

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR
RESEARCH AND
REMEMBRANCE
Feedback from
Engagement Events

National Centre engagement events – background and overview

In October and November 2024 and February 2025, engagement events on the National Centre for Research and Remembrance (National Centre) were held in Dublin, Galway, Cork, London and online. These events were held so that survivors and affected people, their families and advocates, could hear about and feed back on the work of the National Museum and National Archives in relation to the National Centre.

The events delivered on one of the Steering Group’s key commitments arising from the initial, written, consultation on the National Centre, which took place in 2023.

The dates and attendance for each of the events was as follows:

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|--------|------------------|---------------------------------|
| Dublin | 22 October 2024 | Registered: 116 Attended: 81 |
| Galway | 14 November 2024 | Registered: 39 Attended: 26 |
| Cork | 19 November 2024 | Registered: 82 Attended: 33 |
| Online | 19 February 2025 | Registered: 63 Attended: 58 |
| London | 25 February 2025 | Registered: 100 Attended: 67 |

The events were chaired by the Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse. Representatives from the following organisations attended the events and presented some background and context on their respective work areas, relating to the National Centre:

- The National Museum of Ireland
- The National Archives of Ireland
- The Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth (DCEDIY)
- The Office of Public Works (OPW)

The HSE National Counselling Service had an information table at the Dublin event to provide information on the dedicated counselling service available to survivors and former residents of institutions. Sage Advocacy attended the three engagement events in Ireland to share information about the individual advocacy services that they provide for survivors and affected people.

The main aim of the events was to hear from those in attendance, and to take their feedback on board as the project moves forward into the construction phase.

Methods for collecting feedback

The following methods for collecting feedback from attendees were incorporated into the events.

- **Questions and Answers (Q&A) sessions:** At the first Dublin event, dedicated Q&A slots were arranged after each presentation to allow opportunities for attendees to put questions to the speakers. Feedback received after the event from attendees was that this format limited opportunities for feedback from the widest range of attendees?
- **Roundtable discussions:** Following the feedback from the Dublin event, the structure of the event was amended to provide for round table discussions to follow an overall presentation. This provided attendees with an opportunity to talk directly to representatives of the Museum, Archives DCEDIY and the OPW and to share questions, ideas and concerns with them.
- **Written feedback cards:** Feedback cards were provided on tables so that attendees could provide written feedback on any aspect of the National Centre project. These were then collected and the feedback is included in this report.
- **Information stands and direct feedback:** Information tables with representatives from all of the organisations were available for attendees to speak to before and after each event. Attendees were also welcome to share direct, verbal feedback with any of the teams throughout the events.
- **Graphic recordings:** A graphic recorder attended each in-person engagement event to capture key themes, direct feedback from attendees and statements from the sessions. Graphic recording is the live capture of ideas in a visual way. Graphic recording can serve to further assist in helping people feel heard, and see their feedback and experiences represented visually. This is especially important for people who have literacy issues, or do not feel comfortable sharing their story through written feedback or in a large group.
- **Follow-up contact:** Contact details for all of the organisations were shared at the events, so attendees could engage with these organisations on any further feedback or queries after the event.

All feedback collected through the various channels is contained below. The feedback has been arranged into overall themes, however it is important to note that no changes have been made to any of the wording, so feedback is transcribed in its original form.

The main themes identified were as follows:

- Survivor involvement and decision-making in the development of the National Centre and its ongoing governance
- Survivor representation within the Museum element of the National Centre
- Survivor lived experience and the importance of truth
- The use of the site by survivors once opened
- Records and access to them
- Local memorialisation and engagement with those overseas
- Feedback on the engagement events and future engagement

There were also some general comments about sustainability, funding, and the other elements of the National Centre site – for example social housing and education, which are captured under ‘Other general comments’ below.

In addition, the graphic recording from each of the events is also included at the end of this report.

Feedback shared at the National Centre engagement events

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

- Survivors should be equal partners in this project
- Ensure Survivors are at the centre of decisions/ planning/ design
- The methodology of the approach to be co-designed, co-created and co-produced with Survivor input at every level of implementation.
- Use co-production as a methodology – so co-creation and input in implementation directly for Survivors. Equal input means paying people for their time and co-production. Transport should be covered for this. Not just collaboration – equal input is needed.
- There are rich opportunities for Survivors/ Affected Persons to engage on the design of the site (noting planning permissions already been sought) — eg features on the stairs, including Survivor words / poetry etc; art and creative design including textiles and metal work, respecting the creative skills of survivors and affected persons; involvement in design of planting in memorial garden in some capacity?
- Seeking commitment that there will be further engagement on key elements of the project – eg memorial garden, art works at the NCRR
- People who were actually involved need to be the ones inputting into this – truth is crucial and not paraphrasing/generalising.
- ‘Survivor led’ emphasis yet at the end of the OPW presentation the final project was shown with all decisions made
- Current framing of NCRR site presentation is giving the appearance that project is signed off on – missing opportunities to highlight and engage with Survivors on where and how their input can be sought in the development of the site
- ‘Nothing About Us Without Us’ – meaningless in reality.
- Sick of hearing ‘nothing about us without us’
- Upsetting to see NCRR videos projects claim this is a Survivor-led / Survivor-centred project when the reality is completely different.
- Trust needs to be built with Survivors & Affected People
- Respect needs to be shown to the people whose lived experience will be represented at the NCRR, during the planning and development of the site

