



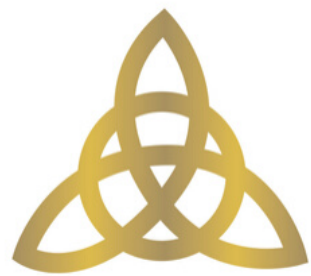
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DUBLIN HONOURS  
MAGDALENES

# LISTENING EXERCISE

## VOL 1: REPORT ON KEY FINDINGS



JUSTICE FOR MAGDALENES RESEARCH

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Photographs by Paul Sherwood/JFM Research

*This report is dedicated to the memory of  
Josie, Martina, Catherine, Kathleen, Beth, Mary,  
and all of the women who died in Ireland's Magdalene Laundries,  
for whom Dublin Honours Magdalenes came too late.*

*Justice for Magdalenes Research is eternally grateful to all of the Magdalene  
survivors who are our guiding lights and who have entrusted us with their  
testimonies.*

### **An important note regarding photographs**

The women who attended Dublin Honours Magdalenes were given an option to use a sticker system to indicate whether or not they were willing to be photographed. Women who did not wear a sticker were happy to have their photographs taken. Women wearing purple stickers were not photographed, while women wearing white stickers were happy to have photographs taken and be approached by members of the media. One woman who wore a purple sticker at the event has since indicated that she is happy for her photographs to be included in this report.

The photographs used in this report are intended to honour the women and put them at the centre of the process. The women's identities have been protected in the transcripts. The placement of photographs beside quotations in this report does not imply that the quotation is attributable to that person.

# DUBLIN HONOURS MAGDALENES LISTENING EXERCISE

6TH JUNE 2018  
MANSION HOUSE ROUND ROOM,  
DAWSON STREET, DUBLIN 2



Photograph by Paul Sherwood

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



Photographs by Paul Sherwood/JFM Research

<b>1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION</b>	<b>APPENDIX 1</b>
<b>2. METHODOLOGY</b>	List of facilitators, scribes and other volunteers
<b>2.1 CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY</b>	<b>APPENDIX 2</b>
<b>2.2 TRANSCRIPTION PROCESS</b>	Transcript of video shown at Listening Exercise
<b>2.3 REDACTION PROCESS</b>	<b>APPENDIX 3</b>
<b>2.4 WHERE TO FIND THE TRANSCRIPTS</b>	Briefing notes for facilitators and scribes
<b>3. KEY FINDINGS</b>	<b>APPENDIX 4</b>
<b>3.1 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS</b>	Information and Consent Forms
<i>Welcome from the public on Dawson Street</i>	<b>APPENDIX 5</b>
<i>President Higgins' speech and apology</i>	Dublin Honours Magdalenes Contributors and Volunteers
<b>3.2 CONCERNS RAISED BY PARTICIPANTS</b>	<b>APPENDIX 6</b>
<i>Healthcare</i>	Speeches by President of Ireland, Minister for Justice and Equality and Dublin Lord Mayor
<b>3.3 WHAT DO THEY WANT US TO KNOW?</b>	<b>APPENDIX 7</b>
<b>3.4 WHAT LESSONS SHOULD BE LEARNED?</b>	Selection of news coverage
<b>3.5 HOW SHOULD THEY BE REMEMBERED?</b>	<b>APPENDIX 8</b>
<b>3.6 FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS</b>	Request form for survivors to obtain transcripts

## Hyperlinks

Words that are **underlined and in bold** indicate a hyperlink to an internet source in the electronic version of this report.

# 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

On 6th June 2018, a formal ‘Listening Exercise’ took place in the Round Room of the Mansion House as part of Dublin Honours Magdalenes (DHM), an historic two-day event in Dublin from June 5th-6th. The event fulfilled two key aspects of the Irish State’s **Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex-Gratia Scheme**: to bring together those women seeking to meet others who also spent time in the Magdalene Laundries, and to provide an opportunity for a listening exercise to gather views from survivors on how the Magdalene Laundries should be remembered by future generations.

DHM was voluntarily organised by Norah Casey, alongside Dr Katherine O'Donnell, Dr Maeve O'Rourke and Claire McGettrick of Justice for Magdalenes Research. The event was funded by the Department of Justice and Equality, with seed funding from the Central Area Committee of Dublin City Council. A list of other contributors is at *Appendix 5*.



Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan, T.D. addressing the Gala Dinner in the Round Room of the Mansion House on 5th June, where the Listening Exercise also took place. Photograph by Paul Sherwood.

Five years earlier, in May 2013, Mr Justice John Quirke made **recommendations** to government on the provision of an ex gratia ‘restorative justice’ scheme for Magdalene survivors. The **Magdalen Commission (Quirke) Report** was distributed to Magdalene survivors who had engaged with the process. It was also published online. In June 2013 the government agreed on the Dáil record to accept all of Mr Justice Quirke’s recommendations ‘**in full**’.

Mr Justice Quirke's sixth recommendation concerned the establishment of a Dedicated Unit, which would (amongst other things) facilitate the 'acquisition, maintenance and administration of any garden, museum or other form of memorial which the Scheme's administrator, after consultation with the advisory body or committee referred to below has decided to construct or establish' (p. 12).

Judge Quirke highlighted that any such memorial or archival centre or project should be overseen by an advisory board or committee that 'should include at least 6 Magdalene women...[including] at least 2 representatives of eligible women currently living within the U.K. or elsewhere' (p. 45).



*A group of women arriving at Heuston Station on June 5th. Photograph by Paul Sherwood*

On June 5th and 6th, 2018, over 230 women who survived the Magdalene Laundries gathered in Dublin to take part in DHM. Many women were accompanied by relatives and companions, numbering an additional 200 participants. Women travelled to Dublin from right across the island; others returned to Ireland from the UK, USA, and Australia, some for the first time. The Listening Exercise took place on Day 2 of DHM.

The two-day event also involved an address by the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins, and a garden party at Áras an Uachtaráin; a gala dinner hosted by the Lord Mayor of Dublin, Mícheál Mac Donncha, at the Mansion House with an address by the Minister for Justice, Charlie Flanagan, TD; and a second night of dining and entertainment at Citywest Hotel.



*On stage with Philomena Begley at the Gala Dinner on June 5th. Photograph by Paul Sherwood.*

The Listening Exercise consisted of round-table group discussions with 147 participants. Tables were mediated by 26 volunteer facilitators who were assisted by scribes who took notes and were responsible for the audio recordings (see *Appendix 1 for list of facilitators, scribes and other volunteers*). The facilitators were invited to volunteer because they were known to members of Justice for Magdalenes Research as experienced advocates for Magdalene women and skilled at facilitating group discussions.

Most facilitators brought their own scribe, while some were provided with scribes on the day from invited volunteers, including a pool of University College Dublin (UCD) law students who had undertaken study in a Human Rights Clinic with Dr Maeve O' Rourke. These students were on hand to deliver tea and coffee to the tables and to assist the participants and facilitators in whatever manner necessary.

At the start of the exercise the participants were shown a ten-minute video which detailed how the Magdalene Institutions are currently being commemorated in Irish society and culture and surveyed the current state of ownership and repair of the buildings (see *Appendix 2 for transcript of the video*). A link to view it can be found here: <https://youtu.be/smAa5E1luA8>

Over the course of two hours participants engaged the same three questions and discussed their answers:

- 1. What should we all know about the Magdalene Laundries?*
- 2. What lessons should we learn from what happened in the Magdalene Laundries?*
- 3. How—in what ways—should we remember what happened in the Magdalene Laundries?*

The exercise closed with the participants being asked to choose a word (or a cluster of words) that summarised their experience of the Listening Exercise. The facilitators at each table were given a mic to feed back the responses to the rest of the room. The women were offered the opportunity to speak to members of the media at the conclusion of the event and many chose to do so, including some who had previously opted not to be photographed or interviewed.



*Photograph by Paul Sherwood.*

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The directors of the Listening Exercise, Dr Katherine O'Donnell and Claire McGettrick, mapped the ethical conduct for the exercise onto the protocols approved by the Research Ethics Committee of UCD's College of Human Sciences for the project: ***Magdalene Institutions: Recording an Oral and Archival History*** which was a Government of Ireland Collaborative Research Project, funded by the Irish Research Council.

The Listening Exercise consisted of round-table group discussions with the 147 participants. Tables were mediated by 26 volunteer facilitators, who were assisted by 29 volunteer scribes. Facilitators were briefed on their duties in advance by email and again on the day when they arrived 60 minutes before the participants (see *Appendix 3 for briefing notes on duties, planned schedule and confidentiality forms*).



Photograph by Paul Sherwood

### 2.1 CONSENT AND CONFIDENTIALITY

When the women arrived at the Mansion House, volunteers distributed the information and consent forms and read out aloud the information and consent notices and answered questions on the process (see *Appendix 4 for information and consent forms*). Facilitators were extremely diligent in ensuring that consent was informed, and in some cases, provided additional notes and observations to the directors where necessary.

Most women consented to have their discussions recorded, while two tables preferred not to have a recording. Many women were happy to release the audio recording from their table. However, the Listening Exercise directors took the decision not to release the audio recordings because it became obvious that it would be impossible to ensure that confidentiality could be maintained.

We did so, firstly, because in the vast majority of cases, there was at least one participant at each table who did not want their audio released and, secondly, because there was a such a high level of crosstalk (given the number of participants), it is not possible to guarantee that all identifying details would be redacted.



*Photograph by JFM Research*

## 2.2 TRANSCRIPTION PROCESS

The Listening Exercise was an unprecedented event and uncharted territory in this field of research, not only in terms of the number of women who participated, but also because the discussions happened simultaneously in the same room. Thus, because of the noise levels and the number of participants speaking at once, the transcription process was, in equal measure, challenging, rewarding, and deeply moving for everyone involved.

For example, if a portion of audio was inaudible, this was often because the sound was interrupted as a result of the participant being comforted by another woman, or because there were so many individual exchanges at each table. Every effort has been made to decipher inaudible sections, however, in some instances this was not possible.

The audio recordings were initially transcribed by Dr Clare Moriarty, Aodhán Peelo, and Sophie Gough, who took great care in producing first drafts of the documents, and consulted the notes taken by Scribes as they worked on each transcript.

In order to ensure that the transcripts were as accurate as possible, the directors took the decision to also engage the services of a professional transcription company (Virtual Office Solutions), whose transcribers carefully checked each draft transcript prior to the finalising process.

Ultimately, it is important to acknowledge that the resulting transcripts constitute a mediated version of a live, complex and dynamic event, and while great effort has been taken to insure accuracy and precision, we also acknowledge that the final published versions may well contain some minor inaccuracies.

## 2.3 REDACTION PROCESS

Redactions have been carried out by the directors of the Listening Exercise. Participants are not identified and, in most cases, each woman was assigned a pseudonym. In some instances, it was not possible to assign a pseudonym to certain participants as they either chose not to use names, or they did not identify themselves at the beginning of the audio recording. Because many women were often speaking at once, it was not always possible to identify the participants, and in such cases, *'Participant'* is used in lieu of a pseudonym.

The names of third parties have been redacted, save for instances where a pseudonym is necessary in order to understand the context of what is being said, and other identifying details such as locations, or in some cases, dates have also been removed.

## 2.4 WHERE TO FIND THE TRANSCRIPTS

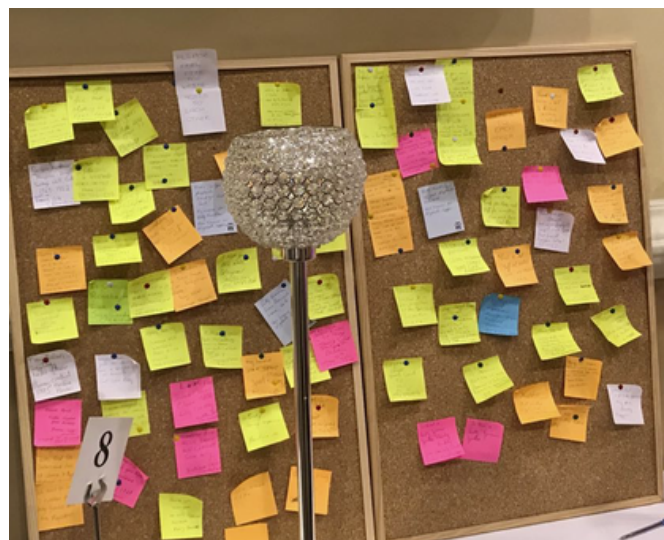
The Listening Exercise transcripts form **Volume 2** of this Report and are published separately as the document is extremely large.

