

SPECIAL ISSUE — ADVOCATING FOR SURVIVORS

Who is JFM?

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) is a not-for-profit, totally volunteer-run organisation, with members in Ireland, the UK, the US, the EU and Australia. We are primarily an online community, with a website, a Facebook site with over 750 members, and two internet based discussion groups with over 300 members.

What is JFM?

JFM is a survivor advocacy group. In other words, JFM advocates on behalf of a population of women—living and dead, some still living in religious institutions, others living in anonymity, and many now speaking about their past—who are not recognised or acknowledged as survivors of institutional abuse by the State, by the Church, or by Irish society.

Our Goals

JFM's primary goals are **(i) to bring about an official apology from the Irish State and the Catholic Church**, and **(ii) the establishment of a distinct redress scheme for Magdalene survivors**. Once JFM achieves these objectives, the door will be open to every survivor and/or her family and/or other groups representing Magdalene survivors to pursue their own claim for redress.

The JFM Campaign to Date:

- We have worked to establish the State's complicity in referring women and children to the Magdalene laundries
- We have met with the Departments of Justice, Education, and Health
- We have made a presentation before the Oireachtas Ad Hoc committee, involving politicians from all parties
- We have facilitated almost two-dozen Parliamentary Questions
- We have communicated with the Catholic hierarchy as well as the four relevant religious congregations in an effort to engage them in our campaign
- We recently submitted an application to the Irish Human Rights Commission seeking a formal enquiry into the State's obligation to provide redress of Magdalene survivors
- We have an online petition addressed to Mr. Brian Cowen challenging his political leadership on this issue—almost 1,000 people have signed the petition thus far

National Counselling Service

The National Counselling Service was set up by the HSE to provide counselling services (free of charge) to adults who have experienced child abuse, with priority given to adult survivors of institutional abuse in Ireland.

North East	1800 234 117
North Dublin	1800 234 110
North West	1800 234 119
West	1800 234 114
Mid-west	1800 234 115
Midlands	1800 234 113
Dublin South	
West/Kildare/ West Wicklow	1800 234 112
South Dublin & East Wicklow	1800 234 111
Kerry & Cork	1800 234 116
South East	1800 234 118

How to Contact Us

You can write to us at **Justice For Magdalenes**, Crocknahattina, Bailieborough, Co. Cavan, Ireland. You can e-mail JFM at **info@magdalenelaundries.com**. You may also contact us by phone, in Ireland at **(353) 86 4059491**, in the US at **(1) 215-589-9329**, or in the UK at **(44) 208-346-7479**

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Resources for Survivors

JFM is always willing and eager to help survivors and family members in every way we can. Unfortunately, we do not have the funds or staff to provide direct services to survivors, but we do what we can to help with the limited resources at our disposal, including the following:

Research Guides

We offer a “*Research Guide for Survivors*” and a “*Research Guide for Relatives of Magdalene Women*” — these guides contain information to help survivors gain access to their records, and where applicable, avail of the Residential Institutions Redress Board. We received confirmation from the Department of Education that survivors who were transferred to a Magdalene laundry from a State residential institution are eligible to apply for redress under the current scheme.

The guides also contain research advice, lists of questions to ask, sample letters, contact details for relevant government departments, religious congregations, and national counselling services.

Family members who have used the “*Research Guide*” inform us that they did receive responses to their letters and ultimately gained assistance in accessing relevant records.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you would like a copy of either “*Research Guide*” or if you know of someone who would like a copy.

Helpline

We operate a helpline through a messaging service where survivors can leave a message and we will phone them back. Please note that as we are all volunteers, your call may not be answered immediately.

Survivor Network

We had originally hoped to put together support groups for survivors, but we unfortunately do not have the resources to do so at the moment. However, we would like to help put survivors in touch with each other, for those who would like to be put in touch with women who were also in the laundries. Family members of Magdalene women may also like to be put in touch with people in a similar situation and we are glad to help. Just pass on your details and we will put you in touch with people in your area and/or, if you wish, women who were in the same laundry as you.