- Civil Servants and the people in power have degraded and disrespected us for years – the lack of real engagement with Survivors is continuing this
- The only way that this can work, if there is actually a commitment from government for this process to be, "Survivor led", is that 50% of the Steering Committee are actually institutional Survivors. Anything less would just be window dressing and I for one, would be very upset if what we end up with is some sort of multi-functional, cross institutional tasteless tat, that has no meaning for Survivors
- One pressing concern is the absence of Survivors on the Steering Committee and also that of the working groups established by government officials. This is certainly an extraordinary oversight that should be corrected as soon as possible. Active involvement of Survivors is crucial for ensuring inclusivity in any initiative, and their voices must be central to the design, implementation, oversight, and decision-making of all government-led efforts.
- Need for Survivor Representation in steering group and processes
- What commitments will be made in relation to ensuring Survivor representation as part of the NCRR project. Survivors and Affected Persons need to be centre in co-creation, collaboration, decision-making & governance as part of this project.
- Survivors do not have a fair representation on the Steering Committee. The answer may be sub-committees with broader representation; however, this would likely be another top-heavy structure, functional on paper only.
- Needs to be more Survivor representatives
- Governance needs Survivor representation and Survivors and affected people should participate in decision making
- I was very disappointed with your conference in Dublin. I was taken aback when I realised that there was no Survivors involved in any of your planning stages for this centre for research and remembrance. What are you going to do about this shortfall?
After all you keep promoting that Survivors are at the centre of this project, how so none of the Survivors are not on any of the committees.
- Needs to be an actual co-design approach with Survivors
- Survivors need to be front and centre in shaping the NCRR, especially the memorial centre, garden, museum and reading room for looking at personal records
- Consider Advisory Circles/ Groups of Survivors to engage with on different aspects of the NCRR – eg the memorial garden, art works in the NCRR
- Survivors are a diverse group, and many are working in fields relevant to the work of the centre and could provide invaluable guidance and insight into the NCRR project
- Consider hiring Survivors as subject matter experts/ consultants
- Support participation – total integration of all the institutions involved, keep family members and individuals involved – conversations
- Can there be a Working Group of Survivors to ensure fair representation in decision-making

- Where has been the input from Survivors in the planning/ plans for the NCRR to date – where is this evidenced?
- Despite repeated claims that the NCRR is a ‘Survivor-led’ initiative, it was abundantly clear today that this process has been operating without the direct input of affected people. Several of us asked repeatedly for this question to be addressed but each time it was ignored.
- In reference to the open consultation with Survivors discussed at the event – was this the online survey only? The outcome of the online survey was involvement in decision-making.
- How were Survivors involved in the decisions & plans of OPW for NCRR?
- The OPW has already designed the space. There has been no Survivor input (apart from an online survey) – that is not co-production.
- Design of the NCRR site also needs to take a trauma-informed care approach. There is lots of research in this area already, and lots of expertise, but it is not being used.
- Opening statement that, "The government has decided..." sums up this project’s approach to Survivor engagement
- There’s a lack of awareness amongst UK survivors and affected people about schemes and programmes – please try to increase awareness about the NCRR
- More outreach and engagement needed with overseas Survivors, so they feel part of this important project – via embassies, Irish communities, cultural groups, sports clubs overseas

Ensure survivors are at the centre of all decisions made:

- Listen!
- By taking a vote of all Survivors in the room

Supporting participation and collaboration:

- By taking on board all we say – please listen to us
- Survivors and Affected Persons need to be listened to, believed and not judged

Theme 2: Survivor representation within the Museum element of the National Centre

- Will the scope and remit of the National Centre include Adoption?
- NCRR should not just consider this history through an Institutional lens - should also include forced family separation; boarded out, fostered out, illegally trafficked
- Emphasise the network of institutions, rotating exhibitions focusing on institutions
- Capture the numbers involved, compare our society to others show that Ireland was up there with the worst of countries for the incarceration of their people
- Psychiatric hospitals need to be included, in museum and records

- Maternity hospitals need to be included, in museum and records
- What will the legacy be for the NCRR?
- The focus remains on institutions and not systems, including the adoption system.
- I'm extremely confused by the floor plan for the Archive & Museum within the proposed Centre. How are all 3 Institutions going to be equally represented within the Museum? All 3 Institution displays need to be completely separate & none of the Institution displays can be adjacent to each other. There must be a clear 'separation' between all 3.
- In order to speak to all Survivors experiences ,the Museum must also allocate an equal amount of floor space to each Institution.
- Real concern that the memorial garden should not be an enclosed or confined space
- Survivors want to be involved and provide input into the design of the garden as this will be an important space for Survivors visiting the National Centre
- More information please on the OPW plans for engaging with Survivors on artwork / projects at the NCRR site – can this be shared/ added to the NCRR website?
- Education and artwork- future generations
- Involve Survivor artists. Art is hugely important .
- NCRR should have Centrality of people lived experiences, their oral history, & the power of art/ visual art when words fail
- Collaborative/ co-create artistic pieces
- Transformational art- sculptures/ photos
- Power of Art and Visual art to convey experiences – co-creation
- Art can be healing
- Use best practices from other countries
- Engage with Survivor Artists and Artists who specialise in genuine co-creation
- Welcome more information for OPW art project and how this will be organized/ timelines / how to input ideas etc.
- I would like to propose a statue within the building of a mother and child being separated that acknowledges both parties.
- It is critically important that no Survivors are excluded, or institutions left out, forgotten or excluded. This needs to be thoroughly and forensically reviewed.
- Ensure no Survivors excluded – no institutions forgotten. Long history of this in Ireland.
- Loss of heritage and identity
- National Centre must represent the experiences of all affected people

