



**Special  
Advocate**  
For Survivors of  
Institutional Abuse

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**In response to the launch today of the first Annual Report for the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme by Minister Foley, Special Advocate for Survivors Patricia Carey raises concern at the poor take up of Mother and Baby Institutions redress scheme and calls it exclusionary, poorly advertised, and re-traumatising for many applicants. With less than 10% of the redress budget spent after nearly 2 years of the scheme being open, there is an urgent need for Government to make every possible effort to ensure that no Survivor misses out on their redress.**

*“Trying to complete the application online was a minefield. I never wanted to revisit that part of my life with my family, but this process took that choice away from me as I needed help at every stage. Shame on them for making the application so difficult and damaging” - **Quote from Survivor***

*“My journey has been fraught with difficulty, and this has not been helped in the slightest by this cold and callous Redress Scheme” - **Quote from Survivor***

*“When I first heard the State Apology, I believed it was sincere and that my pain was finally acknowledged. But when I learned I was excluded from the scheme, it felt like the rug was pulled out from under me. Do policymakers realise the extra hurt they’ve caused? I had tried to move on, but now I’m reliving the trauma and feeling worthless and forgotten by the Irish state” - **Quote from Survivor***

Patricia Carey rejects that the Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme is achieving its goal of speedy, easy and trauma-informed access to redress for Survivors and Affected Persons.

The Special Advocate welcomes those who have successfully received redress in the first year of this scheme and strongly encourages all who are eligible to apply.

However, a litany of complaints have been received by the Special Advocate office from Survivors about the many failures of the redress scheme since its launch in March 2024.

The Special Advocate said:

*“Over the last 20 months my office has received daily calls and emails from Survivors unhappy with the scheme, many of whom have shared the negative impact that engagement with the scheme has had on their lives and are looking for support. It is incumbent on the Minister to address these myriad issues in order to ensure all Survivors receive the redress they are entitled to.*



*As we approach the end of year two of a five year scheme, there is a need for urgent improvements to the operation and promotion of the scheme and an end to all exclusions”*

Concerns and Issues raised by Survivors and Affected Persons with the Special Advocate office include:

- **Ongoing operational issues with the Payment Scheme**
- **Issues around Records of time spent in Institutions**
- **An inconsistent trauma-informed care approach across the scheme**
- **Poor Promotion and Advertising of the Scheme**
- **Exclusions from the Redress Scheme causing ongoing hurt and pain to Survivors**

**With Revised Estimates for the Payment Scheme discussed at the Oireachtas Children’s Committee showing an underspend of over €68.5 million in 2025, the Special Advocate calls for the expansion of the redress scheme to include all those excluded from redress. She has also continued her call for those Boarded Out to be included in redress.**

## **ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

In her first Annual Report published in June 2025 the Special Advocate outlined the key issues raised with her by Survivors and Affected Persons and their families, including the extensive issues raised in relation to the Mother and Baby Institutions Payments Scheme ([Link: Annual Report - Special Advocate](#))

### **Persistent Operational Issues with the Payment Scheme**

*“I can’t help but feel that the system is actually being operated ... with little account taken of the trauma that I and other survivors have already gone through in our lives” - **Quote from Survivor***

*“The portal has been difficult to navigate, prompting requests for additional proof of residence, which we’ve had trouble uploading, hence we’ve had to send by mail instead (more delay).” - **Quote from Survivor***

- The Special Advocate office has received ongoing feedback on the inconsistent level of service and poor follow-up provided by scheme operators and the outsourced Call Centre, which is causing applicants unnecessary stress and worry.
- Survivors and those supporting Survivors with their applications have reported difficulties with applying to the scheme; difficulties navigating the portal, delays with the application progress, reviews and appeals and with payment delays.

- The Special Advocate office hears regular complaints about long waiting times, sometimes up to one year for completion of the redress application, as well as unnecessary administrative barriers built into the application process.
- The ongoing lack of practical supports and resources for people requiring assistance with completing and progressing their applications is regularly highlighted and has been raised directly with the Mother and Baby Institutions Payments Scheme Executive Office
- Further difficulties for overseas applicants have also been highlighted, who often experience additional administrative barriers to receiving their redress
- Lack of Plain English & Easy Read translations of the website, information booklet, application form and other resources. Ongoing feedback received that many Survivors and those supporting them find the language and terminology used confusing and difficult to understand.
- Digital poverty and difficulties for many Survivors applying for the redress scheme, navigating the portal, and uploading necessary documents continues to be raised as a serious issue for applicants
- The lack of a free phone number to contact the call centre as well as a free post option has also been raised as an unnecessary barrier for applicants.