Your Rights as a Magdalene Survivor

Under the current Redress Scheme, if you were transferred from an industrial school to a Magdalene laundry, you have the right to apply for redress. JFM is working hard to convince the Irish state to bring forward a separate redress scheme for all former Magdalenes.

Regardless of the circumstances under which you were sent to the laundry, as a survivor, you have the right to be treated with dignity and respect.



A Word of Caution

The subject of the Magdalene laundries is a very popular one with the media, as well as with academics, musicians, documentary makers, film-makers, poets and other artists. In an effort to complete their work these individuals will nearly always want an interview with a Magdalene survivor. JFM never passes on the contact details of a survivor without permission and in fact we try to keep communication with survivors and the media to a minimum. JFM's priority is to protect the welfare of survivors, even if this results in a loss of media coverage.

As a survivor, only you can decide if it is right for you to speak to the media. If you are unsure and would like some advice, please don't hesitate to contact us for a confidential chat. In general, we urge survivors to be cautious and if anyone has been contacted by the media and would like JFM to act as a go between, we would be more than happy to do so.

A Word of Reassurance

We would like to reassure survivors that JFM does not require survivors to be members or to openly support us. If you are a member of another group, this is absolutely fine. If you are afraid to speak up, don't worry, you still have our support and we are here if and when you want to get in touch. No matter what, we will fight for your rights, whether you speak up or not, whether you are a member or not.

Hello to London Based Survivors!

JFM would like to say a big hello to all London/UK based survivors. We would like you to know we are thinking of you and we will make sure we send our newsletters to the Irish Centre so that you can keep up to date with all the news. If there are survivors elsewhere, please get in touch with us so we can keep you informed.

Confused?

If there is anything in this newsletter that you don't understand please don't hesitate to contact us.

Find us on



Facebook and Twitter

News Coverage

JFM Applies to the Irish Human Rights Commission

JFM has submitted an application to the Irish Human Rights Commission (IHRC) requesting an enquiry into the State's failure to protect the constitutional and human rights of women and young girls in the nation's Magdalene laundries.

It is almost one year since JFM circulated its draft proposal to all politicians in the Dáil and Seanad, including language toward an official apology and a distinct redress scheme (3 July 2009). We have since demonstrated that the State was indeed complicit in referring individuals to the laundries, and it was always aware that children—beyond those transferred to a laundry from an industrial school—were in the laundries.

Ireland's government has rejected JFM's twin objectives. An Taoiseach, Mr. Brian Cowen recently stated that, "the position of women in such laundries was not analogous with that of children in the residential institutions that were the subject of the Ryan Report" (27 April 2010). The Minister for Justice, Mr. Dermot Ahern, asserted that, "Magdalen laundries were not State institutions and their records are a matter for the individual religious congregations concerned" (27 May 2010).

By abdicating its responsibility to inspect and regulate private institutions, JFM asserts that the State failed to protect all the women and girls in the laundries from enforced and compulsory labour. JFM looks forward to the IHRC's decision.

Cowen 'trying to deny implications of state's complicity over laundries'

By Claire O'Sullivan

Irish Examiner, Thursday, April 29, 2010

AN ADVOCACY group seeking redress for former residents of Magdalene laundries has accused the Taoiseach of attempting to "deny" the implications of the state's role in sending girls to the institutions.

In a response to a parliamentary question from Deputy Michael Kennedy, Brian Cowen told the Dáil that he believed "the position of women in such laundries were not analogous with that of children in the residential institutions that were the subject of the Ryan Report." His response comes weeks after Cardinal Sean Brady told institutional abuse victims that he intended "to work towards a just solution" for the former Magdalene women.

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM), who have met with representatives from the departments of justice, education and health in recent months, has long argued

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that these departments were “complicit in referring women and children to the Magdalene laundries.” Much of their assertions have been accepted by the department officials they have met with. Last night, JFM declared themselves “outraged” at Mr Cowen’s response to their fight for justice. “The Taoiseach does not contest the fact that the departments and organs of the state were complicit. He merely seeks to deny its implications,” a JFM spokesman said.