- Important that NCRR honours Survivors equally
- Trafficked children across international children boundaries need to be remembered
- No hierarchy of survivors at the NCRR – respect for all
- Please make sure everyone’s story is told, and no one is left behind – including those outside institutions e.g. boarded out, trafficked overseas, illegal birth registrations etc.
- I noted at the Engagement Event in Cork that it was stated that Adoptees & Boarded/Fostered out lived experiences would be incorporated into the Institutions displays. This is akin to the Commission Reports attitude towards both groups of survivors, 'incorporating' doesn't go far enough to represent the 2 groups trauma. How exactly will our lived experiences be represented?
- Display areas for both Adoptees & Boarded/Fostered out should be included in Building A & be separate from the Institutions Displays including audio recordings of their lived experiences.
- The emphasis on women’s stories, which although significant, has been told to the detriment of other experiences. This wasn’t intended as a comment on a hierarchy of suffering, but more to emphasise the need to include and acknowledge the stories of other survivors, particularly boys hired out from industrial schools and the impact on children who lost parents for various reasons and whose lives were destroyed as a result.
- Some concern at the experiences of different institutional abuse Survivors/ People Affected being represented together in same NCRR site - how will this be done in a fair and balanced manner?
- I have no problem with Sean McDermott Street location for Magdalene Laundry Survivors given the history of the site but not for Industrial Schools Survivors
- Important not to forget those whose experience is not wholly related to time in an institution – eg Boarded out / Fostered out. Need to focus and highlight systems, not just the institutions themselves
- It is really important to include ‘related institutions’ and not just those named – i.e. Mother and Baby Institutions, Industrial Schools etc.
- Also important to include information on all outcomes and pathways – i.e. boarded out, fostered out, adopted, adopted overseas etc.
- Where and how will the stories of those who went to these mother/baby homes for sanctuary be represented? there were many women there when I was there that went voluntarily for sanctuary - sex workers, women escaping domestic violence, women hiding from their (high) society 'judgements'
- Need to engage with people who have been ‘othered’ & underrepresented in consultations in the past in order to better understand their specific/ differing/ unique experiences of Institutional Abuse – for example people with disabilities, people of different races and their experiences, people from the Traveller & Roma community.

- Interest by advocates on behalf of disabled survivors about depositing a collection in the NCRR
- Mixed race children and treatment of the mothers of mixed-race children needs to be a part of the NCRR
- Forced labour should be included – panels about boarding out
- What is the current proposal for representing each of the 3 types of Institutions, how will they be 'individually' represented in the permanent museum?
- Represent the Borstals – the segregation room and punishment. How children were encouraged to smoke and given cigarettes as a way of controlling them.

Theme 3: Survivor lived experience and the importance of truth

- Role of society and acknowledging the role of shame, deceit and stigma needs to be captured
- Ensure the NCRR site does Justice to people's history, take them out of the shadows, recognition
- Architecture of Containment needs to be a central element of the NCRR story
- Please start efforts in collecting Survivor and community stories for the NCRR as soon as possible, while people are alive and remember these important stories & experiences
- Survivors would welcome opportunity to develop their own record of their experience & deposit at the NCRR, as a correction to the 'official' record of the State.
- Can there be a private dedicated space at the NCRR for recording video/audio testimonies (or some such medium) to record lived experiences and stories from Survivors – maybe this is being considered for the museum?
- Support for Survivors to tell our own story at the NCRR
- Survivors experience stands with those of 'official' records – equal value & respect
- The history is so important and cannot be forgotten. It needs to be unfiltered, no matter how poignant and raw.
- No false narratives
- I'm very focused on making sure the names of those who died in Ireland's institutions don't die with them. I'm wondering if there are any plans to encompass the names of those who died in the institutions around Ireland to be factored into the final NCRR? Like, a looping slideshow? A screen with a credits-esque scrolling list of names? A computer to search a database of names? Knowing the names would need to be a fundamental part of the NCRR and I'd like to know what precisely is going to be done to try to do this.
- A documented history of the process from the beginning of when Adoption was recognised by the state must be part of the NCRR. The glaring failures of the process, the religious control over the application to adopt, the process itself, the financial dealings. & the complete lack of monitoring post adoption.

