

1. Mr Martin, Assistant Secretary

2. Secretary General

**Re: Magdalen Fund – resource requirements**

I refer to our discussion this morning and understand that Judge Quirke's report is imminent.

While we are not aware of its contents, it can be anticipated that we will quickly need to put arrangements in place to administer any Magdalen Fund on foot of his recommendations.

As things stand, we have received over 500 expressions of interest. It would appear from the information supplied that many of those women have difficulty in establishing when and where they were resident in the Magdalen institutions. Records are not easily available and in some cases not available at all. We can therefore expect major problems to arise.

There will also be the issue of people who were resident in institutions other than Magdalen Laundries and who will not be eligible for payment under the Fund. This will be a growing issue which will take up a substantial block of work as time moves on (particularly when payments to former residents of the Laundries commence)

For our part, we will need to put a system in place to identify and make payments to eligible applicants. This will include:-

- devising applications forms, information booklets, frequently asked questions;
- providing assistance in filling out forms and enclosing necessary information;
- including records or proof of residence in a Laundry;
- setting up and staffing telephone helplines, on-line support etc;
- establishing eligibility for payment;
- verification arrangements with the religious congregations to confirm whether applicants were resident in the Laundries or not;
- processing payments and all that will entail; and
- extensive record keeping, checking of records, and related IT support systems.

Some of the work such as application forms and telephone helplines will need to be in place when the Government announces its decision on the Report.

We will also need to look at putting a range of supports in place. This may include assistance in obtaining social welfare entitlements, income tax queries, medical cards, access to counselling and any other supports identified by Judge Quirke. Liaising with the relevant Government Departments and various support groups both here and in Britain can be expected.

This work will be resource intensive and pressurised given the age of the women, political, media and public interest involved. There will in that context be an inevitable pressure to complete this process and make payments as quickly and efficiently as possible. Numerous requests for briefing, topical debates, PQ replies etc can be expected.

To meet the demand, I anticipate that we will urgently need to establish a small unit dedicated solely to this work. Additional staffing resources are required and, while I cannot be precise at this time, it seems to me that such a Unit will require a minimum of 1 AP, 1 HEO, and anything up to 6 support staff.

I expect that we can arrange office accommodation here in Montague. There is already some vacant space while more will become available with the ending shortly of our Presidency commitments.

As time limits may be involved, I would hope that the work should last no longer than 12 to 18 months. That would be kept under review but we should be better placed to make an assessment when the Judge's report is received.

Submitted for consideration, please.

Gerry McDonagh,  
Prisons & Probation Policy.

29 May, 2013.