**If you are a survivor and you would like to have a copy of the transcripts, please fill out the form in Appendix 8 of this Report and send to the Restorative Justice Implementation Unit at the Department of Justice.**

Transcripts can also be downloaded from the following page:

<http://jfmresearch.com/home/restorative-justice/dublin-honours-magdalenes/>

## 3. KEY FINDINGS



The message board at Citywest Hotel for survivors to leave each other notes in order to attempt to reconnect with each other. Many girls' and women's names were changed while incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries and escape or release was invariably without warning. Ed O'Loughlin likened these message boards to those found outside Red Cross tents and hospitals in the aftermath of wars and natural disasters. Photograph by Paul Sherwood.

Read: Ed O'Loughlin, 'These women survived Ireland's Magdalene Laundries. They're ready to talk.' The New York Times (6 June 2018)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/06/world/europe/magdalene-laundry-reunion-ireland.html>

### 3.1 GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

The transcripts of the discussions that took place amount to over a thousand pages. They are worth reading in their entirety. Collectively, they constitute a significant addition to the nation's historical record. They offer an unprecedented account of former Magdalene women meeting and talking with fellow survivors, often for the first time since they left those institutions. **Many women were trying to see if they could recognise each other and make connections.**

The twenty-six groups each followed their unique development of discussion with most of the women introducing themselves by recounting the key points **of their biographies, which were often traumatic to recount and hear.** Some participants were more vocal than others but all were actively engaged in listening to each other, often comforting each other or offering words of support and indeed, rounds of applause. Women became visibly upset and a few left the tables for some time-out (but most returned).

## WELCOME FROM THE PUBLIC ON DAWSON STREET

Given the immediate context of the Listening Exercise as integral to the Dublin Honours Magdalenes (DHM) event, many women mentioned **the profound impact it had on them to see all of the people who came out to welcome them on Dawson Street the night before.** For many, this welcome told them that there was no longer any public shame in having been confined in a Magdalene Laundry. Some wished that women they knew who were unable or chose not to attend could have shared in that experience.



*And all the people last night [on Dawson Street] moved me so much... And I said to them...to think that someone recognised us...I never saw anything like it.*

*Amazing, amazing...I actually ended up going over and shaking their hands, and thanking them for supporting us. It was like, we turned that corner on the bus expecting a few cameras, maybe. Amazing.*



*It was like we were being welcomed back into society, or whatever.*

*It's like we were being forgiven. Accepted again, that we're humans, yeah.*



*They were sobbing. 'Welcome home,' you know.*

*...a girl called me over and shook me hand...actually cried because...it's after taking a little bit of a burden off me.*

*But still, we remember...like...like last night, to see the women, and people to come out and welcome us, it was so emotional... Like, we thought...that nobody wanted us.*



*And we'd also like to thank all these people that supported us.*



*I felt like a celebrity.*





*Did you see that crowd out there yesterday when we were coming in?...Those women, they really... they were saying, 'you look nice! Welcome home, sisters'.*

*You know the people that were outside here yesterday...The crowds that were out there? They, to me, understood more about us than we do about ourselves...From what they're reading and they were well-informed...*



*There was a young little girl there... She's the generation that's going to remember this.*

*I don't think anyone in this room will forget them people out there, welcoming us last night*



## PRESIDENT HIGGINS' SPEECH AND APOLOGY

President Michael D. Higgins' speech and apology at the Áras was warmly received and there was general agreement about how well they had been treated during the DHM event. The women felt they were treated with respect, and that was deeply meaningful for them.



*The...[speech] that Mr Higgins done yesterday, that made me cry...*



*Like what you basically need is respect and I think it was shown this week to us by the President, which not everybody gets that opportunity, but it was a great opportunity for us. Well-deserved I would say, but in the other way, it was lovely, you know, and I do appreciate what the President did yesterday and what them people outside that gate [on Dawson Street] yesterday, they were absolutely tremendous. People we didn't even know. I even get goose bumps... even talking about it.*



*A very good man. He was so sincere.*



*I was still ashamed to go on camera yesterday [on the first day of the event]. So, I still had that. That's ... what I want everybody to do, including myself, now is to say, 'to Hell with them! Go in front of the cameras!' But I'm just speaking for me. I need personally to say, 'go out there! Don't hide behind the curtain... go out there and throw your hands up in the air and be proud of who you are and who you became'. And let the world know that I don't care what people think of me. As President Higgins said yesterday, 'If you can't love yourself, you have no business loving someone else!' That's what I need to do. I want to come out here and say 'to hell with this media, I faced them!' But I still have that shame. I'm still ashamed.*



## 3.2 CONCERNS EXPRESSED BY PARTICIPANTS

### HEALTHCARE

As many of the transcripts make clear, the women insist (repeatedly) that the Health Card, as recommended in Justice Quirke's *Magdalen Commission Report* (and explained in detail in Appendix G to that report) and agreed to 'in full' by the government, was not what was delivered to them by Government under the Magdalen Restorative Justice Ex Gratia scheme. The Quirke Report advised that the Irish State should provide health services equivalent to those provided under the HAA card, which was given in the 1990s to people who contracted Hepatitis C from contaminated blood products.

**Magdalene survivors accepted the terms and conditions of the Restorative Justice Scheme and signed away their right to sue the state on the promise of an enhanced health service. However, ultimately the benefits offered to them are essentially nothing more than the routine healthcare service offered to state medical cardholders, which most of them already have due to their low income or advanced age.**

A number of survivors living outside Ireland also expressed frustration at the state's failure to deliver healthcare benefits to women in the Diaspora - indeed, some women did not know they were entitled to such a benefit in the first place.



Survivor Elizabeth Coppin speaking to a journalist.  
Photograph by Paul Sherwood

*We're not able to use ours in England. I spoke to Judge Quirke*

*Did you get the medical card in England?*

*-No, no...*

*'...there's also a point I want to bring up, and it's one of the reasons I'm here today...is what we were promised in the Quirke Report. The stuff that we're entitled to, as...being survivors.*

*Now, this is a letter I got at the time... 'This, the bill, provides for a broad range of health services, which we will receive free of charge. These services will include general practitioner, medical and surgical. Drugs, medicine and surgical. Nursing services, home help services. Dental, ophthalmic and aural services. Counselling services, chiropody services and physio services'. Now out of that, at the moment...the only thing I have...is...my medicine free. And... I have got free counselling.*



*You're asking what we'd like the government to do. I would actually like them to fully implement Judge John Quirke's recommendations. He recommended a medical card of a HAA. You know, that would give us a lot of benefits that we could access things that's wrong with us in life because this medical card he gave us, enhanced medical card, it's not much more than the ordinary medical card. ...We get our medications. We don't have to pay for our medication, but other things they said we're entitled to, it's not happening.*

*[Judge Quirke] recommended a medical card...that would give us a lot of benefits that we could access things that's wrong with us in life because this medical card he gave us, enhanced medical card, it's not much more than the ordinary medical card.*

*You know, we're pensioners. We got this booklet telling us that we could get our eyes tested twice a year. But you get that anyway as a pensioner! But they thought they were giving us something extra... But still...still if I want to go and get my eyes tested, I still have to get permission from the HSE, but this card was telling us, and the booklet was telling us... as far as we were concerned we didn't have to fill in no forms. We get the same benefits as a pensioner and that needs to be rectified.*



*[Judge Quirke] recommended a medical card...that would give us a lot of benefits that we could access things that's wrong with us in life because this medical card they gave us...it's not much more than the ordinary medical card.*

*And even with this magic medical card...you have to pay for your blood. So, I have no sense on the principle of the thing...The physiotherapist is actually the same as when you have an ordinary medical card.*



*But you know with it all we were supposed to get ...counselling... and the dentist. We were supposed to get all those. But you get them automatically as a pensioner...When I accepted my money that time, I had to sign a form that said I would never take another penny off them...you have to pay €600 then to the solicitor and he signed off that you accepted your money.*

*Don't make promises they're not going to keep to people. Because I really thought like, this is the opportunity for us all to get counselling, to talk to someone. This is counselling to me. Everybody sharing, you know.*

*It is really embarrassing when you see the card.*

*We were promised the medical card that would give us a climb up on the ladder for our teeth, for our eyes... everything. Haven't got it... We got the card, but we never got anything to go with it. And I got a private number to ring and they never answer it.*

The above descriptions of the deficiencies in the healthcare received under the scheme are supported by a Letter to the Editor of the *Journal of the Irish Dental Association* (Aug/Sept 2015, Vol 61(4)) by several dentists who wrote about the card that Magdalene survivors received: 'with this card they are entitled to the limited and incomplete treatment that the DTSS provides for most medical card holders. It is believed that more than 90% of these women who live in the State already have a medical card'. The authors called on the Council of the Irish Dental Association 'to publicly disassociate itself from this act by the Government and to speak out publicly on behalf of its members who do not accept the injustice we are expected to support.'

### 3.3 WHAT DO THEY WANT US TO KNOW?

**The women who survived the Magdalene institutions want us to listen to them and hear what happened to them.** Many women addressed the fact that for decades they remained silent (sometimes not sharing their past with husbands, children, and family members) for fear of the stigma and shame attached to having spent time in a Magdalene Laundry. Likewise, other women were convinced that they would never be believed, that they would be seen as against the nuns or church, that their experiences did not matter to the powerful in Irish society. After the Taoiseach's apology, and the apologies from Minister for Justice Flanagan and President Higgins the day before, the women very much want the historical record to reflect the truth of what happened to them.

*What I'd like people to remember about the Magdalene Laundries is they punished women for situations that the woman had no control over. They punished them as children and blamed them for situations that they were in that they had no control over.*



Photograph by Paul Sherwood

*The regime, it was a regimental way of life and there was a regime, and it was a very harsh regime. And some of the girls were very young, I suppose it doesn't matter what age they were, just that the cruelty, the hard labour, working ... you know you're not getting paid at the end of the week.*



*I hope it will never happen again.*

*I call the Magdalene Laundries  
illegal confinement.*



Many women wanted the record to show that many victims of rape/sexual abuse, including young girls, were confined in the laundries while the perpetrators went free. They feel keenly the injustice done to them because they were young women and girls.

*The rape victims were singled out. I remember one woman had a child, and the priest got up on the altar, when he found she was pregnant, she'd to leave the parish as a bad example. He would never mention the man responsible...*

*...it was all women that was punished, while the guilty walked free.*

One table made the point that the *Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries (IDC)* did not accurately reflect their abusive experiences:

*...afterwards, reading, upon reflection and reading his report, I gathered that all of us who were in industrial schools and spoke to him, we all associated the word 'abuse' as the beatings. We weren't associating the psychological, the solitary confinement, the name changing...he should have been more specific to us because he was the so-called 'educated person'. And he should have said, 'when you're talking about abuse, there's different types of abuse,' and I've come to realise afterwards, only when I read his, I thought, 'oh my God, I said 'no''. ...But yet I was telling him I was in solitary confinement as well.'*



Photographs by Paul Sherwood



Photograph by Fiona Ward

Many were upset about being stereotypically misrepresented as ‘fallen women’, unmarried mothers, and/or prostitutes. Some women feel conflicted between, on the one hand, the relief they feel at an increasingly sympathetic public attitude to their histories, and on the other hand, ongoing frustration at the assumption that their life stories and the circumstances that led them to be incarcerated are all similar and fit pejorative stereotypes.

*People out there think when they hear of High Park or where they hear laundries, that we were all prostitutes...We are not all prostitutes...And people just assumed because...Mary Magdalene, because that name was there, they thought we were prostitutes from the streets. And it's so awful. It's a label that we've carried all them years.*

*I went into the chemist and I was actually asked in the chemist, ‘oh, do you have a baby?’... I had to go in to the dentist there with my card [from the Magdalene Redress Scheme] and I thought, ‘everybody knows’.*

*And we didn't all have babies. I didn't have a baby.*

*Assuming that you had a baby and that was it, end of story.*



Some tables were emphatic that religious orders should not continue to have a role in social services, especially those services funded by the state.

*Any young people getting involved with the nuns, keep as far away from them as possible.*

*I can only say a lot of things were hidden, now, right? And the government believed anything that was said to them. But now I'm glad to know that they do realise what we went through and hope they maybe do something about it. Well...to make it clear that it did happen...because...a lot of people are still bitter about what was said. 'Oh they wouldn't do that, they wouldn't do that'. But they weren't fucking living with them, to be honest, you know what I mean? ..We are the sufferers. But now, thank God, we are the survivors.*

*Let me tell you what the nun said to the rape victim. The woman said she was frightened and the nun said, 'ah, you're always whinging,' she said, 'you never stop whinging'. And she said, 'ah, if I could only get out'. And the nun turned around and said to her, 'out? When you were out, you weren't able to mind yourself'. Imagine saying that to a rape victim!*



Other participants wanted their views to be recorded thus: that they did not consider that all nuns have behaved badly but that the nuns had choices about how they lived their lives while the girls and the women of the Magdalene institutions had no choice but to submit to enforced labour and incarceration.