- A documented history of the Boarded/Fostered out system must also be included.
- The illegal adoption practices in Ireland—ranging from the forced separation of children from their families to the falsification of birth records—represent a dark chapter in the country’s history. These practices affected thousands of children and their birth families, many of whom still suffer the emotional and psychological consequences today. Our group firmly believes that the painful experiences of those impacted must not be forgotten. It is crucial that we continue to raise awareness, support those seeking justice, and ensure that this chapter of Irish history is acknowledged and remembered by all.
- The idea of the NCRR feels alien to my experience
- The need to include the story of survivor advocates in the memorialisation.
- Show how slow it has been to try and get acknowledgement and ‘small’ wins.
- Show Survivor resilience, agency, empowerment.
- The National Centre should depict trauma that people went through. The activism and advocacy work that survivors have had to do since the commission.
- Honour the commitment to involvement, keep it going.
- There is a need to include information on those who have fought, and continue to fight, for justice and those involved in activism in this area.
- Intergenerational impact of this trauma needs to be included
- There is real intergenerational trauma, and this must be recognised.
- The intergenerational aspect of this history can sometimes be forgotten – but it had intergenerational impact. Family separation. There are a lot of nuances as to how people have been affected.
- The false promises and empty apologies from politicians.
- The truth has come out very slowly, it’s been ‘dragged out of them’ – acknowledge that! don’t want any TD’s or others crowing about ‘how great’ they are for getting this done.
- Acknowledging the role of society in this, and the shame that came with it for Survivors
- NCRR needs to illustrate Industry and their involvement in Institutional Abuse; including through records and research
- Important that the Government and church acknowledge what happened in these institutions.
- We should also represent society’s role in this – localising memorialisation and remembrance work to local communities can help communities come to terms with how complicated society was. Society, state, church all involved in this.
- The role of society in enforcing shame and stigma needs to also be recognised.

- Name and shame who committed the abuse e.g pharmaceutical companies who paid the nuns to undertake vaccine trials - What about pharmaceutical records? Ensure they are accountable for their actions e.g Tusla. UCC colluded with pharmaceutical companies with regard to vaccine trials, no records held by UCC.
- The need for truth telling to ensure that the events of the past are not repeated which is a concern which is being addressed by the Centre.
- Important to show the history of the NCRR site, and the work of Survivors & supporters, in securing this site for the NCRR
- Adopting an all-island approach to memorialisation is critical - how we can advance that conversation? It may be worthwhile for the North/South Council to discuss the implementation of this principle moving forward.
- Trafficking across border between Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland needs to be understood and displayed in the NCRR.
- The overseas experience of Survivors needs to be included
- Need to be conscious that the institutions impacted people around the island of Ireland and the world
- The survivors in the UK have a different perspective and have had a different experience to survivors in Ireland. This must be reflected in the memorialisation.
- We need to represent both the history and the ongoing impact of the institutions & abuse
- Youth of the people should be acknowledged – many were just children
- People want to give the full truth to museum – including oral histories
- Represent the impact of poor access to education and of societal attitudes. People don't have access to basic needs – health, housing, funeral expenses. They missed out on so much education and opportunity. This needs to be represented.
- Highlight the networks of trust, acknowledgment of containment- nurses, nuns, scale, time to justice
- Perpetrators should be “named and shamed”
- Be careful there's not overload – compassion fatigue.
- We need to be inclusive of lived experience – oral histories, art, and local memorials are a powerful way to do this.
- The Witness Blanket was a good way to include multiple survivor voices. There is also an artwork of survivor handprints by the artist Dr Michael Irving in Canada that does this. The artwork is a living memorial – art can be a powerful way of doing this.
- We should represent the depth of cover up and deceit at all stages of this history right up to the present day.
- This story is evolving so our interpretation of it needs to be flexible and evolve too.

- We should keep all the graffiti and markings in Sean McDermott Street, some made by survivors and residents during their time there – the story of the people in the building. Keep all the objects.
- How is the NCRR proposing to portray 'The Apology' for Institutional abuses'?
- Have international experts been consulted on how best to deliver the NCRR?
- An interactive museum, with audio recordings, by a narrator, of the survivor's testimonies. It is paramount that the testimonies are 'heard' by the visitors to truly understand the raw emotions. The listener will have a better understanding of each testimony & will also feel a connection to each & every testimony they choose to interact with. Each audible recording is partitioned & has visual images on a small screen while the recording is playing. An excellent example of this type of a Centre is 'The Blasket Heritage Centre', you are immediately drawn into the Blasket Islanders lives when you listen to their individual stories. It is a phenomenal way to educate the visitor.
- Consideration for visiting the site, that exhibits that include religious iconography can be upsetting e.g. the cross over gate.
- In the design and conservation of the Convent building – the facade is very important, as is the entrance. It might be hard for some people to come in the entrance – they may break down when they see it.
- Can the NCRR website include more information on objects and what the museum is looking for, and how these objects might be treated?
- Ordinary items as part of NCRR collection – Irons/Shoemaker tools/ Bakers Tools/ Bags of Coal.
- Represent what was given to children when they left – a brown paper bag with two sets of socks, clothing – it was like a uniform.
- There should be photos of people when they were young and in the institutions and photos of them now – where they are now.
- The building needs to be reflective of how it was originally- long corridors, the rows of sinks – the smell of cleaning. The freemason tiles were red and black and should be kept
- It's important to depict the cruelty a child experienced when entering the schools – learning how to make starch, soap, etc. And representing different trades and types of work:
 - Baking
 - Cleaning the building
 - Cleaning shoes
 - Making shoes
 - Work in kitchens
- This work was often dangerous with high risk of injury. There was no payment for this work.
- Children were on their hands and knees using toxic chemicals with nuns standing over them. This should be represented.
- Some further ideas about what to collect/represent:
 - Rows of baker's loaf tins
 - Mending bicycles

