### Key Issues Raised With The Special Advocate



1

#### RECORDS

- **Urgent need** for full access to records and files



2

#### REDRESS

- It is not about the money
- A Human Rights-based approach is required to ensure **equal access to redress, supports and services** for all Survivors



3

#### SUPPORTS FOR SURVIVORS

- Housing Needs
- Healthcare and On-going Supports



4

#### MEMORIALISATION AND DIGNIFIED BURIAL

- National Centre for Research and Remembrance - national site of conscience honouring all Survivors
- Importance of local memorialisation
- Need for access to shared memorial fund for **all Survivors**



5

#### OTHER ISSUES

- Desire to share stories, community with other Survivors
- Survivors are **over consulted and under delivered**

### Special Advocate website

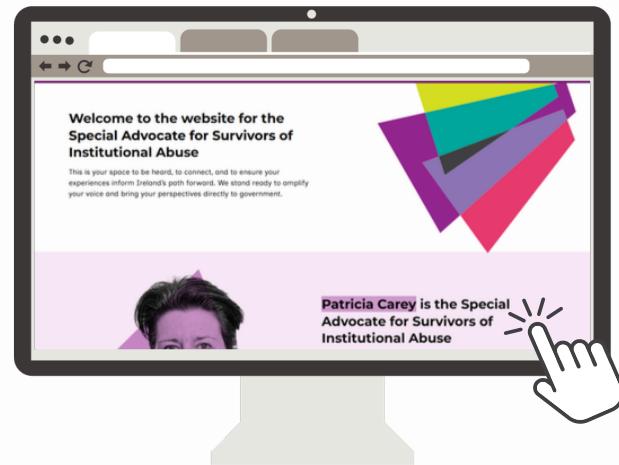


#### The Special Advocate for Survivors website is now **LIVE**

We are delighted that the Special Advocate website is now live.

The website will function as a space to share updates from the Special Advocate about her work, provide details on upcoming events and useful resources.

We want this to serve as an informative and easy-to-navigate space to locate up-to-date information for Survivors, their families and other stakeholders

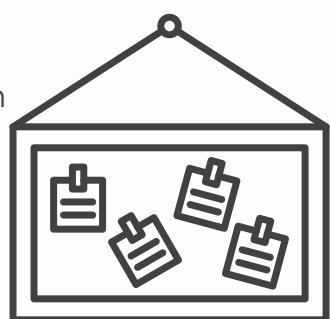


We always welcome ideas and feedback. Please get in touch with the Special Advocate office if there is content which you might like to see or would find helpful to include on the website.

### Community Events

The Special Advocate website also will provide up-to-date information about upcoming Survivor community engagement events and initiatives which are being organised by the Special Advocate and her team.

We have some exciting plans coming up later this year so keep an eye on the Events Page to find out more in coming weeks!