“The Taoiseach’s response signals the state’s primary concern is to limit liability with respect to anticipated claims for compensation. Mr Cowen and his Government should, of course, be focused on providing justice for women and children denied their constitutional rights. Does Mr Cowen believe that the state, and in particular the Department of Education, did not have a moral and Constitutional obligation to protect every child from the exploitative work conditions in the laundries?”

In his response to the parliamentary question, Mr Cowen also said that Government departments “would be ready to help... with further inquiries as far as possible.” However, last night JFM said they have asked the departments of justice and health and the Courts and Probation Services for records on women they knew to be at the laundries. “To date, our ‘enquiries’ have been met with polite acknowledgement and nothing more,” the JFM spokesman said.

Graves of Bethany children

The Irish Times, Tuesday, May 25, 2010

Madam, – Justice for Magdalenes – a survivor advocacy group – supports Derek Leinster and Niall Meehan in their demands for a full investigation surrounding the circumstances in which 40 children, resident at the Bethany Home, came to be buried at Mount Jerome Cemetery in Dublin (Home News, May 22nd). The State had a constitutional obligation to protect all children, to supply the place of the parents, to ensure a minimum education. The fact that these children died in an institution, “outside the home,” should be fully examined and all records made available.

Ireland has been confronted with the spectre of a mass grave related to institutional “care” before – the exhumation, cremation and re-internment of 155 former Magdalene women from the High Park, Drumcondra institution in 1992 still needs a full investigation: an additional 22 bodies were discovered, death certificates were missing although they were legally required since the 19th century, names on the exhumation licence and on the subsequent headstone at Glasnevin cemetery do not correlate. These questions remain unanswered!

Similar questions must now be asked about the children buried at Mount Jerome cemetery: how did these children die, do death certificates exist for each child, were family members informed? Answers to these questions will enable an appropriate memorial stone with accurate information.

The Bethany Home, like the Magdalene laundries, is not considered a State residential institution. Therefore, it was not included on Schedule 1 (a) of the Residential Institutional Redress Act, 2002. Consequently, survivors of the Bethany Home, like survivors of the Magdalene homes, are deemed ineligible for redress under the current scheme. Like the Magdalenes, the State deems the Bethany Home a “private and charitable” institution that was not licensed or managed by the State. And yet, the courts referred women to the Bethany Home upon giving them a suspended sentence for certain crimes; they also placed women “on probation” and, in all likelihood, placed women “on remand.”

In this sense, the Bethany fulfilled the function of the Catholic Magdalene laundries for women from the Protestant faiths. The State always relied on its existence and availability to deal with so-called “problem women”. In researching my book on the laundries, I discovered four cases at the Central Criminal Court, between 1929 and 1945, whereby Protestant women found guilty of “concealment of a birth” were referred to the Bethany Home for periods of up to three years. Can the Department of Justice demonstrate conclusively what became of each of these women?

– Yours, etc, JAMES M SMITH, Associate Professor English, Department and Irish Studies Program, Boston College, Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts, US

JFM Online Petition and Postcard Campaigns



recently undertook an online petition campaign through the activism website

<http://www.thepetitionsite.com/1/leadership-needed-on-magdalene-laundries>.

To date, 1,000 signatures have been collected from around the world (with an expected modest goal of 5,000 signatures). These voices support our own in urging Brian Cowen to call for State acknowledgment of its complicity in remanding women and children to Magdalene laundries, and to offer an official apology to and establish a distinct redress scheme for victims and survivors of these abusive institutions.

We also have an online e-postcard campaign at www.magdalenaundries.com/an_taoiseach.htm, which has seen more than 1,000 submissions since the beginning of May.



Former Bethany House residents **Derek Leinster**, **Patrick Anderson**, **McQuoid** and **Noleen Belton** attend a memorial service at the unmarked graves of 40 children from the home in Mount Jerome cemetery in Dublin 21 May. Photograph: Niall Carson/PA Wire