

Appendix A

Report of the Expert Technical Group (ETG) *Options and Appropriate Courses of Action available to Government at the site of the former Mother and Baby Home, Tuam, Co. Galway*

The multi-disciplinary report was commissioned to provide clear technical guidance having regard to international best practice in this complex area. The report established that there are a number of issues that make the site and the recovery of human remains here complex and unique when compared nationally and internationally. These were issues were found to be:

- The forensic requirement of the site;
- The ‘significant’ quantities of juvenile remains;
- These juvenile remains lying in a commingled (mixed) state, and
- The remains being present in deep subsurface chambers with limited accessibility and potentially also affected by the water table.

The report identifies five possible options for dealing with human remains at the site and the logistical implications of each option. The options, which range from the least intrusive to the potentially most intrusive intervention, which are explored and presented in the context of internationally accepted best practice, are:

1. Memorialisation, with no further investigative work involved. The site would be returned to its original state and managed as a memorial. (Memorialisation could also be combined with any of the options below).
2. Exhuming of known human remains and re-interring elsewhere, but with no further forensic analysis.
3. Forensic excavation and recovery of known human remains. This would include use of an approach known as humanitarian forensic action, with the recovery and analysis of all remains from the identified chambers.
4. Forensic excavation and recovery, with further evaluation/excavation of other areas of potential interest. It would include an extensive programme of non-intrusive investigative work, which would then inform decisions as to what further areas of the site (if any) might contain human remains.
5. Forensic examination of the total available area, with full examination of the memorial garden, playground, car park area as formerly occupied by the Home. It would be the most extensive option available, aimed at exhausting all potential for further relevant human remains. It would however exclude the built private areas, including the house and gardens subsequently built on the site.

The focus of the report was on explaining as clearly as possible what each approach would entail in practical terms if implemented. Having set out in detail what each option involves, the ETG report noted that the site is exceptionally complex by international standards, with significant technical complexities due to the 'commingled' remains, the difficulty of accessing those remains from deep subsurface chambers, and the need for highly specialised techniques from a range of disciplines (including osteology, anthropology and DNA) with no guarantee of being able to recover, 'individualise' and identify the many bodies interred there.

The report emphasises that the technical complexities of the situation require that the site must be considered as a 'mass grave'. In addition, the Report includes detailed geophysical and engineering surveys undertaken as part of the ETG's work. The ETG notes that where exhumation is envisaged, it would be preferable to sort the mixed or commingled remains into individual remains ('individualisation') to the greatest extent possible, but that this requires a variety of highly specialised techniques from osteology, anthropology and DNA molecular techniques which carry no guarantee of resolving all the questions which arise. Forensic science has its limits and the site at Tuam will test the boundaries of forensic investigation in every regard.

The full report is available on the website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs at <https://www.dcy.gov.ie/viewdoc.asp?DocID=4515>.