<https://www.specialadvocate.ie/projects-and-events/>

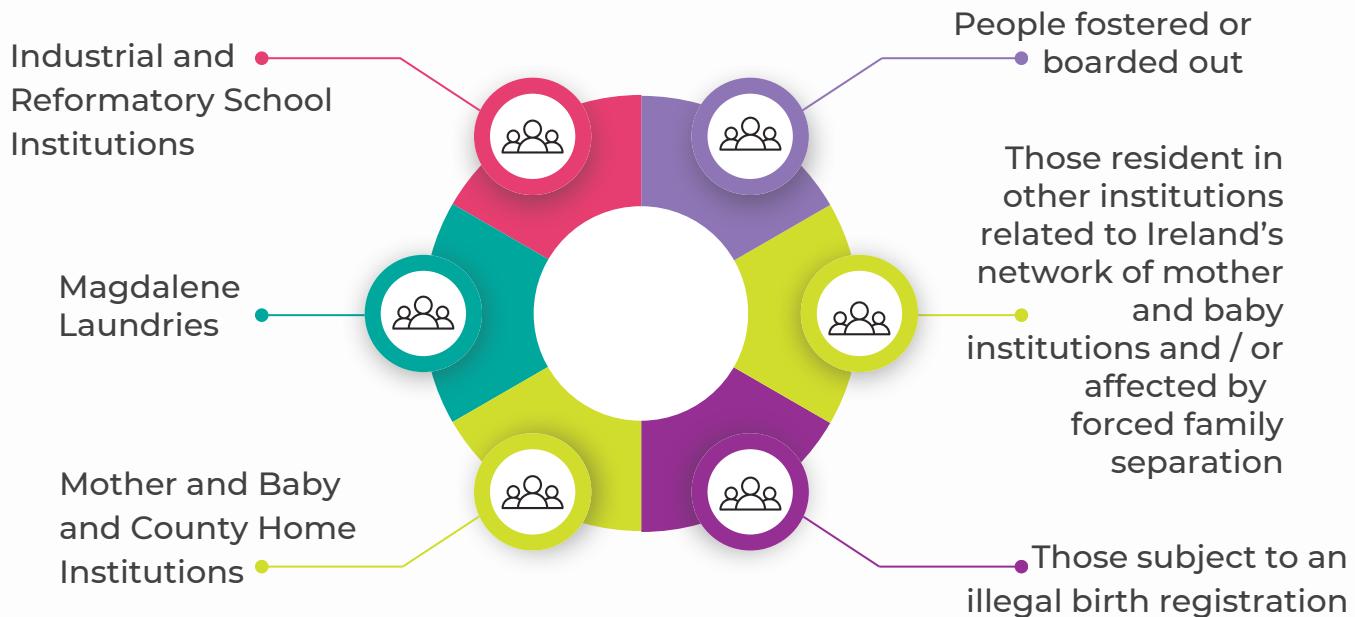


## About the Special Advocate

Below you will find some information about the role of the Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse.

As Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse, Patricia has a specific remit set out in the Department of Children, Disability, Equality's (DCDE) Action Plan for Survivors and Former Residents of Mother and Baby and County Home Institutions.

### REMIT OF THE SPECIAL ADVOCATE



### Priorities of the Special Advocate

-  Hearing From and Building Trust with Survivors and Affected Persons and groups, in Ireland and overseas.
-  Raising Collective Issues with government departments, officials and service providers who work with Survivors and Affected Persons.
-  Ensuring that the voices of Survivors and Affected Persons are central in key projects.
-  Reporting on the collective interests, experiences and issues of Survivors and Affected Persons.

## Overseas Updates

### Philomena's Law

It's estimated that around 13,000 Mother and Baby Home Survivors living in the UK. Currently applicants from the UK who receive means-tested benefits or supports for social care costs could lose their entitlement upon receipt of the payment and receiving the payment can also impact their future claims.

Philomena's Law aims to address this by excluding certain payments from calculations of a person's eligibility for means-tested benefits or financial support for social care.

'Philomena's Law' was first introduced to the House of Commons by the chair of the UK Labour Party's Irish Society, Liam Conlon MP.



**Listen To: Siobhán McSweeney on why we need Philomena's Law**



## Advisory Council Update

***“The response of Government must be directly informed by the voices of those most directly affected.”***

Since her appointment at the end of March 2024, Patricia has spent her time meeting and engaging with Survivors and Affected Persons, various Survivor groups, as well as with partner and support organisations in Ireland and overseas working directly with those affected by institutional abuse and forced family separation.

Now that the initial round of engagements with Survivors has concluded, the Special Advocate is establishing an Advisory Council.

We are confident that the Advisory Council will further ensure that the work of the Special Advocate is informed by the lived experience and needs of those most centrally affected.



The Special Advocate for Survivors will establish **7 pillars** as part of the Advisory Council supporting her work. Each pillar will represent a specific area of institutional abuse and forced family separation.

- **Pillar 1:** People who spent time in Industrial School and Reformatory Institutions
- **Pillar 2:** People who spent time in Magdalene Laundries
- **Pillar 3:** Mothers who spent time in Mother and Baby or County Home Institutions, or who experienced forced family separation
- **Pillar 4:** People who were born in or who spent time in Mother and Baby or County Home Institutions and related institutions, or who experienced forced family separation
- **Pillar 5:** People who were Boarded Out or Fostered
- **Pillar 6:** People whose births were illegally registered
- **Pillar 7:** Survivors and Affected Persons living overseas who spent time in an institution covered under the Special Advocate's remit, or who experienced forced family separation

More information about the Advisory Council and how to submit an Expression of Interest can be found in the Advisory Council Information Booklet and on our website



[www.specialadvocate.ie/about/advisory-council](http://www.specialadvocate.ie/about/advisory-council)



## Redress Schemes Updates

### Magdelene Scheme ex-gratia payment

The Magdelene Scheme ex-gratia payment is still open to receive applications and we encourage anyone who might be eligible for this redress scheme to find out more information and apply.

#### What is the Magdalene Commission Scheme?

The Magdalene Commission Scheme was set up because of The Magdalene Commission Report of Mr Justice John Quirke 2013. This report stated that an ex gratia scheme of a lump sum and weekly cash payments should be set up right away.

Women who applied to this redress scheme and were successful were given ex-gratia (non-taxed) payments based on the length of time they spent in the Magdelene Laundries.

#### How to apply

More information on the scheme and application forms can be found on the Government website or by contacting the officials operating the Magdalene Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme via the contact details below.