- Infirmary – iodine, tenapads
- Kitchens – vats larger than a table, 2 boilers, dangerous
- Only having religion classes – no other education
- Some institutions are associated with different kinds of production. Eg Goldenbridge is rosary beads. Balmess (?) – boys labour. In the Good Shephard's in Cork there's Little Nellie's grave – cleaned headstones with wire brushes.
- There's the Industrial Memories Project – listen to that for objects.
- Listening stations could allow for interactive oral histories.
- Listening station could also play associated music for example there was a song sung to get people to sleep at night – everyone sung the Elizabethan Lagoon(?) together – a song written in 1951. Two separate survivors at the table I was facilitating began to hum this song when it was mentioned.
- A survivor shared a story about food – apples were treats. In the schools they were fed these “red things” as a treat too, but he didn't know what it was until he was boarded out – when he was fed the food and learned it's called beetroot.
- Represent how institutions changed over time, and what has changed since they closed. How has society changed? What has gotten better and worse? What brought about the closure of the institutions, the reckoning with family separation? There is hope in what brought about change.
- An oral history - crucial for remembering the experiences of illegal adoptees and their birth mothers, ensuring these personal stories are preserved and publicly acknowledged. adoptees and birth mothers have been silenced for too long, and how this project aims to bring their stories and experiences to the forefront. Recording and archiving personal testimonies from adoptees will preserve their experiences and raise public awareness.
- We could collaborate with Frea on their oral history project. In Frea's experience, not everyone wants their own voice recorded in oral history. There could be the option for actors to record the oral histories from a transcript. Frea have created a “rolling agreement” for the use and access of oral histories to encourage continued consent.
- Written stories and personal testimonies from those affected
- Photographs and historical records documenting the lived experiences of illegally adopted individuals and their families.
- Artwork and poetry also from those affected.
- The language and words we're using are important – there are no agreed terms and NCRR need to make sure everyone feels represented.
- Need for sensitivity around language and terms used across the NCRR
- At present we are way down the list when it comes to survivors. When mentioned, the narrative is 'those affected'. We often feel like an afterthought, left to navigate a system that disregarded our rights and our very existence. However, we are not just the product of a broken system—we are the product of the mothers who were coerced, shamed, and forced to give up their children. We would therefore request that the wording be changed and that we are known as 'illegal adoptees' rather than those 'affected'.

- Terminology and how people are described in records is of interest to Survivors and was the topic of discussion at NCRR engagement events.
- Name and shame, especially the Pharma companies
- Stories from all sides- women, children, nurses, staff working in the laundries

Objects and stories survivors would like to see in the NCRR:

- Conversations, conversations, conversations
- Based on survivors wishes
- 'props' from the laundry to show what the work was
- UCC/ collaboration with Bessborough
- Everything!!
- Working in the ironing and washrooms

Theme 4: The use of the site by survivors once opened

- Sensitive design of the building, museum and archive space (especially for areas where Survivors might read their records) and garden for accessibility, privacy and natural light is important.
- Will there be creative spaces at the NCRR where Survivors can engage with art projects?
- Will there be any weighting for Survivors on the housing list – for example if there are Survivors living in the local area?
- Can Survivors use the Education Facility
- Will there be any weighting for Survivors to access education/ courses being run in the Education facility at the site?
- Will there be any employment opportunities for Survivors at the site? There are many Survivors working in relevant areas that could be engaged with as part of the development, and eventual operation, of the site (artists, writers, speakers, guides etc)
- The need for emotional and practical supports to be onsite in the NCRR, including information on government supports.
- Will there be Survivor only days in the NCRR?
- How will the NCRR site work with public tours/ schools' tours etc? Will this be sensitively managed?
- Can Survivor groups use the space for events / community meetings / arrange tours, readings etc?
- We could play films in the museum – have community screenings. Small Things Like These for example

- Simple community engagement ideas that are meaningful and healing - art / films/ poetry/food
- Community building of Survivors e.g.: Survivors only access days
- Complimentary Survivor events alongside the museum and archive would be welcome
- The need for guidance in the NCRR for visitors/Survivors to navigate both the archive and museum.
- Tracing is an important element for the NCRR – rebuilding of severed connections.
- Survivors can find and connect with old/ lost friends from institutions – this would be very welcome
- Personal support, access, general supports for Survivors
- Practical support and information – counselling
- Support to get to the National Center – local transport, parking etc
- Support while there- quiet spaces/ counselling/archive support
- Support to tell our story – museum/ archive
- Support to share objects and their history – museum
- Funding of supports is important - will there be any funding available as part of NCRR project/budgets?
- Optically it may appear to some Survivors that though the centre is dedicated to them they may not see how they benefit in terms of help them manage the ongoing challenges they face. In the wider context Survivor support centres are poorly resourced and not really that well equipped to provide the level of support necessary to this cohort of people. Survivors have experienced so called redress measures which have been retraumatising and the resentment and pain such measures caused lives on. In this context I wonder could an initiative be developed to allow for education modules to be developed which are directed at Survivors and their children and could this development be led by Survivors possibly with the assistance of education specialists providing of course that Survivors take the lead and are seen to take the lead. I know of many Survivors who would assist with such a project. Providing such a positive support to Survivors may offset some of the resentments and suspicion Survivors may feel and more experience provide a long-lasting improvement in their lives.
- For the National Centre for Research and Remembrance, will there be dedicated funding for research relating to issues important to Survivors at the Centre? Is there more information on plans?
- There should be grants for the Survivors and affected people who are writing biographies and making artworks to process their experiences. These could be facilitated onsite at the NCRR in some way.
- Access to the museum should be free.