*And in saying this, there was some very, very bad nuns, but I also have to say there was a couple, very good, one nun in particular who stood up to the others who were bullies. And to them people, I kept in contact all my life until they died. But as for the others, it's terrible to say the word 'hate' because it's not right, but you can't help how you feel.*

*And when they were nice, they were...I found with some of them, mainly the young ones, were gentle and kind. You might get one or two of the cranky old ones, but they wouldn't mean any...it was like they were prisoners. You felt, looking back, I felt they felt frustrated with their lives. Because they had the same mundane [existence] although they had choices.*

There was also a sense that **it was important to acknowledge the complicity of the wider society**; that the collusion of politicians, social workers, medical workers, the judiciary and police in upholding the system should be taken seriously

*I was actually terrified walking down because they seen me coming out of [the laundry], and I didn't know what they were going to do. It was the fear. I was afraid to go out of the convent. Terrified—because of the people outside, as well. I think it was the fear that was put in us on the inside.*

*Don't judge me.  
And I have been judged. I've been judged.*

*But it was a collusion, and it suited...the church did it, ...[b]ut they were backed up by the [state] and they knew what was going on.*

*It was the State and the church together, yeah.*



Photograph by Paul Sherwood

The **theme of being kept under surveillance** even after leaving the Magdalene institutions was quite strong at some tables. Many spoke of how they were transferred from the laundries and put to work in hospitals also run by nuns, that they were afraid of being sent back to the Laundries if they were not seen to be docile and compliant. Some felt they had to leave Ireland to escape the shame and stigma of being identified as a Magdalene and because they were constantly fearful of being sent back to the nuns. Indeed, a large number of women travelled to the event from the UK, while others came from the USA and Australia.

*I escaped Ireland because I was always afraid of being put back...I said I would go to Australia. I was always afraid of being put back.*



*Anyone that got out, literally went to England or wherever, and didn't want to come back for fear of being put in the laundries again.*

*It kills me to come from England, as soon as I hit Ireland, everything hits me...You have to give up your country because of what the nuns have done to you. It's sad.*

*Sure my first job, I was threatened. The manager, the manageress that was over me, I was talking to a fellow one day and she told me I'd go back to Limerick again.*

### 3.4 WHAT LESSONS SHOULD BE LEARNED?

The women call for better supports for women and children, and they insist that we find ways to listen to children and to ‘the unimportant people’, that Irish society commit to looking behind ‘closed doors to ask vulnerable people how they are being treated’, and that as a nation we learn to address people’s suffering.

For the women who survived the Magdalene Laundries it is important that we learn from the past and ensure it doesn’t happen again.

They want assurances that nothing like what happened to them ever be allowed to recur.

*Basically, what people should understand and know, that we were unimportant people, we didn't need to be remembered or mentioned, because they were believed, and that's what I'm saying, no matter what they said they were believed, we weren't, so there was no point, we were wrong, so there was no point in us complaining because nobody listened. And that was saying, and there was a lot of girls, or women now, that I know, and they say what's the point in complaining? Cos nobody listens.*



Photograph by Paul Sherwood

Well, I'd like to say that as we're older women, that the younger people that will be studying this and looking at this, that we could be a light or a torch down that path to let them see what's down there...so that if they see, when they're old enough and mature enough, if they see an injustice starting to happen, before it gets out of control, they can look at that light and say, 'hold on, hey, stop, this happened before'. Do you know, like those holding [Direct Provision] centres for immigrants, they've been in them for 10 years. They're not allowed to earn money, they're given an allowance every week. Their children are living in adult [inaudible]...they are given no education.



*...for it to never [e]ver, happen again. And make a promise to the women...*

And young people need to ask loads of questions and to manage and everything. Don't be frightened to ask because we were frightened. We were conditioned to not ask questions as young people...Yeah, so as there'd be a continuous monitoring of everything and they should have mentors as well. So be careful, young people. That's all. No monument statues I think. They'd be wasting money. Just keep it for the young people.



*...to understand that we did nothing wrong.*

*Let's open a lot of people's eyes, what goes [on] in behind closed doors. Go and find out more information...In other places...It's like old folk's homes, you hear all about people getting abuse[d].*

*We [inaudible] this for the history books. Don't treat women like we were treated back then. Anyone, anyone, okay? And don't ever take a baby away from their mother. And that's my say.*



*Just please God, let it never happen again, you know, that it could never happen again*

*We have to educate the youngsters coming up now so it never can be happening again.*



*That what happened to us will never again happen to another girl or woman in this lifetime...that Ireland will start looking after its children and its women because for a long time they did not do that.*

Many participants expressed the strong opinion that women should have a much more powerful say in public policy and governance.



*Women have to stand up. Women have to just stand up. I mean, God bless, I've been doing it so long the past couple of years and it's exhausting, but I am lucky I'm free and I'm able to do it. And I am not afraid of any of that. ..But as women, we have to stand up for ourselves first before someone stands up for us. Am I right?*

*The youngsters have to be educated and know...like this #MeToo thing that came out. That no means no. The same goes for this...where somebody's trying to control you. That's what the religious and the State did to all us women in Ireland. They were controlling you.*

*I think it will change, but it will take time because the young Irish today, the young girls I've spoken to, they're very articulate and they're very precise and they're very confident and self-assured, not like the way that we were brought up. And I think, maybe it's the same with the young boys, I don't know, but I'm hoping it will be women will be more in power, in a way. It doesn't mean they won't have the...but I would like to see just the Irish culture changing politically.*

## 3.5 HOW SHOULD THEY BE REMEMBERED?

**Public education, and in particular the education of school children, was a strong and constant theme in how the former Magdalene women want to be remembered.** Many view education as a protective measure to enable people understand that the church and state have the potential to incarcerate people as they have done it in the recent past. Moreover, they believe that awareness of such a possibility might protect younger generations from a similar fate or help them recognise related practices in contemporary society. It was striking to see the women's trust in young Irish people and their confidence that today's youth would take better care of the socially vulnerable if they are educated about 20th Century carceral institutions in Ireland, including industrial schools, Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries. **Above all, the women insist that what happened to them should never be forgotten.**

*To make it clear that it did happen... 'Cause a lot of people... said, 'oh they wouldn't do that.'*



*Through history.*



*It should be under social history... It should be compulsory... I'd like them to read the whole history of the Magdalene Laundries.*



*I think through books... I think you could just introduce it gradually and say something like Irish history, the foundation of the Magdalene Laundries, when they started and then when Ireland became independent in 1922, they got into the Irish government. The Catholic Church took over and made them into money-spinning and they kept the women prisoners. That's when it all started by the Irish State... Contrary to what we say about the British, they were free to come and go when the British were in charge, but since 1922, the Irish started this Magdalene system. And I think something like that to show that the ages of the children that went in were something similar to their ages.*



*Education. Education.*

*They need to be very aware of what Ireland has done to people like us.*

*Educating children in schools. It should be in our history. Irish history. It should be. I mean, the worst person, one of the worst people in the world, was Hitler. He was known by, he never lost his name or his identity. It wasn't stripped from him. Ours was.*



*Educate people. That's the crux of it, isn't it? Because it must never be forgotten. It's part of the Irish history, isn't it? So, it should be taught in the schools. Children learn history, don't they? And they should know what they've come from...*



*Education [for children and young people in care].*

*...the education of the next generation.*

*In the history, it should be in history.*

*It should be in the history books.*



*They have to educate, educate, educate...[s]o that this never, ever, ever happens [again].*



*...all the names should [be] put on [a memorial]...I think school children... should be brought to the monument. The teachers should tell them exactly.*



*They should have a scholarship. The Magdalene scholarship. For the grandchildren.*

*[E]ach city that was running the laundry. They should pay a scholarship.*

*...these are important lessons for Ireland.*

*I think every child in Ireland should be taught. I do.*



*Told all about the Magdalene people.*



*And it's only when I...had my own children, I realised education means so much to us, but we never got it.*

There was emphatic agreement when one facilitator asked the direct question if learning about the Magdalene Laundries should form part of the Leaving Certificate curriculum.

When probed about what should be addressed in educational initiatives, the responses included:



*The truth.*

*No holds barred.*



*Emotion and everything in it.*



*The truth.*

*...the truth.*

The women who have died behind Magdalene walls and are buried in mass graves across the country were repeatedly mentioned as a community that should never be forgotten. Some of the women mentioned attending the annual **Flowers for Magdalenes** events and stated how important these events are.

*Look at all the people that died and were never honoured...Honour the people that worked there.*



After Dublin Honours Magdalenes, JFM Research members visited Glasnevin Cemetery and placed flowers on the Magdalene graves.  
(Missing from photo: Mari Steed)

*[There] should be something in each county...each county to represent the women, maybe in a graveyard, a plaque or a Celtic cross to say 'to honour these women who were incarcerated and died and perished in the Magdalene Laundries'...in each cemetery maybe where there was a Magdalene Laundry.*

*There's graveyards at Donnybrook...And it just gets forgotten. Nothing on it. There are ladies getting forgotten...No one goes up to see them anymore or anything.*



Some of the Magdalene graves at Donnybrook.

While there was consensus on the importance of educational initiatives there was not the same measure of unanimity on whether there should be a distinct material memorial dedicated to the Magdalenes.

*Statues, what good is a statue?*

*No statues, yeah.*

*Do we honestly need a statue that says the Magdalene, when we're all dead and gone?*

*I'm sure what Ireland would be better to do...[i]s getting to the end of this. This is what they've done now, and it's going to take another five, to ten maybe years, and I would hope after that time, Magdalene Laundries was never mentioned in Ireland.*



However, the vast majority of the participants supported the creation of a prominent commemorative monument or space, or a commemorative day or event.

*...somewhere to go and reflect.*

*[The memorial should be] [i]n the centre of Dublin, because then they can come from everywhere.*



*I think the money should be spent on a plaque... 'Mea culpa' ... [A plaque] [s]omewhere in Dublin, because Dublin is the capital. Just a plaque with mea culpa, mea culpa, and a few words to say, 'We will forever make sure that this never happens again'.*



*I think a statue...*

*Statue...*

*Statue, I think, yeah...*

*It would just be lovely to have something on O'Connell Street to remember.*

*...a statue of a woman in O'Connell Street...with all the other statues to everyone. And especially for all the women who died within the convents and for those who've died since. It would mean a lot I think to every Magdalene survivor.*



*I would say, myself personally, if I come to Dublin, I probably am not going to go to the park. I'm going to go shopping or I'm going to go to see a show. And if there was a monument near the city, people would see it and be aware of it, whereas I don't think if somebody comes to Dublin for a day, they're going to make their way to the park...They need to be very aware of what Ireland has done to people like us.*



*[E]vents like [Dublin Honours Magdalenes].’ They could have a free, a free day just for mothers and women. Say every 5 years.*

*...a day that's called ‘Magdalene Day’...[a] commemorative day.*

*A day of remembrance...*

*I think drama...*

*And have a memorial day. Once a year even for all the women.*



*...memorialisation right around the country. If there was something put up in every town, where it was. Every town. Because you couldn't exclude any one town. They all went through it, you know. So something, no matter how small it is, it means something. It's only a plaque, a statue or whatever. But definitely there should be a big statue in Dublin. That should be the main one. Then all the other towns, something to remember. And when people pass by, they'll read it and they'll think ... that will help them remember. Through the future generations, it will help them remember.*



*I would like a garden with a fountain in the middle with water flowing. I'd like a sculpture like the Phoenix or just women swimming in the centre. The women with their hands high up in the sky, with sympathetic. They've been through sadness and at the centre of their eyes are warm. I like the building to be used as a charity. A place where the people could stay - a retiring home, or some place they could go on holidays, or somewhere you could go for healing. I would like a light - like all colours, like the rainbow. Again, something like the Phoenix coming up. I'd like a light for the dead relations - for all those that died in the laundries. And I want a place for the healing. And this event has brought healing to all of us.*

Some participants specifically addressed the issue of what should be done with the former Sean McDermott Street Magdalene building, which is in public ownership and at the time of the Listening Exercise was proposed to be sold to a budget hotel chain.



