



JUSTICE FOR MAGDALENES RESEARCH

RESEARCH GUIDE FOR MAGDALENE SURVIVORS SEEKING ACCESS TO RECORDS

Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) is a not-for-profit organisation whose main aim is to provide for the advancement of education of the general public by researching the Magdalene Laundries and similar institutions and by providing information and support to the women who spent time in the Magdalene Laundries and their families.

INTRODUCTION

Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) has compiled this Research Guide to assist Magdalene survivors in obtaining their records. If you have not already applied to the Magdalene Restorative Justice Scheme at the Department of Justice and Equality, the following guides may be of assistance to you.

Survivor Guide to Magdalene Restorative Justice Scheme

<http://jfmresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Survivor-Guide-to-Magdalene-Restorative-Justice-Scheme.pdf>

Supplementary Guide to the Magdalene Restorative Justice Scheme

http://jfmresearch.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Supplementary-Survivor-Guide-to-Magdalene-Restorative-Justice-Scheme_FINAL.pdf

If you are affected by adoption, you can find information and support at the Adoption Rights Alliance website at www.adoption.ie.

BEGINNING YOUR RESEARCH

Before you set out, you should firstly gather whatever information you can from your own records and memories. Make a list of things you remember and put together your paperwork, if any. We suggest that you purchase a folder to keep everything in. As you receive responses from religious orders and government departments, you can use it to keep them safe and in the one place. Below is a list of questions that might help you remember:

- What laundry/laundries were you in?
- When did you enter the laundry?
- Were you sent into the laundry by your family?
- Were you transferred from an industrial school?
- Were you transferred from a mother and baby home?
- Were you sent into the laundry by a judge in court?
- Were you transferred from a psychiatric institution?
- What part of the country was the laundry in?
- What order of nuns ran the laundry?
- Can you remember any of the nuns' names?
- What were your responsibilities in the laundry?

Contacting the Religious Order

Once you have gathered whatever information you can, your first step should be to contact the religious order that ran the laundry in question. If you cannot remember what order was involved, then we suggest that you write to all of them. We suggest making a subject access request under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). Guidance and template letters are available at: <http://mydatarights.ie/>, which concerns the industrial schools, however, the information can be easily adapted to suit other purposes. A list of names and addresses of the Magdalene religious orders is available at the end of this guide.

Guidelines for Dealing with Religious Orders

- ✓ Always communicate in writing preferably using Registered (Signed For) Post.
- ✓ Do not give the order a contact number. If you absolutely have to contact the order by telephone (e.g. to arrange an appointment), we advise that you turn off caller identification on your phone.
- ✓ **If the religious order seeks a meeting with you, we advise that you proceed with caution. If you decide to proceed with the meeting we strongly advise that you do not go to this meeting alone and suggest that you bring along a family member or friend.**
- ✓ Remember, you have the right to be treated respectfully – you have nothing to be ashamed of and deserve an apology for what happened to you.
- ✓ If you are told that you have been placed on a waiting list, ask how long the wait is and ask to be kept regularly informed of your place in the queue.
- ✓ Ask for the name of the person dealing with your query and address all correspondence to this person.
- ✓ Keep track of your paperwork in a folder or file and keep a copy of any correspondence sent to the order.

Contacting Government Departments and Other Agencies

While the Magdalene Laundries were church-run institutions, the State was also involved in referring women and girls there. You may also have been transferred from a mother and baby home or another institution. You should therefore make a GDPR subject access request to the government department(s) and/or institution(s) in question. See this link for guidance: <http://mydatarights.ie/industrial-school-records/>.

If you are unsure what government department(s) and/or institution(s) you should contact, the following may be of assistance.

- If you entered the laundry **via a government department/agent/official** (e.g. a school inspector or ISPCA inspector), you should write to that department

(Department of Education for school inspectors, Department of Children and Youth Affairs for ISPCA/similar inspectors).

- If you were **removed from school** prior to your entry into the laundry, you should , you should send a subject access request to the Department of Education at: foi@education.gov.ie.
- If you were transferred from an **industrial school** to the laundry, you should obtain your records from that institution as they may have recorded when you left. See: <http://mydatarights.ie/industrial-school-records/>.
- If you were transferred from a **Mother and Baby Home** to the laundry, you should send a subject access request to Tusla at: datacontroller@tusla.ie.
- If you were sent to the laundry via the **courts system**, you should send a subject access request to Department of Justice at: subjectaccessrequests@justice.ie.
- If you were sent to the laundry from a **County Home**, you should send a subject access request to Tusla at: datacontroller@tusla.ie.

We hope the information in this Guide is of help to you. Remember, you have every right to pursue the information you are looking for and deserve to be treated with respect.

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Distribution of this document is encouraged, but no alterations are permitted.

CONTACT DETAILS FOR RELIGIOUS ORDERS (MAGDALENE LAUNDRIES)

Good Shepherd Sisters and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity (these orders have now merged)

Province Administration
Sisters of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd
63 Lower Sean McDermott Street
Dublin 1

Telephone: 01 8711109 or 087 7719723

Email: province@rgs.ie

Sisters of Mercy

Ms. Marianne Cosgrave
Catherine McAuley Centre
23 Herbert Street
Dublin 2

Telephone: 01-6387521

Email: info@mercyarchives.ie

Sisters of Charity

Sisters of Charity Generalate
Caritas, 15 Gilford Road
Sandymount, Dublin DO4 X337

Telephone: 01 2697833/2697935

Email: generalate@rsccaritas.com