- Individual access to non-catalogued items in museum collection – what might this mean? Can Survivors see any item in collection, not just those currently on display? Particularly if it is their own item they have shared with the museum.
- Accessibility is very important in terms of language and physical disability. All experiences must be recognised equally – institutional experiences and those of affected people.
- Commitment to Universal Design, for visitors across all spectrum of disability
- We need to use simple, accessible language at all times as some survivors are illiterate.
- The National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) offer a Plain English service – exhibition materials, websites, resources etc. should have this mark by default
- Lots of survivors/affected people are people with disabilities – some are blind, deaf, neurodiverse.
- Physical accessibility of site – from arrival, through use of museum and archives onsite – is crucial. Especially noting the older age group of many Survivors
- If we can make the Centre and our work autism friendly that will have positive impact for accessibility all round.
- Noting digital access and digital literacy – will there be supports for people to find their information by trained staff at NCRR?
- Plain language for exhibitions is so important
- Important to note the lifelong impact that the lack of an education has had on many survivors. In terms of former residents of industrial schools who were often made to work instead of attending school, they have suffered lifelong disadvantages in terms of lack of opportunities forced to take low paid work and, in many cases, this has impacted their children who already experience inter-generational trauma. This is a source of pain and embarrassment.
- Physical accessibility considerations should be a priority – noting demographic of Survivors & their needs
- Consider Neurodivergent people and their needs in developing the site too
- Awareness that there are elements of the physical site which might particularly resonate with or be sensitive for some Survivors (staircases, landings) – direct engagement with Survivors on how to mark this space in NCRR would be welcome
- Hire a psychological support person to be at hand to attend all meetings and events and is there if needed.
- Will there be Survivor only days at the NCRR?
- Will staff on site be properly trained / knowledgeable about Survivor experiences
- We should consider the mental health supports needed for everyone who engages with this work – counselling services should be available / information & signposting on site
- We can never assume or predict what might be triggering or difficult for someone. There should be no surprises about what to expect – trigger warnings.
- There should be a safe space at the National Centre for people to go to. Quiet, peaceful, alone time – separate to the rest.

- We need to look inside our organisations – never assume those internally and those who are working on this project are not affected.
- Will there be quiet / private spaces at the museum and at the archive, in case Survivors are upset – where they can recover away from the general public visiting the NCRR?
- There needs to be a recognition of trauma and its ongoing impact, and that the National Centre has supports in place for people who might be upset and affected by visiting the Centre or even receive upsetting information when accessing their records.

How would you like to feel after visiting the NCRR?

- Firstly, I hope I live to see it. After that I would like to feel satisfied you have done the right thing by us Magdelene Survivors
- That our lives matter/mattered
- That we are not invisible again
- My history mattered
- Truthful, accurate, fair representation of how we were treated
- No more cover ups/ secrecy / protection of powerful individuals and institutions
- Peace
- I will never visit the National Centre, it is completely alien to my experience

Theme 5: Records and access to them

- Who are the Archives for?
- What about records held by pharmaceutical companies, religious bodies, private nursing homes, solicitors, HSE, the Redress Board for Industrial School abuse etc.
- Will the NCRR inform visitors that records are incomplete & tell the truth about the ongoing shame of information being withheld from Survivors and their families?
- Where are the records about forced labour – farms, Builders
- National Archives Act 1986 needs to be changed. Tusla from a legal perspective doesn't fall under the act, so will they only release to NCRR what Tusla decides?
- Hospitals not included under legislation
- Concern that Records are still in the hands of Religious Orders
- What about Church records, administrative records, Diocesan records?
- Why is the Department of Health not working with the National Archives? It is transferring all its relevant records? Will this be made public knowledge?
- What archives staff will be working with Survivors at the NCRR?

- Will there be researchers available to assist Survivors?
- Will staff be fully trained to work with Survivors/ trauma informed?
- First and foremost, the Archive needs to support Survivors in practical ways, e.g. tracing friends and relatives' burials missing friends
- Will staff be available for people going to access their records to explain the language used in the documents and how to navigate the records.
- Access to Records for Survivors should be the first priority for the NCRR, followed by for academics, researchers, writers, journalists
- Survivors looking for their records and family records is central & NCRR should be designed around this
- Records are an ongoing issue – access, need for documents to be unredacted etc.
- Survivors should be consulted and engaged with directly on the experience at the NCRR for accessing their own records, for example layout & design of space, what supports will be available onsite if upset, ensuring privacy of the space to engage with their information.
- Welcome NCRR Archive acting as one stop shop for information on Survivor records – can this be the goal?
- Facilitating Survivor access to our own record is more important than a building/ bricks and mortar - It's our lives.
- How will personal access to records for Survivors work at the NCRR – can Survivors decide who can see their records?
- Will archives be available to access online for people living abroad.
- Access to records – who will be able to see personal records? I do not want researchers/ academics/ students reading personal files
- Seeking further detail & clarity on how to access private records
- Who will have access to these records are they researchers and academics? will the research be used to write papers books etc.? will the Survivors be consulted as it is their records being read and used?
- Will all files from Tusla be transferred over to NCRR?
- People should be able to give their stories anonymously
- People denied access to records held in Northern Ireland – need for cross-border cooperation
- Some are not interested in existing records and want to lodge their own story at the NCRR
- Need to have the option to correct the 'official' account and to tell story