*I would like to get a tour in Sean McDermott Street... A tour around...you know, for remembrance...inside. That's my opinion... and the other one is that I would like Sean McDermott Street if it were made into a museum'.*

*I'd love to see that demolished.*

*I'd make sure it was gone...Burn the bloody thing down.*

*Burn it down.*

*[Burning it down] still wouldn't take away your memories, though, would it?*



*It could be a museum.*

*...a museum [that] anyone can go into. ...This will be part of the history...*

*And if they're going to...not knock it to the ground, like if they're going to make something out of [Seán MacDermott Street] a safe home for women and children, and especially young pregnant girls. Girls like me who ran away from home, somewhere safe to go.*

*I think we should all get together... and fight that that place stays open, or stays open as a monument.*

*For one thing, I would never, ever, ever stay there [if it became a hotel]. Bad. Disrespectful.*



*What hardship we all went through. And that's why I think one of them should be left standing as a laundry, as an institution, and this institution, like Kilmainham Gaol. People go into Kilmainham Gaol because they know the history of it. The same way with the laundry.*



*But if the [laundry] machinery was [available at any of the laundries] or if they had it put somewhere, it would be nice even if they're going to build student accommodation that they put the machinery out, you know in nice gardens as a remembrance. And I think something like that should be put in every Magdalene Laundry that was in Ireland. Not just one, in the whole lot of them, you know.*

## 3.6 FEEDBACK FROM THE PARTICIPANTS ON THEIR EXPERIENCE OF THE LISTENING EXERCISE

Near the end of the Listening Exercise, each facilitator asked the women to sum up the experience of the two-hour event in a single word or brief phrase. The facilitators then shared each table's feedback to the wider group as a microphone travelled from one table to the next. This feedback is transcribed verbatim below and in the order that it was delivered on the day. Also included are final remarks from Assoc. Prof. Katherine O'Donnell, Principal Investigator of the Listening Exercise and Norah Casey, lead organiser and ambassador to Dublin Honours Magdalenes.

### Table 10

Hi, everybody. The words we had from our table were 'heart-breaking,' that this was 'sad, but very fulfilling'. It was really about releasing years of emotion. One of the comments that was really great was that one of the ladies at our table was indifferent at the start, but by the end felt that this was really a process of release, that this afforded great solace and it was about solidarity. Thank you. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Dr Jennifer O'Mahoney; Scribe: Maria Ronan]*

### Table 16

Hi everyone. We had a list of quite emotional words. So we had 'sad,' 'relief,' 'safe'. We had a sense it was really good to share stories together. Again, there was solidarity between the women that maybe wasn't obvious, even at the start of this sharing. And there was still a sense of rawness about it. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Sarah Browne; Scribe: Sarah Grice]*

### Table 1

So our words. 'Free-spirited,' 'freedom,' 'not ashamed to speak,' and 'a sense of releasing the chains and letting go of the burden of what's been carried for so long'. 'Feeling good,' and 'education'. Letting everybody know, like educating the young, educating children. Another word was 'memory,' and then we're talking about 'shame,' and the shame is of the religious orders and what they did. [Applause] And our final one was 'love,' and realising how much love there is for every woman here. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Prof. Aislinn O'Donnell; Scribe: Seán Henry]*

**Table 24**

Hello. We found it difficult at this table to limit it to three words. [Sound of microphone feedback] Sorry. So 'emotional' and 'harrowing' were mentioned, but on the positive side, [a] 'weight lifting' and 'a sense of release'. I think that's a common thread. Women felt that they'd all learned from listening to their colleagues' experiences, and it corroborated very importantly their own experiences, they feel less isolated. It's been 'eye-opening,' 'shocking,' but on a positive note, 'unifying'. They feel as though they're part of a very, very unique group who have something important to give to society. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: William Quill; Scribe: Susan Lohan]*

**Table 26**

So our group said they were previously apprehensive before coming, but felt a sense of relief after talking, felt relaxed. One of the terms is 'like coming off an oxygen tank'. There was also a sense of sadness sharing their stories, but being grateful for opening up, and that there was a great sense of camaraderie amongst all of the women, and there was a great feeling of welcome, both here and yesterday with everyone at the Mansion House yesterday evening, and want to thank everybody who came out [on Dawson Street], and just a feeling of being very grateful for yesterday and today. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Tara Casey; Scribes: Ciara Landy, Eily Mathews]*

**Table 19**

So our table found it hard to limit our words, our emotions to three, but we did talk about how emotional it was to be here. And we spoke about freedom and a sense of release when we were here listening to each other's stories. And the connections between everyone's stories and the similarities between the women's stories I think came through very clearly, particularly women who talked about coming and arriving at the Magdalene Laundry and seeing the gates of Seán McDermott Street. And that seemed to be a point of connection for a lot of women, that they felt the emotion, they were transported back to that time and they felt that, you know, the strength of that emotion and pain really. Yeah, so some people are feeling bad. They're feeling...they've a headache, they don't feel good, but what is coming out of this conversation as well is that they feel a connection and they don't feel as isolated, I think people were talking about. Not feeling as isolated and feeling respect. So thank you. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Dr Sinéad Ring; Scribe: Jason Murray]*

**Table 7**

Okay, so our table, the words that I was asked to convey is that the feeling is that they're not alone, I guess all of you are not alone, 'not forgotten,' 'supportive,' 'sisterhood,' 'strength,' and a desire that this can make a difference for now and for future generations. [Applause].

*[Facilitator: Fiona Fox; Scribe: Sam Lynch]*

**Table 4**

From the wonderful people at this table, the following. 'Comfortable,' 'the importance of it being a shared experience,' 'a healing experience,' 'the importance of listening to each other'. They were 'delighted,' 'found it brilliant and great to just have people around'. It was 'therapeutic'. 'It was an experience of a lifetime and it was part of something very big.' [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Dr Danielle Petherbridge; Scribe Catherine Murray]*

**Table 25**

Okay, thank you. Thanks to everyone round the table for sharing the words and to [name removed] for sharing these amazing photographs as well. The words that tumbled out of our conversation, 'slave labour,' 'institution saturated in lies,' 'physical and sexual abuse'. In terms of the process this morning, I think everyone said it was a great help to be able to express themselves, and a number of things we said around the table have never been said before, and I think it's important to recognise the immense bravery that it took to do that. In terms of the future, it was stressed the importance of robust inspection of all institutions in Irish societies, including nursing homes and similar places. One thing they've said a number of times was, you know, 'please take care of the youth today,' and there was particular attention given to children and people in foster care, and the importance of robust inspection. And then finally, the thing that came out of our conversation was the need to continue to raise awareness of all forms of abuse in Irish society. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Dr Paul Michael Garrett; Scribe: Emer Slattery]*

**Table 11**

There was a feeling of rawness in the session of sharing stories. There was a description of having...‘wearing an invisible scar on your body then your whole life afterwards’. There was feelings of ‘sadness,’ ‘of pain,’ and ‘wanting to forget’. There was anger that it was understood to be a man-made situation. One woman wrote, ‘I love my mother country, but I hate the system’. There was doubt as to whether or not this moment is about publicity. ‘Is it just going to go away?’ But there was a feeling that being greeted yesterday by women outside [the Mansion House on Dawson Street] was a very powerful moment, that people felt loved. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Jesse Jones; Scribe: Sara O’Rourke; Audio: Donna Rose]*

**Table 9**

Hey folks. So on our table, and again, thank you to all of the ladies who shared and participated. So, ‘it was interesting to listen to other women's stories,’ ‘glad to have someone to listen to us,’ ‘great to listen to everyone else.’ So that's the sense of community and sharing, sharing experiences. But, ‘it was slavery,’ and, ‘it was a prison,’ and ‘I am angry and frustrated,’ ‘let down and alone,’ ‘degraded’. On the other hand it was...the process this morning was, ‘educational and inspiring,’ ‘speechless,’ and to finish, one lady just said, ‘I feel okay’. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Assoc. Prof. James Smith; Scribe: Colleen Taylor]*

**Table 17**

So at our table, we got three words from each of the women that we were talking to here this morning and while we went through a lot of the darker stuff, the words that we've come up with give some sense of the conversation we were having. So those words are ‘emotional,’ ‘relief,’ ‘wants closure,’ so ‘still wants closure,’ that ‘the feeling was good’ and that the woman enjoyed the session and also that she felt a connection with the other women here. The third set of words were...the...one of our women here referring to the participation with the others and she complimented their modesty, graciousness and the increasing sense of confidence from the experience this morning. And that was from our table here. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Sarah Clancy; Scribe: Sarah Ferrigan]*

**Table 3**

Thank you. We had a very open and emotional conversation I think at this table. The predominant feelings following the conversation were sort of...the positive feelings were a sense of relief, that it was a brilliant process, a sort of feeling of happiness and a sense of...some sense of closure, but also just a strong feeling of heartbreak and sadness and the pain of looking back on the things that happened. In terms of the process itself, there was a real positive sense that it was wonderful to be finally understood, to have the truth spoken in their own words, that was very important. 'To be believed at last,' and 'to be trusted' and to have a chance to personally say something that will go down in history, 'down into the history books,' in their own words. And the final sort of lesson from our table was that we're all different as well. There's a sense of solidarity, but everyone has their own unique experiences and that came out very strongly in our conversation, and that people have dealt with things differently and responded to things differently and that everyone is dealing with things in their own different ways. Thanks very much. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Assoc. Prof. Daniel Deasy; Scribe: Laura Sicat]*

**Table 6**

Thank you to the amazing women that I have met today and the amazing women at this table for sharing their sense of overwhelming support through this process today and the sense of honesty and truth and great emotion in the room. Some kind of lessons really, 'to pay it forward,' 'never give up' and about 'today as a result of never giving up'. 'I hope the next generation take our word for it, but I feel sick at the idea they might not.' 'We are opening up, but there are many women who could not be here today,' and that 'we have to share our stories and to also make spaces available for those women to share their stories later.' 'Only the wounded can heal the wounded,' and then also really beautifully, 'we can be a light for younger women'. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Assoc. Prof. Emilie Pine; Scribe: Emma Penney]*

**Table 13**

So I suppose, kind of four main themes came out of our table when we talked about the experience this morning. The first one was in relation to the burden that has been lifted by having this conversation this morning and some of the words were, 'chains released,' 'lifted a load,' and, 'unburdened'. And then others talked about the emotion that they felt this morning and one word that was used was actually 'emotional'. [Contd.]

**Table 13 contd.**

Another word, 'depressing'. Someone said that they were sad to have to have the conversation in the first place, but happy that they had and someone talked about the flashbacks that the conversation this morning resulted in them having. Some talked about the friendship. Some women knew each other before sitting down at the table this morning, others didn't, so they talked about friendship, old and new. And then I can't blame them, but quite a few people said that they were in need of a stiff drink or a large brandy after it. [Laughter] [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Lewis Mooney; Scribe: Isabelle Aylmer]*

**Table 5**

A couple of the themes of our discussions of past experiences, which were sort of a sense that there were misconceptions, that there was judgement, which the ladies turned into an imperative of 'don't judge me,' and, 'don't assume to know my experience,' for example. And related to that, a sense of not being believed and not being listened to and an imperative in relation to that, to believe and to listen when someone comes to you as a lesson for the future. In terms of our exercise this morning, I was told that someone felt drained, which I can understand. But I was also told that they felt a sense of understanding and relief, which others have mentioned as well, and a sense of...a feeling of empathy and also just some very terrific words about feeling happy and the experience today and yesterday has been wonderful. So I'd like to just add one word myself, which is that I'm very grateful and thank you for sharing your stories. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Elina Eriksson; Scribe: Chloe Gott]*

**Table 8**

I'm very honoured to have had the experience of listening to these incredible women this morning and I'm very conscious that I am now speaking for them, which is something that has been done in this country, but I understand the practical implications of why I'm doing that, but I just need to name that for myself. So we also had two women on our table who passed away, who couldn't be here, so Maisie's friend, and Stella [pseudonyms] were given a space at our table as well, so I just want to acknowledge them before I go through what everyone else has said. [Applause] So Margo [pseudonym] said she felt great to be able to remember all that's been buried. It was great to be able to access emotions and feelings and stories that have been buried through talking to other women. [Contd.]

