

Inter Departmental Working Group (IDWG)
Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalene Laundries and Historical Clerical Child Abuse

Note and Action Points
Workshop on Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries

Thursday 29 October 2020 @ 3.30pm
Webex

Present

Judith Gillespie	Independent Chair (the Chair)
Eilís McDaniel	Department of Health (DoH)
Gareth Johnston	The Executive Office (TEO)
Michelle Bell	Department for the Economy (DfE)
Brian Grzymek	Department of Justice (DoJ)
Ricky Irwin	Department of Education (DE)

Apologies

Anne McCleary	Department for Communities (DfC)
Eugene O'Loan	Departmental Solicitor's Office (DSO)

In attendance

Astrid Hamilton	Department of Health (DoH)
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[Redactions made]

1. Welcome and Introduction to the Workshop

Judith Gillespie welcomed IDWG members to the workshop and noted apologies.

The Chair emphasised the workshop as an opportunity to discuss and agree the options on the way forward on Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries before sharing with the Reference Group for ultimate presentation to the Executive. The Chair asked members for their contributions and challenge as well as their support and cabinet responsibility in respect of the options for presentation to the Executive.

The Chair provided an overview of the workshop agenda and outcomes.

2. Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries Research Report Key Findings (Paper 1)

The Chair asked Eilís McDaniel to provide an overview of the key findings from the draft research report. Referring members to **Paper 1**, Eilís provided an overview of the demographics in relation to both sets of institution; including numbers of entrants, referral pathways as well as areas where the draft report identifies that further research is needed; e.g. adoption and cross-border adoption, mortality rates and work on preservation of the records/archives accessed by the researchers. Eilís also referred members to the findings of the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry regarding systemic abuse.

3. Representations Process (Paper 2)

Referring members to **Paper 2**, Eilís provided an overview of the Representations Process including the deadlines set; requests and agreement to extensions; an overview of the themes within the responses; the establishment and composition of the Representations Process Panel (the Panel) and how the Panel considered the responses.

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Members were updated on the outcome of the Panel's discussions including the agreed amendments to the report. Eilís indicated that changes to the report as a result of the representations will not fundamentally alter the report's key findings. Eilís advised members the researchers have been asked, but have not been able to fully commit to completion of the amendments by the end of October 2020; and acknowledged the further work required by the researchers. The Chair acknowledged the work the Panel has undertaken as part of the Representations Process and expressed her gratitude for this.

[Redactions made] Eilís provided further clarification in response to queries from members.

Action Point 1:
[Redactions made]

Action Point 2:
Pass on the thanks of the Independent Chair to all members of the Representations Process Panel.

4. Timeline and Key Milestones (Paper 3)

Referring members to **Paper 3**, Astrid Hamilton provided an overview of the updated timeline and key milestones in relation to next steps in respect of Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries. Astrid indicated the timeline is predicated on a "best case scenario" and everything going according to plan.

Astrid also welcomed Gareth Johnston's view on how best to brief and engage The Executive Office and the timing of engagement; Astrid also informed members the Chair is scheduled to brief the Health Committee on 26 November. The Chair advised members of her engagement with political parties to date, explaining that not all parties had responded to her invitation to meet as yet. Members discussed the possibility of writing to both the Committee for Health and the Committee for The Executive Office and re-visiting this once the final decision on the presentation of options to the Executive has been agreed.

In light of the revised timescales, members agreed that any amendments to the draft research report will be signed off by correspondence.

Action Point 3:
IDWG will agree the amendments to the draft research report by correspondence.

5. Options (Paper 4)

Astrid provided members with an overview of **Paper 4** including the advantages and disadvantages of each identified option as well as other considerations

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arising from the draft research report; for example, recommended research into adoption, mortality rates and preservation of records and archives.

Members discussed the out-workings of the options and related matters in further detail, the importance of the views of the Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries Reference Group and the outcome of the Commission of Investigation (Mother and Baby Homes and Certain Related Matters) Records and Another Matter Bill 2020.

Members discussed the need for clarity on the rationale and evidence base for each option. [Redactions made]

IDWG further considered additional research on adoption and baby homes; including the Department's powers to access records and the all-island dimension to this area of work and that, and the necessity to undertake this research in order to fulfill the research terms of reference. Members also discussed potential actions in relation to preserving and maintaining the records held by relevant institutions and organisations in respect of Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries and whether this should be taken forward immediately by seeking ministerial approval or through a recommendation to the Executive. IDWG acknowledged the inter-jurisdictional dimension to this work, for example, with respect to records held by The Salvation Army in its London archive.

Action Point 4:
[Redactions made]

Action Point 5:
[Redactions made]

Action Point 6:
Undertake further work in connection with the preservation and maintenance of records and archives relevant to Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries.

6. Consultation

Members discussed consultation requirements and the potential detail of what would be consulted on.

IDWG also discussed engagement through the Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries Reference Group and how its views will potentially inform Executive decision making.

7. Interim Actions

IDWG discussed a range of issues in relation to engagement with relevant Assembly Committees; informing and briefing relevant Ministers prior to

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Executive engagement; ongoing engagement with the Reference Group and relevant stakeholders through written updates and information sessions prior to publication of the research report.

Action Point 7:

For the purposes of informing/briefing Ministers, share all relevant papers with IDWG members prior to issue.

Action Point 8:

Consideration to be given to circulation of an information bulletin/letter for circulation to relevant stakeholders following the meetings of the Reference Groups.

Action Point 9:

Consideration to be given to scheduling information sessions with relevant institutions/organisations and research participants prior to the publication of the Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries Research Report.

Action Point 10:

Consideration to be given to scheduling of an IDWG meeting in a month.