- Terminology and how people are described in records is an issue raised by Survivors. There was interest in how the National Archives manages this without erasing the historical context, particularly given that information in records in archives is not corrected or altered in any way.
- Interest in plans the National Archive has around the creation of amending statements by Survivors.
- Recognise and acknowledge flawed reports - note the restrictions of them, some reports known to be wrong as proven in court
- Records are sometimes false and forged, NCRR should be fully truthful about this
- Survivors' rights to privacy should be paramount.
- Control and decisions over access to own private information should be decided by individual Survivors
- Some Survivors shared that have deeply personal records in their file and do not wish anyone else other than Tusla qualified social workers accessing them. It would cause deep distress and upset to find researchers reading these letters and perhaps publishing them in any form in the future. They are part of the individual's story and only mind to tell or publish if the Survivor wished.
- Facilitate sharing stories and experiences or access to records for the NCRR now, to ensure they will be accessible to the Public in the event of an individual passing away prior to the centre opening
- Supporting access to information and records for people around the world through digitisation.
- Note supports needed to assist people with using digital records/ supports – digital literacy issues / demographics of Survivors
- New legislation on preservation of private records is a welcome development, as a first urgent step of preservation of records.
- Important that the legislation is used now that it has been signed
- Hope that the new legislation will ensure accountability for behaviour – especially religious orders holding records.
- Legislation regarding Privately held documents holds no teeth
- Is there any legislative means to compel private organisations to send their records to the National Archives?
- Still don't have information & burial records for many babies, children in unmarked graves in sites around Ireland. How will the NCRR reconcile these. Will this be a research priority for the NCRR to address this information gap & resourced appropriately?
- While a research centre is vital for those who wish to use the facility, I feel it should only apply to those who wish to research.
- I want to be able to view the research & conclusions that has been extensively done into the reasons why these institutions were created, why people were incarcerated in these institutions,

why the nation allowed this system to become the 'norm', why human rights were not paramount in the creation of these institutions, why the Church held such power over the State.

- I do not want to do research, I want the answers, the 'logic' given at the time by the State to facilitate such an inhumane system.

Theme 6: Local memorialisation and engagement with those overseas

- Can there be centres of remembrance in every major city in Ireland – as hubs, linking with National Centre – allowing access to records/ travelling exhibitions/ online information. This would widen reach of exhibitions to Survivors in these areas, local community, schools – to ensure more people understand this history/impact. These could take a regional focus on institutions in the surrounding counties.
- Local Memory is powerful - Physical presence of sites remain in the community.
- Legacy of these spaces is important.
- Memorialisation is different in each community; this could be supported by local authorities and connect with National Centre.
- The memorial is the people.
- Important to note different experiences in different parts of Ireland, not relegate the local, regional experience to an attempted single national one in the NCRR
- More information welcome on how NCRR will link in with local memorialization initiatives, site of memorial, research etc
- Local memorialisation- importance at County level, regional and specific to institutions. Each County, every family in Ireland affected in some way most likely.
- Travelling exhibitions – more information on this, and engagement with Survivors around the country on what they would like in their local communities would be welcome
- NCRR's engagement with local sites, museums, communities should be flexible and adaptable- not static. Listen to what Survivors & communities want
- Opportunities to collect local memories and stories as part of roadshows (across Ireland and Overseas)
- Need to collaborate with and support local museums and community organisations.
- Recognition of each area, prominent towns and locations - local digital access and local engagement
- How is the National Institution proposing to serve all of Ireland?
- Will there be mobile 'Mini Museums' touring Ireland's Schools , Libraries, Community Centres, etc.?
- How exactly will the National Centre 'achieve a global & national reach', what proposal has been drafted to outline how this is going to be accomplished?

- I believe the only reference that I can find to this question is that 'it is envisaged that there will be a physical presence in other museums around the country'. 'Envisaging' is non - committal.
- The conservation of all the former sites is important. Each site should be marked in some way. Maybe a plaque at each site with people's names on it.
- For travelling exhibitions – remember to include Northern UK cities. There are many centres and community groups who could host – including Frea. There are Irish festivals all over the UK in which exhibitions could feature.
- We could have some element in all the provinces – not necessarily a physical memorial, but artwork, display, garden – the Ryan Memorial Fund could be split between the provinces to do this.
- We should connect with local museums and libraries – spaces where people feel comfortable.
- What are the plans to engage with Survivors living abroad? Will there be online access?
- Important that the different & distinct experiences of Survivors abroad are also captured in the NCRR
- Need to ensure that overseas Survivors aren't forgotten when planning for records & the museum
- Interested in travelling exhibitions for the NCRR – and engagement plans with overseas Survivors
- What are the plans to engage with Survivors living abroad – how will NCRR / Museum ensure that their stories are told? What are the plans for this & timelines?
- Find and connect with those in Australia responding to similar histories there – best practices.