The Special Advocate notes the regular meetings and ongoing engagement with the Payment Scheme Executive Office since March 2024. The extensive feedback from Survivors and the issues shared have been repeatedly raised in these meetings. The Special Advocate notes some positive improvements to the running of the scheme that have been made; however the implementation of other necessary changes has been consistently slow.

### **Exclusions from the Redress scheme causing ongoing hurt to Survivors**

*“The idea that the redress scheme arbitrarily dictates who gets compensation due to days spent in the institution seems cruel, unfair and discriminatory.” – Quote from Survivor*

*“There are no reasons or explanations for excluding individuals who spent less than six months in an institution before being forcibly removed from our mothers. This policy implies that the earliest weeks of life hold no significance, an assumption that is completely invalid. Those first weeks are critical for any child’s development and dismissing them ignores the reality of their impact.” – Quote from Survivor*

*“It is not beyond the Government’s remit to rectify the injustice of the current redress plan... Do not let boarded out children become the forgotten children.” – Quote from Survivor*

- Exclusion from Redress for those children who spent less than 6 months, the exclusion of many institutions including Temple Hill, Westbank Orphanage and a range of other places where children were separated from their families.



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- Work Related Payment is currently only provided for County Home Institutions as well as two of the Mother and Baby Home Institutions leaving many survivors excluded, with no recognition for the work they carried out.
- Exclusion of those Boarded Out

### **Records of time spent in institutions**

*“I was told “your dates are wrong; you’ll need to get a solicitor to confirm your dates”. This application undermined everything I thought I knew about myself” - **Quote from Survivor***

- The Special Advocate has received ongoing feedback from Survivors that the records, and information provided by Survivors as part of the redress application, have been questioned by staff operating the scheme. Ongoing disputes around dates can cause immense hurt and upset.
- The Special Advocate is concerned about the recent changes made to the Concluding Years for Institutions (namely the inclusion in November 2025 of an additional 103 years across 13 institutions) and the implication that records being used in determining Survivor applications to redress have not all been made available to the Department in order to make decisions.

### **Lack of a Trauma-Informed Care approach**

- The Special Advocate has received ongoing feedback from Survivors of the clear lack of a consistent and fully embedded trauma-informed care approach across the application process, as well as the communications with the Call Centre staff.
- Use of hurtful language and terminology such as ‘award’, ‘relevant person’, ‘relevant institution’, ‘benefits’
- The Special Advocate for Survivors reported that eligibility rules have “enforced a hierarchy of suffering according to arbitrary criteria,” causing anger and re-traumatisation among survivors excluded from the scheme.

### **Poor Advertising of the Scheme to date**

*“I thought I knew about what was out there, and I keep in touch with support services, but I hadn’t heard of the scheme until I heard your interview on the radio one day, just by chance” – **Quote from Survivor***

- The Special Advocate is very concerned with the poor take up of the scheme of the scheme – in Ireland and overseas.
- The Government must make every possible effort, in terms of targeted and logical engagement and promotion efforts and in accordance with what will best reach Survivors, to ensure that no one misses out on their redress.



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## Recommendations

The Special Advocate continues to call for:

- **a renewed and extended advertising of the Redress scheme in Ireland and overseas to ensure all those eligible are aware of redress and can apply on time.**
- **Additional practical supports with completing applications**, for those using print applications and using the online portal.
- **Changes to the Eligibility Criteria of the Redress Scheme.** The Special Advocate calls on the Minister **to add all Mother and Baby institutions and other settings**, public, private and religious, which are currently excluded from the Redress Scheme where children were born and separated from their families. She also calls for the extension of redress for those people who have been excluded due to the **under 6 month rule affecting children born in a mother and baby institution.**
- She has also repeatedly called for **immediate inclusion of all those Boarded Out** into this Redress scheme.

**ENDS**



### **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 Special Advocate is operationally independent of Government.

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.

### **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.