**Table 8 contd.**

Fay [pseudonym] said she was emotional. She was taken aback, but it was really nice to get it all out there. Lucy [pseudonym] said that nobody listened to us, she said nobody listened to them. She said that she felt heard. She felt, 'we are being heard now,' but she said that she's 'terrified that this will all just go into a drawer and that they will get away with it'. That's a very real fear on our table, that this is just going to go into a drawer and nothing will be done with the testimony that's been recorded here today. Maisie said, 'this is the raw reality of the experience of the Magdalene Laundries,' and she feels she did the right thing by telling her story, like she's felt since she first told her story, and she'd like to wish all the organisers the best and to hope they have good guidance. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Grace Dyas; Scribes: Veronica Dyas/Cliona Buckley]*

**Contribution from Maisie, a survivor who was at Table 8**

This is not going to go into the history books. It's going to be done by the committee [JFM Research] here that's led by Jim, Claire, Maeve and all the group that went to the European Courts of Human Rights [United Nations human rights committees] to help us. Us, all of us that's been through the same thing and told, 'you've got a nice job, you're going to like it'. We didn't like it and we didn't stay at it. Some of us had no choice but to stay. But I would say what we ask you all for a special applause and thank you to the whole committee of the Magdalene committee. [Applause] It is to them we owe this, being able to come here, being able to talk, to tell our story. We didn't fabricate it, as we were accused of in in certain areas, but people will talk anyway, whether they like it or not, but we couldn't care less. We told the truth. But all I can say is well done to the committee, every single one of you, for what you have done at the European Courts of Human Rights, and you remind me so much of Mary Robinson, who in the seventies...and the wonderful speech she made in the Senate when she demanded to have rights so that there must be never again a place where somebody will say to you, 'you're here because nobody wants you'. [Applause] That must never happen again. [Applause]

**Table 21**

That's very unfair now, Maisie, that I've to follow you with the ladies' words! So the words that came up here were 'emotional,' and, 'trying to hold back the tears,' and a big ginormous 'why did any of this happen in the first place to anyone?' Also an expression of hope and impatience that there's a swift apology for Mother and Baby Homes and what happened there, and that people don't have to wait years and years, like they did for the Magdalene apology. People found it interesting to listen to one another. [Contd.]

**Table 21 contd.**

Relief to speak out loud and tell their stories. It was like a family and you didn't have to feel nervous because even though people were different, they'd certain similar experiences. One lady mentioned going to Kilmainham Gaol where there was a big wall and how that brought back huge memories of the wall at the Good Shepherd's Convent and it was kind of a triggering experience. It was easy to talk. It was refreshing to talk. There was no need to be ashamed here and it was great to be believed. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Susie Kiely; Scribe: Jane Mulcahy]*

**Table 2**

Thanks again to the women at my table for sharing their stories and we were quite good, very good at condensing things down to one key word, and those words are reflective of the occasion today, of the emotional occasion and in fact 'emotional' was one of those words. 'Heartbroken,' 'happy' also, 'hope for the future,' and importantly, the word 'justice'. Thank you. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Dr Clara Fischer; Scribe: Alyson Staunton]*

**Table 18**

So at our table, the strongest sense that came out of it was they're glad them days are over. (Clears throat) Sorry. They were happy and sad during the discussion and now that it's over, they want to forget and get on with their lives. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Sarah Clarkin; Scribe: Paula Carroll]*

**Table 14**

Hi there. So we had a real sense at our table of shared experiences over a number of different generations. Some things that came up were the fact that people are still fighting for recognition and that it affects your life forever. One particularly nice moment was when the ladies embraced and said we are all sisters together. And the words then, our list of words, 'painful,' 'relieved,' 'very sad,' 'upset,' 'fantastic,' 'beautiful,' 'emotional,' 'solidarity,' 'completely drained'. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Dr Mark Coen; Scribe: Caoimhe Gethings]*

**Table 23**

And I want to say thank you to these incredible resilient women for sharing this morning. The words in order that they came, ‘horrendous,’ ‘refreshing,’ ‘frustrating because I can't explain myself,’ ‘enlightening,’ ‘listening,’ ‘glad I came when I wasn't sure I would be,’ ‘confidence,’ ‘not ashamed’. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Dr Vicky Conway; Scribe: Gearóidín McEvoy]*

**Table 20**

Again, I have to thank the ladies around this table. It's been an absolutely incredible moment. Some of the stories that were told had never, ever been spoken before and that is a really important thing for the ladies, [to] just say it. These are the words that we have. They ‘got release’, ‘it helped to talk,’ there was ‘support’. One of us has ‘LHA’, ‘listened, heard, appreciated’. They communicated with one another. There was ‘emotion’. It was ‘eye-opening’ for some. I was particularly asked to say that they wanted to forget now about being called ‘sinners,’ that this was the end of that. And then on the positives, there was...we have a few positive words, there was ‘beautiful,’ ‘freedom,’ ‘no more nightmares,’ ‘smile,’ ‘clarification,’ ‘brightness,’ and ‘support’. Thank you. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Assoc. Prof. Síofra Pierse; Scribe: Emma Dunne]*

**Table 15**

So the words at our table were ‘hopeful,’ ‘lift-off,’ ‘positive, but the hurt remains,’ and ‘it's difficult to move it from our minds all the time’. ‘We absolutely need to remember.’ ‘We need joined-up thinking to make services better.’ ‘There are a lot of memories, and now it's over, but the memories never fade.’ And of today, ‘the experience of being with other women means that we're not alone’. So to Barbara, Judith, Dolores and Doris, [pseudonyms] thank you, because it was an absolute privilege. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Orla O'Connor; Scribe: Susan McCormack]*

**Table 12**

I'll say thank you again. It was an absolute privilege and an honour. We remembered some people at our table as well. We remembered Caroline, Francesca's sister, Esther and Janet's mother, [pseudonyms] and Nellie from Cork. So the words we had were 'therapy in itself,' 'extraordinary,' 'amazing,' 'extraordinary,' 'nice to meet the people in the group to talk,' 'great to talk as a group,' 'emotional, but fantastic that we all survived to tell the story,' 'glad to speak and listen,' 'glad that it's out in the open, and that we shared together what happened in our lives'. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Prof. Kath Browne; Scribe: Bríd McGrath]*

**Table 22**

I want to thank all the women very much and also for how supportive they all were of each other because for some of the women here, it was the first time they had shared stories, and for other women, it was very hard to hear the experiences of other people. But also to say that everybody felt that everybody's experience was valid, no matter where you were, how long you were there for. People were relieved. Some people had very different experiences, where they'd been lots of different places, and some people had only been in one place, but that they were relieved to be able to talk about it, they found it was a good experience. 'Happy that I have it said.' 'It's not easy to carry it all with you.' 'Happy,' and also to talk about how determined...some people were determined to carry on with their lives, to make sure that their own children didn't experience things that they had experienced. Some people found it an awful experience to be here to talk today, but that they were relieved that it was done. And one word at the end of this was sisterhood. That this feeling of sisterhood about today and yesterday, because some people don't live in Ireland so they don't hear about the story-telling and the experiences that have been going on. If you live somewhere else, you mightn't realise that this is happening, that other people are talking about it, and so they were feeling a sense of sisterhood from this process. Thank you. [Applause]

*[Facilitator: Suzy Byrne; Scribe: Laura Dowling]*

## FINAL REMARKS AT THE END OF THE LISTENING EXERCISE

### **Assoc. Prof Katherine O'Donnell**

I think we've heard from all the tables. I mean, I have no words except two, which is just thank you, thank you, thank you, thank you, and I just can only keep repeating them. What you've given us today was incredibly generous. To the people who were worried about it going into a drawer, well, there's a team behind me who won't let that happen. [Applause]

And I know that none of us have been looking at the news, but Dublin Honours Magdalenes has been on the one o'clock news yesterday, the six o'clock news yesterday, the nine o'clock news yesterday. We tried to buy tissues for today in a shop, we tried to buy the folders that we need for the end of this process, and the people in the shops, when they saw the volunteer in the purple shirt, there were people who were putting tenners on the counter. Anybody who was in the shop wanted to pay. The reaction that the volunteers are getting when they're out on the streets in the purple t-shirts is just people want to hug them. Because they want to send hugs to you. [Applause]

When the Minister for Justice yesterday, and of course when the president apologised, again, like Enda Kenny's apology, the sincerity and the emotion of those men's apologies were felt by all of us. But they're only saying sorry on behalf of the people of Ireland. We're very, very, very sorry, and it was wrong and we know you're living with it still. And if there is any way we can try and share in it and move forward with you and to educate the younger people, me and all the other facilitators in this room now are under your spell. That is something that we're going to try and address for the rest of our lives, so thank you very, very much for helping us do that. [Applause]

So I'm looking for Norah Casey. I can't see her anywhere. I know that she's dis...she's hiding for once in her life! There she is. She's got a few words to say before we have our lunch. [Applause]

### **Norah Casey**

Now I have to remember what I have to say. For one thing, lunch is going to be served to your table, you know that. Secondly, all of you have been asking how you might get in touch with each other. It's quite difficult in a room this size and there's a lot of people. Now, from the very beginning, I've had this system, which nobody told you about, which is a notice board, which has been in the dining room that you've been in for breakfast. So we're going to move that to reception from when you go back this afternoon. It literally just allows you the chance to put a note there with a name on the front of it and just pin it to the board, and we'll take it in tonight for Citywest [event in Citywest Hotel]. So it'll be in the main...there's a huge big area before you go into the dinner, so you can leave notes for each other and maybe see if you can connect. Tonight is all free seating. The room is set up with tables, so you'll have quiet time, right? It's not like a big bank of cameras in the middle, like it was yesterday. Quiet time, yeah. [Contd.]

**Norah Casey contd.**

So I know the table plans have been a total disaster—you put a bunch of women in the room and they all decide where they're going to sit themselves, by the way! [Laughter] If it was a bunch of men, they'd all be running over saying, 'what table am I at?' And like on my bus, I said, 'you know, you could just...' 'Yeah, that's fine, Norah, we'll sort it out. Don't worry'. And in Áras an Uachtaráin, they were saying, 'will we do seating?' and 'I don't know whether you should or not'. Within 10 minutes, everybody had found a seat, so apart from our guests that we're inviting from outside, there's about 150 people joining you this evening. Otherwise, you guys can sit where you want. You can choose your own friends, you can go to your own table. That's what the whole point of it was. It's not a buffet. We upgraded it to a full dinner, so just in honour of the royalty we have in the room, everything will be delivered to you. [Applause]

You know, there's no reception. I don't want anyone standing around, so you're going straight in at seven o'clock to sit down for dinner, and don't be late because if there's any welcomes or anything, I want them done and out of the way. We've put in a special floor in that room for the Riverdance troupe that are going to be performing for you. [Gasps from participants] The nice thing is, no coaches. You just come down in the lift, you know, and wander through. It's the building next...so it's quite a big ballroom, it's the building next door, so there's a little internal route you can take through and then there's one outside, and so you might go through the indoor...you can choose. It's just right next door to where you are. And then, around 9:30, Riverdance, then Donal Lunny. I think Sharon Shannon's coming. We have Kíla, the band, hottest band they say, on the planet, and some of the guys from Stockton's Wing are coming, Mike Hanrahan, yeah. [Applause and cheers] So it's a knees-up, I've told everybody relax, kick back, no formalities. A big knees-up.

Now, I'm not to forget a few more things. One is, those of you who have white stickers, you know you're coming with me [Women who were wearing white stickers were happy to be interviewed by the media]. I'd love...I'm going to try and take you through the private access route into the Oak Room before the media go in there. So there's quite a lot of media who are interested. I'm determined that's going to be a very nice, comfortable session, that you feel comfortable there, you don't feel pressurised in any way, and I'll try and match you to the kind of journalists that I think...whether you want to do...have a think before you go in. Do you want to do print, as in, a newspaper, radio or TV, and...whichever you're comfortable with, and if you're happy to be on camera or not on camera, so whatever you want to do is what I'm going to facilitate. It's not a press conference.

So I think, lastly, to say that session was the most emotional I have...for the last, you know, 24 hours, I didn't think anything could be more emotional, actually, than arriving at Áras an Uachtaráin or seeing you all for the first time, that was...I mean Louise completely lost it. She's at the back in floods of tears, and who wouldn't be, listening to those stories. [Contd.]

