

Statement on the Magdalene Laundries

The Government today considered the circumstances of the women and girls who resided in the Magdalene Laundries. The Government welcomed the statement made last week by CORI on behalf of the four congregations, the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity, the Religious Sisters of Charity, the Sisters of Mercy and the Good Shepherd Sisters who indicated their “willingness” to “bring clarity, understanding, healing and justice in the interests of all the women involved”. The Government believes it is essential to fully establish the true facts and circumstances relating to the Magdalene Laundries as a first step. The following has been agreed:

1. An Inter-departmental Committee will be established, chaired by an independent person, to clarify any State interaction with the Magdalene Laundries and to produce a narrative detailing such interaction.

2. The Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Alan Shatter TD and the Minister of State with responsibility for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People, Kathleen Lynch TD are to meet with the religious congregations and the groups representing former residents of the Magdalene Laundries. Their discussions will include addressing the following matters;
 - a. The making available by the congregations of all records maintained by them with regard to the residents of the Magdalene Laundries to enable all available information about former residents to be shared with them and also made available for appropriate research purposes.
 - b. The provision of information concerning the number of persons currently residing with or in the care of the religious congregations who originally commenced such residence in the Magdalene Laundries and who have remained in their care.
 - c. To discuss the putting in place of a restorative and reconciliation process and the structure that might be utilised to facilitate such process.

The Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence together with the Minister of State for Disability, Equality, Mental Health and Older People, will now be following up on this Government decision with the relevant parties. Consideration is being given to the appropriate independent person to appoint to chair the Inter-departmental Committee. It was agreed by government that an initial report should be made to Cabinet on the progress being made by the Inter-departmental Committee within 3 months of its establishment.