### Contact details for information on the Magdalene Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme

**Email:** [MRJScheme@equality.gov.ie](mailto:MRJScheme@equality.gov.ie)

**Phone:** 087 143 3235 / 087 165 6460

**Address:**



Magdalene Commission Scheme  
Restorative Justice Scheme,  
Department of Children, Disability, Equality  
(DCDE), Block 1, Miesian Plaza,  
50 – 58 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2, D02 XW14

## Redress Schemes Updates

### Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme

#### Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme

The Mother and Baby Institution payment scheme opened in March 2024 and is open for five years.

We encourage people living in Ireland and abroad to apply to this redress scheme.

##### How to apply

The Payment Scheme website includes information on eligibility, how to apply for the scheme, commonly asked questions and key steps in the payment process along with other areas of interest.

More information on the scheme and application forms can be found on the website or by contacting the payment scheme call centre.



Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme  
[www.paymentsscheme.ie](http://www.paymentsscheme.ie)



#### Contact details for the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme



**Postal Address:** PO Box 13668, Waterford, Ireland,  
**Phone:** Contact the Call Centre via +353 (0) 1 522 9992  
or  
Through the **online portal**, if you applied online.

**Email for general queries:** [info@paymentsscheme.ie](mailto:info@paymentsscheme.ie)

## Redress Schemes Updates

### Supports for Survivors of Residential Institutional Abuse Bill



**This Bill has now passed through the Dáil and the Seanad and was signed into law by the President in July 2025**

The main purpose of the Supports for Survivors of Residential Institutional Abuse Act 2025 is to provide for certain health and education supports for survivors of residential institutional abuse, and to provide for the dissolution of the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Board (commonly known as Caranua).

The Bill has now passed through the Dáil and the Seanad and was signed into law by President Higgins in July 2025

The Department of Education is the government department responsible for the operation of these supports. The Department will be setting up a dedicated website over coming weeks to share information about who is eligible for these supports and how to apply. Once this information is available we will share this on the Special Advocate website.



**Supports for Survivors of Residential Abuse Bill 2025**



## Memorialisation

### National Centre for Research and Remembrance

Engagement events for the National Centre for Research and Remembrance took place in Dublin, Galway, Cork, online and London. Attendees at these events heard about plans for the buildings on the National Centre site, work to date on the development of the archival repository, and examples of other survivor-led exhibition and memorialisation spaces. Attendees also had an opportunity to participate in discussions about what they would like to see contained in the National Centre.

Feedback was received from attendees in a number of ways and has been captured in a report prepared by the Special Advocate's Office, with detailed feedback- in survivor's own words- arranged in seven key themes.



The feedback report is available to view [here](#)

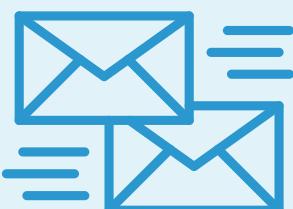


### Steering Group Commitments

The National Centre Steering Group has reviewed this report and committed to actions to address each theme which will help to inform the ongoing work on the National Centre, and future engagement. The Steering Group response document and a summary infographic are available to view at the link below and on the next page.



### Summary of Steering Group Commitments



For all updates relating to the National Centre for Research and Remembrance, you can join the mailing list by sending [nationalcentre@equality.ie](mailto:nationalcentre@equality.ie)



# NCRR Steering Group Commitments

## 1. Survivor involvement and decision-making in the development of the National Centre and its ongoing governance

- The Steering Group will be expanded to include four survivor representatives – an open call will issue shortly
- Engagement with survivors and affected persons, their families and advocates, will continue – led by the National Museum of Ireland and National Archives
- Survivors will have a central role in the Governance of the National Centre
- At least one survivor will be appointed to the National Archives Advisory Council



## 2. Survivor representation within the Museum element of the National Centre

- The vision for the National Centre is unequivocal in its commitment to honour all survivors equally. Survivor representation will be achieved through co-creation and design with survivors, as well as ongoing engagement
- The National Museum of Ireland will hold an open call for survivors to join panels that will inform the development of the museum element of the National Centre



## 3. Survivor lived experience and the importance of truth

- The National Museum of Ireland will finalise a process, in partnership with the Special Advocate for Survivors and supported by the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, to allow survivors and affected persons to share their lived experience – and/or physical items – with the National Museum, if they wish to do so



## 4. The use of the site by survivors once opened

- The Centre will be a trauma-informed environment with staff from the museum and archive trained appropriately, as it relates to their role. The Centre will also offer some dedicated times where it is only open to survivors



## 5. Records and access to them

- The repository in the National Centre will be part of the National Archives
- The privacy rights of survivors and their families in relation to their individual and personal records will be paramount. Broader records, as they relate to different institutions, will be more widely accessible
- The National Archives will design a programme to capture and gather survivor's personal statements or records as part of the institutional records of the National Archives or to deposit as private papers
- Work will continue on policy and legislation, as necessary, to allow for the transfer of records which currently fall out of scope of the National Archives Act 1986



