

# **Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes and certain related matters Fifth Interim Report**

**17<sup>th</sup> April 2019**

## **Frequently Asked questions**

### **1. What has the Minister published today?**

The Minister for Children and Youth Affairs has published the Fifth Interim Report from the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes. The report is available on the website of the Department of Children and Youth Affairs ([www.dcy.gov.ie](http://www.dcy.gov.ie)).

### **2. What is this report about?**

This report focuses on the burial arrangements in the mother and baby institutions being examined by the Commission and the transfer of remains for the purpose of anatomical examination. The report does not include an analysis of the causes of deaths or the registration of deaths. The Commission says it will deal with these issues in their final report.

### **3. What institutions are covered in this report?**

This report examines the burial practices of the following institutions:

- Bessborough
- Bethany Home
- Castlepollard
- Cork County Home
- Dublin Union/St Patrick's Navan Road/Pelletstown
- Sean Ross Abbey
- Tuam Children's Home

The report does not cover all the institutions within the Commission's scope because either there were not a significant number of deaths in the institution; or deaths/burials occurred elsewhere (e.g. Dunboyne, the Castle); or there is very little information available (e.g. Kilrush); or the Commission has not yet completed its investigations (e.g. Regina Coeli). Any further information on burials will be included in the final report.

#### **4. Law on burials**

The Commission writes extensively on the legal obligations surrounding both public and private burial grounds and cemeteries during the relevant period 1922-1998.

#### **5. What does the report say about these institutions?**

This is a significant piece of work that addresses important issues surrounding the burial arrangements at many of the institutions the Commission is investigating.

Some of the findings are included below.

##### **A. Dublin Union/St Patrick's Navan Road/Pelletstown (Chapter 2 page 18)**

- Children who died in Dublin Union premises were generally buried in Glasnevin Cemetery where detailed records are maintained in a Register of Poor Ground Burials.
- The Commission states that deaths and burials have been properly recorded.

##### **B. Sean Ross Abbey (Chapter 3A Page 25)**

- There is a designated child burial ground in the grounds of the institution
- The Commission decided to undertake a geophysical study and subsequently a test excavation of the site and the results of this excavation are currently being examined.

##### **C. Bessborough/ Cork County Home (Chapter 4 Page 26)**

- The Commission has not identified the main location for burials for those who died while resident in Bessborough and Cork County Home. The Commission communicates the difficulties it has faced in identifying the location where burials took place.
- Though at this point it cannot say for certain, the Commission considers that it is highly likely that burials did take place in the grounds of Bessborough. However, it concluded that it was not feasible for it to engage in an excavation of a 60 acre site – let alone the larger 200-acre estate, on which much building work has taken place since the institution closed.

##### **D. Castlepollard (Chapter 5 Page 41)**

- There was no legal requirement to keep a register of burials in private burial grounds and no such register seem to exist.
- The Commission states that it has no reason to doubt that the majority of the children who died in Castlepollard are buried in this burial ground.

##### **E. Bethany Home (Chapter 6 Page 45)**

- The deaths of children from the Bethany Home were recorded in the Bethany Baby Book Register maintained by the Home's authorities.

- Details about the burial of children who died in the Bethany Home were published in 2010 after thorough independent research.
- Mount Jerome Cemetery was the main burial site for the children who died in the Bethany Home.

#### **F. Tuam Children's Home (Chapter 8 Page 57)**

- The Commission states that it is clear that many of the children who died in the Tuam Home are buried in the chambers which date from 1937.
- It is the Commission's view that children who died prior to 1937 are unlikely to be buried in the chambers but may be buried in areas beyond the existing memorial garden.
- This was not a recognised burial ground or purpose built burial chamber. It did not provide for the dignified interment of human remains.
- There is evidence that the burial grounds may extend beyond the area of the current Memorial Garden.

#### **6. Why are some images redacted?**

The report includes a series of detailed and complex technical reports into the site of the former Home in Tuam, Co Galway. The Commission has provided these expert reports in full to assist the Government in the context of the proposed course of action to manage the juvenile remains interred at the site. These reports contain images of human remains at the site. These images have been redacted prior to publication at the request of the Commission.

#### **7. Is this the Commission's final say on burials at Mother and Baby Homes and similar institutions?**

No. The Commission has not yet finished investigating all of the institutions within its terms of reference. Any further information on burials will be included in its final report. Any member of the public who has any information regarding the institutions being investigated by the Commission is strongly encouraged to contact the Commission directly.

#### **8. When is the Commission's final report due?**

The Commission is due to submit its final findings by February 2020. It will contain a Social History Report, Confidential Committee Report and Final Report, all of which are expected to be presented in a single final report to the Minister.

#### **9. How can the Commission be contacted?**

Any persons with additional information about the burials described in this report, or any matters pertaining to the Commission's terms of reference, should contact the Commission directly.

The Commission can be contacted directly by:

- Writing to Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes, 73 Lower Baggot Street, Dublin 2, Ireland.
- Email [info@mbhcoi.ie](mailto:info@mbhcoi.ie), or by Confidential Freephone 1800 80-66-88 (ROI only).
- To make a confidential call to the Commission from outside of the Republic of Ireland, the number to dial is 00 353 1 6445088.

#### **10. What further actions are envisaged in relation to the Commission's report?**

The report will be referred by the appropriate Ministers to a number of relevant bodies for consideration and appropriate action. It remains a matter for relevant authorities to independently consider what response they may deem appropriate in accordance with their respective statutory functions.

#### **11. Impact on Governments plan of action at Tuam site**

A new unit has been established to develop the legislation required to enable the forensic-standard excavation, exhumation and identification project the Government has decided to undertake at the site of the former Mother and Baby Home at Tuam. The technical findings of the burials report are helpful in identifying certain key issues. The wider implications of the burials report for the legislation are under careful consideration in developing detailed policy proposals.