**Norah Casey contd.**

As well as saying a big thank you, which I do every time, to the amazing three women who are really...I've told you, like if you see me at the front of the steering wheel, it's only that the engine and everything, the petrol and the whole thing in the car, is provided by Katherine O'Donnell and Claire McGettrick and Maeve O'Rourke, and you know them. [Applause] And to all the facilitators and the scribes who joined us today, you're incredible and I know that must have been the hardest session that you've ever done in your lives, I'm sure it was. I feel that I'm living in all of your stories, my son has been telling me all your stories. Everybody's been living in your stories, so if there's one thing that's come out of the last 24 hours, people know there's not just one story. There's loads of different stories and they're all unique to you. [Applause]

I did want to say to my own team, you've met the powerhouse that is Zoe Kelly, and she's over in Citywest getting everything organised for tonight so it looks beautiful. You've met the wonderful Louise, and many of you have spoken to her on the phone, and she's here with me. And Maria, and did you know that Maria on my team was a former Rose of Tralee? [Applause] She's wonderful. She is the beauty with the blonde hair, and Michelle on my team, and the lovely Daryl, who's organising all the artists around the whole of the two days and is doing so again tonight.

Now, I was only dithering there, by the way, and over-talking so that I could make sure that we're all ready to give out your necklace and candle [Keepsakes that were given to the women]. So what I wanted to do to make sure...so we've got one for every survivor. Not for companions, I'm so sorry, but one for every survivor. Oh yeah. Yeah, sorry. Just before I tell you the arrangement is to get the necklaces to you, High Park bus leaves at 2:30. Am I right in saying that? What time is the bus for High Park? [Conversation about bus times removed] So what I'd like you to do is stay where you are. The easiest way to do this is if the facilitator or the scribe, one from each table, would come to the side of the stage and collect the jewellery and the candles for their tables. So just the facilitator or the scribe from the table. If you go over to Louise and collect the...thanks, guys. If there's people missing, we can make sure they get them later.

**Claire McGettrick**

Just on an admin note for the scribes and facilitators as well, when you're finished with the necklaces, if you could come over here to the other side of the stage to Fiona [volunteer] and myself with the consent forms and the audio and we can look after getting them from you. Thanks so much.

# APPENDIX 1

## LIST OF FACILITATORS AND SCRIBES

### Table 1

**Facilitator:** Prof. Aislinn O'Donnell, NUI Maynooth

**Scribe:** Seán Henry

### Table 2

**Facilitator:** Dr Clara Fischer, University College Dublin

**Scribe:** Alyson Staunton

### Table 3

**Facilitator:** Dr Daniel Deasy, University College Dublin

**Scribe:** Laura Sicat

### Table 4

**Facilitator:** Dr Danielle Petherbridge, University College Dublin

**Scribe:** Catherine Murray

### Table 5

**Facilitator:** Elina Eriksson, Solicitor with Hogan Lovells

**Scribe:** Chloe Gott

### Table 6

**Facilitator:** Assoc. Prof. Emilie Pine, University College Dublin

**Scribe:** Emma Penney

### Table 7

**Facilitator:** Fionna Fox, Solicitor

**Scribe:** Sam Lynch

### Table 8

**Facilitator:** Grace Dyas, Theatre Maker

**Scribe:** Veronica Dyas

### Table 9

**Facilitator:** Assoc. Prof. James Smith, Boston College

**Scribe:** Colleen Taylor

### Table 10

**Facilitator:** Dr Jennifer O'Mahoney, Waterford Institute of Technology

**Scribe:** Maria Ronan

**Table 11****Facilitator:** Jesse Presley Jones, Artist**Scribes:** Sara O'Rourke (notetaker) and Donna Rose (audio recording)**Table 12****Facilitator:** Prof. Kath Browne, NUI Maynooth**Scribe:** Brid McGrath**Table 13****Facilitator:** Lewis Mooney, Barrister**Scribe:** Isabelle Aylmer**Table 14****Facilitator:** Dr Mark Coen, University College Dublin**Scribe:** Caoimhe Gethings**Table 15****Facilitator:** Orla O'Connor, National Women's Council of Ireland**Scribe:** Susan McCormack**Table 16****Facilitator:** Sarah Browne, Artist**Scribe:** Sarah Grice**Table 17****Facilitator:** Sarah Clancy, Poet**Scribe:** Sarah Ferrigan**Table 18****Facilitator:** Sarah Clarkin, National Women's Council of Ireland**Scribe:** Paula Carroll**Table 19****Facilitator:** Dr Sinead Ring, University of Kent**Scribe:** Jason Murray**Table 20****Facilitator:** Assoc. Prof. Síofra Pierse, University College Dublin**Scribe:** Emma Dunne

**Table 21**

**Facilitator:** Susie Kiely, Trainee Solicitor

**Scribe:** Jane Mulcahy

**Table 22**

**Facilitator:** Suzy Byrne, National Advocacy Service

**Scribe:** Laura Dowling

**Table 23**

**Facilitator:** Dr Vicky Conway, Dublin City University

**Scribe:** Gearóidín McEvoy

**Listening Exercise Principal Investigator**

Associate Professor Katherine O'Donnell, History of Ideas, UCD School of Philosophy, University College Dublin & JFMR

**Listening Exercise Project Manager**

Claire McGettrick, Irish Research Council Scholar, UCD School of Sociology, University College Dublin & JFMR

**Technical Support**

Mari Steed, JFMR

**Co-ordinator of Volunteers**

Dr Maeve O'Rourke, Lecturer in Human Rights Law, Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway & JFMR

**Co-organiser**

Associate Professor James M Smith, English Department, Boston College & JFMR

**Transcription**

Dr Clare Moriarty, Aodhán Peelo, Sophie Gough and Virtual Office Solutions

## APPENDIX 2

# TRANSCRIPT OF VIDEO SHOWN AT LISTENING EXERCISE

When the Irish Free State was founded in 1922 there were already 10 Magdalene Institutions in existence. There was one in Galway run by the Mercy Order who also had another Magdalene Laundry in Dun Laoghaire. The Good Shepherd sisters ran Magdalene institutions in Limerick, Cork, Waterford and New Ross. The Sisters of Charity ran two Magdalene institutions in Donnybrook and Cork and the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity ran laundries in High Park, Drumcondra and in Gloucester St/Sean Mc Dermott Street. Most of the Magdalene institutions closed in the 1980s, the last Magdalene Laundry closed on 25 October, 1996 because it was no longer commercially viable.

The original aim of these institutions up until the 1920s seems to have been to give shelter to poor and homeless women and girls and particularly to women who had become prostitutes in return for their labour at laundry and needlework. However, from the 1920s we can see that these institutions were not places where girls and women could find temporary shelter but they behaved like prisons where vulnerable girls and women were locked up and forced to hard work at commercial laundry and lucrative needlework (such as making the famous Limerick lace.) And, women were punished for not obeying the institution's rules.

Because the religious orders will not release their records we do not have an accurate number for how many women were held in the Magdalene Laundries: estimates vary between 10,000-30,000 women. We do know that the regime was exceedingly harsh: the incarcerated girls and women were told that they were penitents, who had to atone for their sins through their forced hard labour.

The lives endured by the girls and women who were classed as 'Magdalenes' have, even before the last Magdalene Laundry closed down, begun to be honoured, researched and remembered by activists, artists, journalists, academics and teachers as well as by the general citizens of Ireland and even the Irish government who offered an apology and a redress scheme.

In terms of public awareness we have a Magdalene Statue in Galway with a poem by Patricia Burke Brogan who as a novice nun worked in the Galway Magdalene. Burke Brogan was so moved by what she discovered in the Galway Magdalene that she wrote poetry and plays that have been performed all over the world since the 1980s.

Many other kinds of artists were inspired by Burke Brogan and indeed for many years all kinds of artists led the way in terms of responding to the plight of girls and women confined in the Laundries, and thereby raised awareness; besides poetry and plays there have also been art installations, songs, and a major film. Journalists, such as Mary Raftery and French, English and American documentary film-makers made important contributions to bringing the issue to light throughout the 1990s and indeed in the current day journalists regularly make mention of the Magdalene Laundries when describing the poor treatment of women by the Irish State.

Activists in the Magdalene Memorial Committee, set up in 1993, ensured that a bench in St Stephens Green was dedicated in memory of the women who spent time in the Laundries and the children born to some of the women in those communities. Flowers for Magdalenes, the brainchild of Áine Downes, is run by a nationwide group of activists who ensure that flowers are placed on Magdalene graves at a range of different cemeteries across the country. This event is held on the first Sunday in March, around the date of International Women's Day. The Magdalene Names Project is run by Claire McGettrick and is dedicated to ensuring that we record the identity and that a proper headstone mark the burial ground of every single women who was incarcerated in a Magdalene institution. In terms of ongoing activism on the Magdalene issue, Justice for Magdalenes Research lobbied to have the Ombudsman investigate the Redress Scheme and are involved with pro-bono lawyers taking cases directly to the United Nations Committee Against Torture.

Academics, not just in Ireland but across the world have taken an interest in the Irish Magdalenes and there are more and more articles and some books that focus on research. In University College Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology there are oral history projects which have been recording the experiences of women who were held in the Magdalene Laundries as well as also recording the experiences of their family members, some of the religious women and other people who had frequent contact with the girls and women confined.

Researchers at UCD have also been developing videos and lesson plans for secondary school students so that they can learn about the Magdalene Laundries and there are more plans to collaborate with researchers who have worked on Industrial School abuse to develop educational programmes for young people and to make the information available in interesting and accessible formats through the internet.

Two of the former Magdalene institutions have been taken over by third-level colleges: Limerick Institute of Technology and Waterford Institute of Technology. In Waterford, the college has been very respectful of the Magdalene heritage and has kept intact many of the buildings. The students who study many different courses in Waterford are given the opportunity to explore and research the legacy of the Waterford campus.

The Magdalene Laundry buildings in Galway were knocked down to make way for an Anglo Irish Bank. More recently, the Sisters of Mercy donated the former Magdalene Convent to COPE, who plan to use it as a shelter for women and children who have experienced domestic abuse. And, COPE are planning a community-driven heritage project to respectfully remember the former inmates.

The New Ross Magdalene Laundry was bulldozed in the first days of January in 2016 but there are a number of other Magdalene institutions that have better stories. Cork City Council has made a declaration that any applications to develop the Sunday's Well site must include proposals for the interpretation and memorialisation of the site...in consultation with relevant representative groups associated with the history of that Magdalene. Academics in UCD and Justice for Magdalenes Research are in consultation with the agents of the international developers who own the former Magdalene Laundry in Donnybrook to try and conduct a proper survey of all of the Magdalene and to rescue all of the contents from the laundry which will hopefully find their way to a museum. Seán McDermott St laundry is in public ownership – it is owned by Dublin City Council- it is unclear yet what will be done with this campus but Dublin City Councillors will have to approve any plans.

Perhaps the best story of a former Magdalene Laundry is the Respond! social housing project which is currently renovating the former laundry in High Park and they are planning to find ways to mark and commemorate the history of the Magdalene Laundries on the grounds as well as commissioning art work pieces. Respond! are happy to welcome Magdalene survivors to High Park to show them the plans for their social housing development and introduce them to the families now living there and taken out of homelessness.

While we are beginning to know what happened in the Magdalenes we still need to fully understand how it happened and how to listen to and honour the experiences of the survivors of the Magdalene women. We need to learn what pain was caused in our recent past so that we can respond to the legacy of that pain and learn how to move together to face and create a more caring and inclusive future.

The video was produced by Nuala Cunningham at New Decade TV & Films with script written by Dr Katherine O'Donnell, and voiceover provided by Doireann Ní Bhrian.

The video can be viewed here: [\*\*https://youtu.be/smAa5E1luA8\*\*](https://youtu.be/smAa5E1luA8)

## APPENDIX 3

# BRIEFING NOTES FOR FACILITATORS AND SCRIBES

Thank you for agreeing to facilitate at the listening exercise which is being coordinated under the UCD Magdalene Oral History Project in conjunction with Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR), and fulfils one of Judge Quirke's key recommendations for the Magdalene Restorative Justice Scheme. The purpose of the listening exercise is to give women who spent time incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries an opportunity to discuss how they wish their experiences to be remembered by future generations.

After they have been welcomed to the event, the women will be shown a 10-minute video which documents how the Magdalene Laundries have been commemorated to date. This will be followed by an explanation of the process set out by Dr Katherine O'Donnell. Survivors have been sent information in advance to explain the exercise and we will endeavour to speak with women beforehand in terms of explaining the listening exercise and getting consent to make redacted recordings and transcriptions publicly available.

Facilitators will be asked to collate survivors' responses to the following three open-ended questions:

- 1. What should we all know about the Magdalene Laundries?*
- 2. What lessons should we learn from what happened in the Magdalene Laundries?*
- 3. How —in what ways— should we remember what happened in the Magdalene Laundries?*

This discussion will last two hours, tea, coffee and biscuits will be served to the tables at the beginning and will be available during the conversations.