## 6. Local memorialisation and engagement with those overseas

- There will be engagement with local museums and community spaces, like libraries, and travelling exhibitions to ensure people can access museum content from different locations
- The National Archives will lead a digitisation programme, which will assist those outside of Ireland in accessing their records
- The Steering Group will liaise with the Working Group on Local Memorialisation to ensure alignment between the National Centre, local memorialisation initiatives and the commemorative grant scheme
- The Commemorative Grant Scheme will be expanded to provide dedicated grants to support survivors in other parts of Ireland and overseas to visit the Centre



## 7. Feedback on the engagement events and future engagement

- All feedback received will be published on the National Centre website and will be taken on board in the planning of ongoing engagement with survivors and affected persons, their families and advocates
- The National Centre website will be regularly updated to ensure those interested in the project have access to the latest information





## Supports and Services

### Supports For Survivors Living In the UK



#### Fréa - Renewing Roots

Fréa Renewing Roots supports former residents of Ireland's institutions and those who were illegally adopted, who now live in the north of England. We offer free, confidential advice and advocacy to individuals affected by institutional incarceration and abuse. Our service is open to former residents and their family members.

#### We offer support with:

- Accessing birth and early life information and records
- Tracing service for people actively seeking a reunion, wanting to make contact, or looking to share or seek information on their birth family.
- The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme
- Financial provision to support with health care needs
- Counselling support
- Information on the National Centre for Research and Remembrance
- A monthly Arts for Wellbeing Group



## Supports and Sources

### Supports For Survivors Living In the UK

#### Fréa

We work alongside people to achieve the outcomes that they want to achieve – supporting people from the beginning of an application to its conclusion.

**“ My redress has hit my account today...thanks in no small way to the efforts of yourself, and your team ”**

- Quote from former resident

You can contact us if you were or know someone who was in an institution in Ireland on:

#### Contact Information

Patrick Rodgers 0044 7432 138 682

Ciaran Connolly 0044 7732 901 782

Natalie Hughes-Crean 0044 7849 835 841



**Website:** [www.frea.org.uk](http://www.frea.org.uk)

## Supports and Services



### Every minute, Samaritans in Ireland respond to a call for help.

We're here, day or night, for anyone who's struggling to cope, who needs someone to listen without judgement or pressure.

Samaritans is not only for the moment of crisis, we are taking action to prevent the crisis.

We give people ways to cope and the skills to be there for others. And we encourage, promote and celebrate those moments of connection between people that can save lives.

#### Contact Information

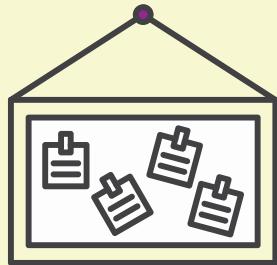
We offer listening and support to people and communities in times of need.

Volunteers are on duty 24 hours a day, seven days a week

**Freephone** helpline number 116 123  
**Email** [jo@samaritans.ie](mailto:jo@samaritans.ie).



## Bulletin Board



Information shared here has been provided to the Special Advocate Office, and we have chosen to share it here. Please **note that the Special Advocate is not involved in the organisation of these events**



### Sage Advocacy are hosting 'Information Sessions' for Survivors In Carlow this week

These are open to All Survivors and Affected Persons, You are invited to drop in at any time between **12.00pm and 4.00pm**.

A small team from Sage Advocacy will be available to give information including on the individual / one to one, issue-based support advocates offer.

**Date:** Thursday 7th August

**Time:** 12.00pm to 4.00pm

**Address:** Seven Oaks Hotel,  
Carlow Town  
Co. Carlow **IE R93 V4K5**



## Contact the Special Advocate office

### Keep In Touch:

We are committed to ensuring the collective voices of Survivors and Affected People are heard.

We will endeavour to assist in any way that we can, and where possible, guide & signpost you to the information and services you are looking for.

### You can contact the Special Advocate team in different ways:

**Email:** [info@specialadvocate.ie](mailto:info@specialadvocate.ie)

**Phone:** +353 (0)1 511 7660

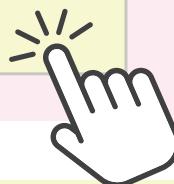
**Address:** Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse, First Floor, Holbrook House, Holles Street, Dublin 2, D02 EY84, Ireland



### Visit the Special Advocate's Website



**Visit: [www.specialadvocate.ie](http://www.specialadvocate.ie)**



**If you no longer wish to receive communications from the Special Advocate office, please email [info@specialadvocate.ie](mailto:info@specialadvocate.ie) and you will be removed from our mailing list.**