

## **JFM Research welcomes progress on Magdalene Scheme, but raises concerns about accuracy of McAleese Report**

Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFM Research) welcomes the news that the State is committed to ensuring that Magdalene survivors receive their lump sum entitlements in a 4 to 6 week window. We are concerned, however that the State is not yet ready to deliver on the promise of pensions and health care benefits, which await the passage of new legislation. It is now over four months since the government accepted Justice Quirke's Scheme in principle. We question why the necessary legislation is not already in place to facilitate these additional benefits.

JFM Research remains concerned for those survivors for whom records, including duration of stay records, are not available. The McAleese Report contends in Chapter 8 that duration of stay records are available in only 42% of known admissions. Survivors for whom records indicating duration of stay no longer exists must not be discriminated against in obtaining/receiving redress and other entitlements.

JFM Research will be seeking clarification on the status of survivors living outside of Ireland claiming their health entitlements through the Scheme. It is important that non-Irish residents are not discriminated against and that they obtain equivalent health care coverage in their place of residency. This is especially important given the age and health profile of many of the women involved. Mr Justice Quirke did not discriminate between survivors in Ireland and elsewhere when recommending this vital element of the scheme, and JFM Research argues that these survivors have a legitimate expectation that healthcare will be provided to them. It is imperative that the government provides equivalent services to women outside Ireland. JFM Research is gravely concerned that these survivors, who are in need of compensation, will therefore sign a waiver, thereby allowing the government to argue that they have no standing to claim healthcare because they have signed up to the Scheme.

According to recent media reports, "it is expected that 55% of survivors will be entitled to more than €50,000. Thus the Government has allowed for up to €58m in payments." Taking these figures into account, the assertion from the McAleese Report that "the median duration of stay was 27.6 weeks" is a significant error given that 55% of survivors claiming redress were in Magdalene Laundries for almost 5 years. As we continue our research we are becoming more concerned with assertions and omissions in the McAleese Report that point to serious errors in the methods and findings of that Committee.

JFM Research is heartened however that more and more Magdalene survivors are becoming empowered to speak out. We strongly support the women in their call on the religious orders to apologise and their demands to see the record reflect their suffering.

JFM Research again challenges Minister Shatter's contention that the "McAleese Report" documents "the facts about Magdalen Laundries." The State makes the same assertion in its recent response to the UN Committee Against Torture (08 August 2013). To clarify, the remit of the McAleese Committee was to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries. The *facts* of the Laundries await a "prompt, thorough and independent" investigation as called for by UNCAT and the IHRC.

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