### REMINDERS TO FACILITATORS

- Please ensure that your scribe has a recording device (a smartphone will suffice).
- Please ensure that you and your scribe are prepared for the recording (e.g. ensuring devices are properly charged and have enough batteries).

- We hope that your scribe will keep written notes as well as ensuring that audio is being recorded – this is a backup in case there is a failure in the recording as well as a useful summary of the main points and a record of any important events that may occur (such as a woman deciding to withdraw from the exercise).
- We have volunteer scribes for those of you who are unable to bring one.
- Before the women arrive for the listening exercise we will collect a signed copy of the Confidentiality Form from each facilitator and scribe.
- At each of the round tables there will be approximately eight survivors.
- Before the recording devices are turned on, please introduce yourself to the women, and ask the women to introduce themselves to you. Please make a note of their names so that you can better interact with them.
- Please try to ensure that every woman gets to speak and respond.
- There will be volunteers on hand to assist the women (and you and your scribe) in whatever practical ways that might be required.
- We will provide a Consent Form for each woman which will need to be signed at the beginning of the listening exercise. (Some women will have already pre-signed).
- We will collect the scribes' notes and transfer the audio recordings to a hard drive at the end of the listening exercise. You will be introduced to this team at the briefing prior to the exercise.
- We request that all audio recordings are erased once we have transferred the recordings to a hard drive

## **TIMETABLE**

9:00-9:15am

Facilitators and scribes arrive at Mansion House for briefing.

9:15-9:40am

We will have copies of these briefing notes and consent forms available and there will be opportunities to ask questions. Tea and coffee will be available.

9:40-10:00am

Women arrive and are seated. The women will know which table number they are assigned to. We will endeavour to seat women according to their consent preferences (that is to what degree they are happy to have an audio record made of the listening exercise.)

10:00-10:20am

Norah Casey introduces Katherine O'Donnell who introduces a 10-minute video on what kinds of memorialisation are currently being done by artists, activists and academics and explains the listening exercise and Consent Forms (the women will already have had an explanation of the exercise process in their booklets.)

10:20-10:30

Consent forms to be collected from the women who have not already signed consent forms.

10:30-12:30am

Discussion on the three questions:

1. What should we all know about the Magdalene Laundries?
2. What lessons should we learn from what happened in the Magdalene Laundries?
3. How —in what ways— should we remember what happened in the Magdalene Laundries?

12:30-12:35

To close the listening exercise we will ask the facilitators to ask the women to choose one word that summarises their experience of the exercise – some women may have cluster of words, others may have none.

12:35-1:00

Each facilitator will have a mic and will read out the list of words generated at their table.

1:00-2:00

Buffet lunch of soup and sandwiches to be served in the room

# APPENDIX 4

## INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORMS

### CONFIDENTIALITY FORM FOR FACILITATORS AND SCRIBES

1. I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read and agree to abide by the conditions set out in the Briefing Note provided to me for this listening exercise. I fully understand that this Confidentiality Agreement is designed to safeguard the needs of survivors.
2. I agree to enter into a non-disclosure undertaking with Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) as outlined below.
3. The 'confidential information' covered by this Confidentiality Agreement shall include all aspects relating to the work of the listening exercise.
4. I agree to exercise due diligence in relation to the foregoing;
  - To ensure that no extracts are taken or photocopies made of confidential information or documentation;
  - Not to communicate information regarding the listening exercise to any unauthorised person or organisation without prior consent of JFMR;
  - To ensure that I erase any audio recording taken by me during the listening exercise immediately after transferring it to the custody of JFMR.

Signed:

Print Name:

Date:

## INFORMATION FORM

The purpose of the listening exercise is to give women who spent time incarcerated in Magdalene Laundries an opportunity to discuss how they wish their experiences to be remembered by future generations.

We are asking three questions:

1. What should we all know about the Magdalene Laundries?
2. What lessons should we learn from what happened in the Magdalene Laundries?
3. How —in what ways— should we remember what happened in the Magdalene Laundries?

- You will be placed at a table with approximately seven other women. There will be a facilitator who will chair the conversation and make sure everyone has a chance to speak. There will also be someone who will take notes and record the conversations.
- Everyone will be asked if they are happy to be recorded. If they are not we will not record them and we will organise tables where no recordings will be made, and just notes taken.
- We will transcribe the recording from each table and we will make sure that the typed copy of the conversation does not identify anyone. The record of the conversations will keep each person's identity private.
- You will be asked if you wish us to destroy the recordings of the conversation once the transcriptions have been made or if you are happy to have us put an edited recording on a website. The edited recording will remove details that might identify people. Everyone at the table must agree to the release of the audio recording if it is to be made publicly available.

## CONSENT FORM

By signing below I am confirming that I have read the Information Form and have had the listening exercise purpose and process explained to me. I have had time to consider whether to take part or not. I understand that my participation is voluntary (it is my choice) and that I am free at all times to leave the listening exercise and to request that my contribution is not made publicly available.

I understand that this form will be kept confidentially in a secure location and will never be made public.

I understand that my name and the names of other people mentioned during the course of the interview will not be identified in the report and transcript from this listening exercise.

Please select your preference from the options provided below:

I would like the audio recording and the transcript publicly available, and I understand that both the audio and transcript will be edited so people's identities will be anonymous.

OR

I would like the transcript (which will be edited so people's identity will be kept anonymous) made publicly available, but no audio recording available to the public.

Print Name of Participant:

Signature of Participant:

Date:

Name of Facilitator (optional):

# APPENDIX 5

## LIST OF DUBLIN HONOURS MAGDALENES CONTRIBUTORS AND VOLUNTEERS

### Dublin Honours Magdalenes Voluntary Organising Committee

Norah Casey, Lead Organiser

Associate Professor Katherine O'Donnell, History of Ideas, UCD School of Philosophy, University College Dublin & JFMR

Dr Maeve O'Rourke, Lecturer in Human Rights Law, Irish Centre for Human Rights, NUI Galway & JFMR

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**Video messages from:**

Mary Coughlan  
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Photographs by Paul Sherwood

# ARTISTS



Photographs by Paul Sherwood

## WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

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 The Oireachtas Justice Committee  
 Central Area Committee, Dublin City Council  
 Office of the Lord Mayor of Dublin  
 An Garda Síochána  
 Dublin Airport Authority  
 Ryanair

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**Many thanks to so many others who assisted in essential ways.**



# APPENDIX 6

## SPEECHES BY THE PRESIDENT OF IRELAND, THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE AND THE DUBLIN LORD MAYOR

**President Michael D Higgins**

**Speech to women who worked at the Magdalene Laundries**

**Áras an Uachtaráin, Tuesday, 5th June, 2018**

Today, here in Áras an Uachtaráin as President of Ireland, mar Uachtarán na hÉireann, I apologise to you - survivors of the Magdalene regime.

Sabina and I warmly welcome you all here to Áras an Uachtaráin for what we regard as a most important occasion when so many former residents of the Magdalene laundries have gathered together from around Ireland and from around the world.

It is truly a great honour for me, as President of Ireland, and for Sabina to welcome you all to our home. I want to thank you, and those who are accompanying you, for taking the time to be with us this afternoon in Áras an Uachtaráin, the home of the President of Ireland, and, indeed, we hope that your making the decision to spend time together over these few days has the warmest possible outcome for you all.

It will, I know, be an opportunity for you to share your experiences with each other and perhaps, in some way, to continue to help us all as a society to understand our past, and help us all to heal and come into the light from the darkness of that past.

Many of you may not know each other. You worked in different Magdalene laundries at different times and the reasons you came to be in the laundries are, I know, varied. Some of you may have spent many years in the laundries and some much shorter periods. As women, you have gone on to live very different lives in different parts of the world. It is only to be expected that your lived experiences, your perspectives on your time in the laundries, and how you reacted to those experiences, will be as diverse as your lives are. The shared common experience of having lived and worked in a Magdalene Laundry, however, makes a bond that you share.

This afternoon Sabina and I know that we are welcoming a special group, 230 individual women, and each of you hold part of the story of the Magdalene Laundries. Since the foundation of the State, over 11,000 women spent time in the laundries, but their experiences were too often never shared.

A combination of stigma, shame and an unreceptive society condemned so many women to concealing their experiences, their trauma, their hurt. In recent years the silence has been broken and you all have helped to let the light into some very dark corners of our shared past. You have presented us with what makes a very harrowing and deeply uncomfortable reflection of an Ireland some would prefer not to be able to recognise, but which has to be acknowledged, transacted and to which a response must be made.

All of you and of all the other women who cannot be with us today were failed by these institutions, the experience of which you share, and the religious orders that ran them. You were profoundly failed by the State which, in its relationship to these institutions, should have had your welfare at its core. You were failed by Governments that knowingly relied on the existence and practices of these institutions rather than addressing your particular needs in other, more sympathetic ways. You were also failed by a society that actively colluded in your incarceration and treatment or chose to look the other way, averted their gaze, as vulnerable girls and women were subjected, in so many cases, to further abuse and degradation.

I know that many of you have engaged directly, or through some of the excellent representative groups, with the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalene Laundries and with Justice Quirke in the construction of a redress scheme. Indeed, more recently, you have also worked with the Ombudsman in addressing deficiencies in that scheme. This has been vitally important, not only for you as individuals but also for Ireland as a nation, as we try to come to terms with, and face up to, our failings in the past.

Each of your individual experiences is a critical element of the whole, and all are equally important in enabling us to engage ethically with your stories and to truly understand them. It is only through this remembering and understanding that we can hope to learn and apply these lessons to our present and our future circumstances.

The treatment of vulnerable citizens in our industrial and reformatory schools, in the Magdalene Laundries and in Mother and Baby Homes represents a deep stain on Ireland's past, a stain we can only regard today with great shame, profound regret and horror. It is sobering to consider that many women were also victims of the cruel and degrading regimes of Industrial or Reformatory Schools before being referred to the Laundries, and so many were intimidated into a silence by the abuse of authority of one kind or another.

Ireland failed you. When you were vulnerable and in need of the support of Irish society and its institutions, its authorities did not cherish you, protect you, respect your dignity or meet your needs and so many in the wider society colluded with their silence.

As a society, those with responsibility pretended not to know or chose not to know. The denial of all of this continued for many, many years until one by one you, the victims and survivors of that time, began to come forward, began to tell your stories, began to force Irish society and institutions who had conferred an immunity on themselves to look you in the eye and listen to your personal histories.

May I also pay tribute to all those who have initiated research tried to draw attention to your stories, break the silence, when these issues were receiving little attention elsewhere, and may indeed have been hidden. I think of writers such as Patricia Burke-Brogan, and Dr. Frances Finnegan, for example, but there were others too.

As you confronted contemporary Irish society with the legacy of a painful past and the question of how that legacy could be addressed, a long and difficult silence began to shatter and break. The stories Ireland was confronted with were harrowing, heart rending and deeply uncomfortable. They were stories of forced labour, of humiliation, of fear and sadness and of despair. They were stories of injustice; stories that continue to speak so loudly and so distressingly of indifference and cruelty fanned by ignorance, prejudice and intolerance, above all by an unquestioned authoritarianism.

You were apologised to by An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny in the Dáil in 2013 but as President of Ireland, I want to acknowledge again the wrong that has been done to you, the pain that has been caused in your lives and the opportunities that have been lost to you as a result of your mistreatment. Today, here in Áras an Uachtaráin as President of Ireland, mar Uachtarán na hÉireann, I apologise to you - survivors of the Magdalene regime.

Your individual tales, the personal narratives that lie behind the overall story of the Magdalene Laundries is what has brought you together here in Dublin. Tomorrow you will have the opportunity to recount your own unique memories and chapters of the Magdalene experiences, and that is so important. It is an acknowledgment of the value of your personal testimony, your personal pain, and recognition of the consequences that have ensued for each of you, as a woman, from the damage and harm that was perpetrated in the name of the Irish State.

They are stories that involve your time in the Magdalene Laundries but may also involve other painful periods of your life. They are stories that were told with pain across the years in homes here in Ireland, in the United Kingdom, the United States of America and elsewhere as each of you sought to move on and rebuild your lives. They are stories that were hidden and buried for too long, stories that were sometimes denied, distorted, deliberately forgotten and even erroneously justified by some in society who wished to embrace an accommodating amnesia and to turn away from that most unedifying version of ourselves.

They are stories which were held, first and foremost, in the hearts and minds of courageous and admirable women determined in going public that their experiences would claim their rightful place in the history of Ireland and in the memory of its people.