Theme 7: Feedback on the engagement events and future engagement

- I feel we are moving forward rather than backwards. All I would ever ask of you is to include us Survivors, we lived it and suffered the consequences.
- Today I really enjoyed the meeting. There are times things may get a bit heated. Sadly, I don't think anybody should be attacking people doing their jobs to the best of their ability.
- Highly informative, did not know what the NCRR was
- It was most informative and interesting, and I look forward to receiving the slides and notes in order to share same with the wider group members.
- Well-intended
- Information given was informative and interesting
- This just feels like a box ticking exercise
- It was an illuminating experience, and I am gratified to have been present for this significant event.

- As a survivor, I found the atmosphere at the Dublin event quite troubling, if not toxic which left me somewhat uncomfortable.
- Everyone sitting at the top table were doing so from a salaried position, with travel benefits and probably some may have had accommodation thrown in. By comparison, the vast majority of survivor attendees are of an aging population, many on pension or no longer economically active. How is this beneficial to a survivor?
- Shocked by the anger and resentment that I have witnessed at the event in Dublin
- Disappointment at tone of event with a small few dominating all the time, shouting was intimidating, and I felt I could not /should not contribute on the day, due to this behavior.
- More opportunities for questions / Q&As
- Galway Survivors not given an open Q&A opportunity
- “The environment today felt too controlled.” There was no opportunity to speak and ask questions to all organisers at once.
- Too long sitting at Dublin event
- Minimum text on powerpoint slides – larger font required according to accessibility best practice. Slides were difficult to see.
- Print out ppt slides for each person attending the event
- Copy of the masterplan for the NCRR on tables would be very helpful
- Request for slides to be emailed to attendees after the event
- Review presentations to make them clearer and easier to understand – some very dense, technical presentations which were difficult to follow for many attendees
- There should be a representative from each element of the National Centre at each table. As only having someone from the archive, or museum, or OPW means that conversation skews that direction and may not cover other elements.
- Not enough visuals
- Placement of Advocacy /Counselling supports in a different area at the event
- Care around terminology and language used
- Have all administration staff wear name identification labels clearly visible.
- As the survivors and their families enter the room have them fill up one table at a time or if they have a large family group split them up to cover more table groups.
- Explain what the advocates are, and what they can do to help. Not everyone knows what an advocate is, and do they charge
- Be prepared to hear very sad and upsetting stories from survivors and their families.
- If possible, replace unnecessary staff with professional counselors and have them mingle
- I would appreciate it if you provided me with more extensive information on the proposed NCRR, what its vision is as of now & how it proposes to interact & include voices of survivors who are unaware of the proposed NCRR to date.

- Request for information to be shared after event – presentations, OPW video, NCRR site masterplan – on website, via mailing list and with print copies where requested by attendees
- Contact details for organisations involved in the NCRR for follow up questions
- Feedback from the NCRR events to be published after the Survivor engagement events are concluded

Other general comments

- Many find the name of the centre ‘National Centre for Research and Remembrance’ unremarkable.
- Prioritising research ahead of remembrance in the name diminishes the importance of remembrance as being central to the function of the centre.
- A clear, independent name and identity are needed for the centre
- On a positive note, I would like to highlight the MacDermott Street initiative is an outstanding concept. I completely understand that there are differing opinions about this particular project. That said, I very much commend the Irish Government for its commitment and generous funding. I acknowledge the efforts of all involved in creating a lasting legacy.
- Serious implications behind “non-recurrence” needs further thought
- Re. the Department’s reference to non-recurrence and transitional justice, what does this actually mean within the context of the NCRR, particularly Survivors needing to know why they ended up in institutions.
- Time to act – the people who lived in the institutions, too late when they die.
- Ensure there is no delays with the NCRR – many Survivors will want to see this Centre but are getting older
- Clear, ongoing communications on the timeline to the opening of the centre.
- Who is going to get the Social Housing / How does one qualify for Social Housing at NCRR?
- Who will determine who gets Social Housing
- Abuse of children and their families still ongoing- Tusla quoted
- North Inner City Dublin categorization & terminology used during Q&A - drug den, alleyways etc. was upsetting.
- More focus on positive – opportunity for regeneration and renewal vs negative image of inner city Dublin
- Survivors are also part of the local community – not necessarily distinct groups
- Will the NCRR be green/sustainable?

- Suggest that an Electric vehicle charging station would be a good idea to include at the site
- Can café/events spaces at the site be a social enterprise? This would be important, given the purpose of the NCRR.
- Why aren't Industrial School Survivors given supports – housing, health, social welfare. Note no fund from Department of Education for Industrial Schools for memorial events.
- Can the NCRR website clearly outline key updates in relation to development, planning, progress with NCRR project (eg planning permission sought/ planning permission granted_, along with project timelines and budget) so people can regularly check progress
- Can the OPW site plan video be shared/ uploaded on NCRR website – I found this really helpful to visualise the site
- What is the timeframe for the development of the centre? Is the money there and available?
- Interest in information on project – confirmed budgets, project timelines, key project milestones
- What are the opportunities for engagement at different points of planning/ design
- Where is the money coming from?
- What is the total project costs for the NCRR?
- Beyond funding from Government, will other stakeholders make a contribution to this as part of overall redress?
- “Why was the 500,000 taken off industrial schools and giving to this project.”

Graphic Recording of Galway Event – 14 November 2024



Graphic Recording of London Event – 25 February 2025

