

Special Advocate for Survivors Advisory Council Meeting Note

Pillar 2, People who spent time in Magdalene Laundry Institutions

Meeting 1 10th March 2026

Agenda item: Introductions

- The Special Advocate and pillar members in attendance introduced themselves and provided brief background information.
- Participants also outlined their motivations for applying to the Advisory Council and shared their objectives and expectations for their contributions to the Advisory Council's work over the coming year, including their engagement through these meetings.

Agenda item: Overview of the work of the Special Advocate, The Advisory Council and Pillar Structure.

- The Special Advocate provided pillar members with an overview of the role and the work of the Special Advocate office since the establishment of the role in March 2024 and further details around the key issues shared with her by Survivors, particularly around records, redress, memorialisation and dignified burial, and the need for ongoing health and housing supports.
- Since her appointment in March 2024, she and the team have engaged with over 1800 Survivors and Affected Persons, living in Ireland and overseas. Her remit covers people who spent time in Mother and Baby institutions, County homes, Magdalene Laundries, Industrial School and Reformatory institutions, people affected by illegal birth registration, people who were boarded out and Survivors living both in Ireland and overseas.
- The Special Advocate for Survivors of Institutional Abuse is an independent, non-statutory role established by Government to ensure



that the collective voices of Survivors and Affected Persons are central to the State's response to the legacy of institutional abuse and forced family separation.

- The role focuses on collective issues rather than individual cases and operates independently of Government in carrying out its functions.

Agenda item: Discussion on the purpose of the Advisory Council and opportunities for engagement with the pillar members for 2026

- The Advisory Council will meet and discuss identified shared concerns and key themes of collective importance such as access to records, redress, health and housing supports, memorialisation, and dignified burial.
- The Advisory Council supporting the work of the Special Advocate consists of 7 distinct pillars, covering a range of different experiences of institutional abuse and forced family separation.
- 38 people have been appointed to the Advisory Council, living in Ireland and overseas.
- The Advisory Council members have been appointed for one year.
- The Advisory Council does not consider individual cases, though it is understood and acknowledged that each pillar member may use their own experiences as reference during group discussion.



Agenda Item: An initial conversation about key themes and possible areas of focus for the pillar

The Special Advocate Introduced proposed topics for conversation, the following is a summary of the key issues discussed.

Issue 1: Records

- Pillar members discussed the difficulty and lack of awareness on where records are stored and how to access them.
- Members raised the inappropriate storage location of some records currently held in private ownership, and the potential for a loss of important information as a result.
The passing of the Preservation of Certain Records Act 2024 prohibits the destruction of privately held records related to Ireland's institutional past, but it is important that all records are brought into state ownership and care.

Issue 2: Redress

- Pillar members advised that the payment made through the Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme should be index linked.
- As the scheme remains open for new applicants, Pillar members discussed the possible barriers to applying.

This included concern that; for some, there is fear that engaging in State-run processes can resurface painful trauma related to their time spent in institutions or their previous experiences of redress.

Shame was also raised as a barrier to applying for redress, with pillar members raising the importance that both Government and society tackles this.

- Members discussed redress, and what this can mean for Survivors. Redress for Survivors is not limited to financial compensation and should also include comprehensive supports to Survivors to provide for comfortable living and dignity in aging.



Issue 3: Health and Housing

- The Enhanced Medical Card provided through the Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme has led to difficult, retraumatising experiences for Survivors and Affected persons when interacting with in medical settings.

“I always have to explain what the medical card is to my chemist”

- Pillar members raised that other supports are still needed for example a fuel allowance for those under 66 was raised as an example.
- Supports for Survivors living overseas is also of importance to Pillar members and should include both medical and other supports.

Issue 4: Memorialisation and Dignified Burial

- Pillar members discussed the national Centre For Research and Remembrance, and Survivor representation with it. It is important to members that the museum element of the Centre represents ‘all walks of life.’
- The opportunity for aspects of the National Centre to move around was welcomed, especially where there may be an opportunity for those living overseas to be engage with it.
- The importance of local memorialisation was raised, and how this should work in a dynamic way and be inclusive of local communities and local memorialisation as well as including inputs from Survivors and Affected Persons

Issue 5: Community and Identity

- Pillar members have expressed the importance of opportunities to meet with and speak to other Survivors and Affected persons, the work of support organisations to provide a space for this is welcomed and appreciated.
- Pillar members have discussed the different ways language can be used and interpreted, not everyone is a Survivor, some prefer resident, Affected Person etc. This should be considered and reflective



Agenda Item: Next Steps and Future Meetings

Next Steps

- Special Advocate advised that it is her hope that the Advisory Council will be involved with, input into and support the work of the office, throughout the year.
- While there are 3 meetings which will be scheduled for each pillar, there will be a range of other ongoing work that would be greatly enhanced by the contribution, voice and lived experience of Pillar members. Participation and feedback into external projects will of be voluntary for all members.
- The Special Advocate office noted that the team are happy to provide and information/ documents in whichever format is most useful for members, please just let the team know.

Future Meetings

- The Special Advocate office will contact pillar members regarding the scheduling of the next meeting, and agenda items for discussion.
- It was also proposed that an in-person Advisory Council meeting may take place towards the end of 2026.

Ideas, thoughts and suggestions about what items and issues pillar members may want to include on the agenda for this meeting, as well as possible external attendees to invite to speak to issues, would be very welcome in coming weeks and months.



A note on privacy and representation concerns

- The Special Advocate advises that Advisory Council members represent themselves and their own experiences, insights and views on the Advisory Council.
- Notes of meetings will be a high-level summary of points of discussion and matters for follow up. Any member's personal information will not be included, and specific points will not be attributed to any single member.
- Copies of the note will be shared with pillar attendees for review and sign-off, and will be published on the Special Advocate website, for transparency and to provide an overview of the range of issues being raised across the Advisory Council pillar.
- Decisions on the naming of pillar members (for example as included by way of thanks in any published outputs, can be agreed in advance)

Meeting Follow ups

Action	Responsible	Status
Confirmation of details for next meetings of pillar	SA office	