Today, in Ireland and across the world, an increasing body of research has focussed on the Magdalene Laundries. Oral history projects are taking place in University College Dublin and Waterford Institute of Technology and are recording the experiences of not only the women who were held in the Laundries, but their family members, and some of the nuns who managed them and other people who had frequent contact with the girls and women confined.

Researchers at UCD have also been developing videos and lesson plans for secondary school students in order to ensure that future generations will learn about, and take lessons from the Magdalene Laundries story. None of this could have happened without the women, of whom they will hear, including those of you gathered here this evening, who came forward to tell your stories.

Your stories confront an Ireland of the present, with the Ireland of closed doors and secrecy, one that wronged you; an Ireland where respectability often trumped compassion, where human rights were not respected, and could be casually withdrawn, from those deemed to have contravened what was defined as 'respectable' behaviour. Today we remember that dark chapter, and the version of Ireland that permitted it to unfold.

Today we also mark a new and positive turn on the long journey from darkness to light that has been undertaken by you personally over so many years, and by Ireland as a nation in more recent times. We have moved from a time of disbelief, denial and even hostility towards your experiences, to a time where we acknowledge that we must deliver compassion, listening and a genuine and heartfelt will to hear, to share and to learn from your testimonies.

You are Irish citizens who have been greatly hurt and wounded by the past experiences inflicted on you. But you are also women who refuse to be defined by such experience. I truly hope that the public addressing and redressing of the consequences of those experiences, and the commemorations that acknowledge the sufferings of so many thousands of women, will help to ease the burden of those past wrongs, a burden that some of your fellow citizens have striven to shoulder with you in recent years.

I also welcome you as inspiring and courageous women of whom we, as a country, are very proud indeed. Your generosity in sharing your difficult stories has allowed us to engage with the Magdalene Laundries story as an important episode from which hopefully we can draw wisdom, including the knowledge of the great harm that can be done when publics are not vigilant, when publics are cowed into not having the courage to question the status quo, when society fails to address institutional indifference or cruelty wherever it might arise.

I commend your resolve and your courage in facing your painful past. I pay tribute to you for your decision to share your experiences with each other. It put me in mind of the valuable role of the wounded healer to which Professor Michael Kearney, founder of the palliative care movement, has drawn so much attention. The wounded by listening to the wounded become the most powerful of healers. Most of all I thank you for helping Ireland and contemporary Irish people address a great wrong.

I realise that many of you left Ireland shortly after leaving the laundries and for some this might be your first time coming back. It is completely understandable that you would have turned your back on a country in which you were treated so badly. It would also be completely understandable for you to harbour resentment for the hurt you were caused.

I sincerely hope that the journey you have been on over recent years will help each of you in making peace with the past. Some of you may even have found it in yourself to forgive the individuals in the system that you encountered and that you were forced to endure.

Forgiveness can play a central and necessary part in healing. I acknowledge that it is very easy for me to say that. Some are asked to pay a very high price when they are called upon to forgive a great hurt that cannot be expelled from memory. Yet, the act of moving from 'silent wounds' to narrated words, as Richard Kearney puts it, is a powerfully healing journey. But in that journey too, you are the best judges as to the timing of the movement to 'narrated words', judges as to when it was too early, or as to when it might be too late, and the consequences of both.

I was in Belfast last week speaking about the peace process and encouraging a reflection on reconciliation between communities and between people who had inflicted and suffered such terrible acts. I quoted Bishop Desmond Tutu, an inspirational man who has written and spoken extensively on the issue of forgiveness, mostly in the context of the aftermath of the apartheid regime in South Africa. I thought when I was preparing to speak to you this evening, that his words might resonate with you and the ordeals you have been through.

He said:

*'Without forgiveness, we remain tethered to the person who harmed us. We are bound with chains of bitterness, tied together, trapped. Until we can forgive the person who harmed us, that person will hold the keys to our happiness; that person will be our jailor.'*

*'When we forgive, we take back control of our own fate and our feelings. We become our own liberators. Forgiveness, in other words, is the best form of self-interest. This is true both spiritually and scientifically. We don't forgive to help the other person. We don't forgive for others. We forgive for ourselves.'*

May I conclude by again thanking all of you for coming here today. May I thank Mary Kennedy for acting as MC for this event, May I thank the Hothouse Flowers who will play for us shortly, and finally, may I commend Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan, Norah Casey and Dublin Honours Magdalenes for organising and hosting the two-day event that you will be attending.

Sabina and I are so very privileged that you have given us part of your time, and that you have come to our home, and we wish you all well.

Go raibh míle maith agaibh go léir.

**Speech by Charlie Flanagan, T.D., Minister For Justice and Equality  
Gala Dinner 5 June, 2018 – Dublin Honours Magdalenes Event**

To say that I am privileged to stand here tonight is an understatement, but to be frank, it is also a difficult and daunting place for me to stand.

It's difficult, because I am only too aware that as a Government minister I represent the State which let each and every one of you, down. This State allowed you be incarcerated, and made to work in Magdalene Laundries. We had a duty of care, we had a job of inspection, and we failed. Indeed we even took on the role, in some cases of referring agent. And in so doing... we let you down.

So as I said, it is difficult to stand here representing the State, even though we have apologised. That apology, made by former Taoiseach Enda Kenny, and recalled by the Lord Mayor earlier, was heartfelt and sincere. And I know that in making it, we have acknowledged much of what you went through, and I know we have made efforts to make redress ... but I also know that what happened to you cannot be undone.

And that is why standing here is daunting. It is daunting, knowing what you have endured, to face such resilience, such strength, such compassion, such sheer human spirit. I can only express my boundless admiration for, and thanks to, each and every one of you, for making the effort to come here.

I know it wasn't easy. Many of you have travelled, some of you all the way from America and even Australia. I know you didn't do it so that you could just have a nice dinner and listen to me. So I won't keep you long.

But I hope you did do it, with a sense of hope and determination.... Hope that you might build a real sense of camaraderie and even of peace from meeting others who share such a core part of your past, and determination that tomorrow, you will have YOUR say, about your experiences, if you choose to do so, and also about how you would like your experiences to be remembered.

It was wonderful to be in Aras an Uachtarain with you this afternoon. I know that for many of you, the chance to visit that historic building and be met, on equal terms, with dignity and respect, by our first citizen, President Michael D Higgins, and his wife Sabina, was the real highlight of the trip, the reason you were so determined to make it, and I believe that given the warmth of your reception there, you won't have been disappointed. And I hope you won't be disappointed either, by how the rest of the two days unfolds.

That you would come together like this, so that you could share your experiences with one another, was of course one of the first recommendations of Mr Justice Peter Quirke's Restorative Justice Scheme; and that you would be afforded an opportunity to have your say on how the laundries should be remembered, was another.

So I want to pay tribute to those who ensured that what Justice Quirke wanted, is being delivered over these two days. This event is happening thanks to a very small number, of very determined women.

Three of them, Katherine O'Donnell, Claire McGettrick and Maeve O'Rourke, have been known to some of you for many years. The fourth, Norah Casey, became known to them, only about 2 months ago when they approached her seeking her help - and didn't they make a wise choice! I heard Katherine and Maeve interviewed and I called Katherine and asked her to fill me in on her plans.

It is undoubtedly true that we can be very slow sometimes in Official Ireland, to say Yes. Even when both our heart AND our head might be telling us to, we worry. We worry - about risks, about consequences, about precedents, about how to reconcile the thousands of competing demands on our desks... and sometimes these concerns can prevent us from acting with the speed that justice demands.

But when Katherine, Norah and Claire came to my office, I could see immediately that this was a project I wanted to throw my weight behind and support in any way I could. When I met them in early April, I thought the plans sounded ambitious but what they have achieved is actually all they hoped for and so much more.

I knew this project to give effect to key aspects of the restorative justice scheme was one I just had to support as Minister - practically and financially. And I want to tell you now, that if by any chance, at the end of my political career, I have to be defined by just one decision, I would be not just happy, but I would be privileged, to be defined by that one.

But supporting you now, in the way we have done, was relatively easy. Others supported you when it was neither easy nor popular.

I remember seeing a newspaper article about a sergeant in Cork, who when a call from the convent came in, to say a girl had escaped, would calm the excited young guard who answered the phone down, would put his feet up, and say: 'Let's just have a nice cup of tea now... and give her a bit of time to make her way'.

I also heard about a man in Galway who kept shoes in his house, so runaway girls could get rid of the boots which marked them out as from a Magdalene laundry and on the radio one day, I listened to a couple who lived on Sean McDermott street speak about how they used offer a refuge to escapees too.

So while many ignored, some did get involved.

Some wrote books, some wrote plays, some wrote in papers. Others lobbied, battled to get political attention. I have mentioned Katherine, Claire and Maeve already.... I know they were joined in Justice for Magdalenes by Jim Smyth and Mari Steed, and I know that many others campaigned too. There were journalists such as Conall O'Fatharta.

And you had political support from all parties and none ... Tom Kitt and Michael Kennedy I know worked very hard, as did Kathleen Lynch, Mary Lou McDonald, Maureen O'Sullivan, Dara Calleary and Clare Daly. And my colleagues Alan Shatter and Frances Fitzgerald supported you too, as of course did Enda Kenny.

But official Ireland took its time and the truth is that you had to wait far too long for acknowledgement, recognition and an official apology. I am proud that Enda Kenny was the Taoiseach who finally made that State apology and, following the Ombudsman's report, I need to add my own. My Department worked hard to administer the redress scheme but we didn't always get it right and I am sorry for that. I apologise to you.

I have been working with the Ombudsman for some time and I am very glad that just last week, Cabinet agreed to admit the women who worked in laundries while living in an adjoining institution, into the scheme. I wish we had done it sooner, and I hope and indeed intend that the other issues highlighted by the Ombudsman will be sorted very soon. An experienced senior counsel is working hard on behalf of Government to resolve complex difficulties and I expect real progress soon.

But to get back to the present, can I just finish by again wishing you well for the rest of the two days. Thanks to the incredible event management skills of Norah Casey and her team, I think they are going to be really special. Thanks to the empathy and care of Katherine, Clare and Maeve, I think the listening exercise tomorrow is going to produce rich testimony which I promise you, as a society, we will listen to and learn from, and thanks to you, and your generosity in coming here tonight, we are all, as a society, the richer, as with you, we remember.

Thank you.

## **Speech by Dublin Lord Mayor Mícheál Mac Donncha Gala Dinner, 5th June 2018**

A chairde go léir, Cuirim fáilte mór romhaibh go léir go Teach an Ardmhéara.

Do na daoine sin a tháinig thar lear agus ó áiteanna eile in Éirinn, cuirim fáilte speisialta go Baile Átha Cliath. On my own behalf and on behalf of Dublin City Council and the citizens of Dublin I welcome you on this special occasion. Céad míle fáilte romhaibh.

For too long the voices of those in our country who were gravely wronged were silenced. No more. Those so long treated as non-persons by Church and State are being heard. Their voices must be listened to, their stories cherished, their rights vindicated.

It is a pleasure to be here for this truly historic occasion, the Dublin Honours Magdalene Survivors gala banquet at the Mansion House. It is a very special honour to welcome all of the women, your family members and friends, including those who have travelled from across Dublin, from the rest of Ireland, and especially from overseas. Dublin welcomes you home. You honour us by your presence.

And, in a special way we remember all those wonderful women who can't be with us here this evening: the many the organisers have heard from in the past few weeks, some not physically capable of making the journey to be with us tonight. And, we remember too those who are no longer with us; some lost in recent years are known to us and fondly remembered, others long since passed but never forgotten.

On behalf of the people of this great city, it falls to me as Ardmhéara - Lord Mayor to add my words of acknowledgement and thanks to the words spoken earlier today by President Higgins when he welcomed you at Áras an Uachtaráin. It is, we all hope, a measure of how far Ireland has travelled as a society that we openly and proudly celebrate and honour you this evening. In preparing for tonight's banquet, I found myself thinking about the memorial near here in St. Stephen's Green. The plaque affixed to the park bench invokes members of the public to 'reflect here upon [the] lives' of the 'women who worked in the Magdalen Laundry institutions' and 'the children born to some members of those communities.' When the memorial was unveiled on the 20th of April 1996 a small crowd of approximately 30 people gathered to witness then President Mary Robinson mark the occasion as making a 'historic statement.' Reflecting back to that occasion begs the question what kind of a statement are we seeking to make with the Dublin Honours Magdalene Survivors event in 2018?

I ask this question because there is a lesson worth remembering from 1996.

That lesson is contained in what happened next. Just a short six months after the dedication in St. Stephen's Green, the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity announced in October 1996 that they were closing down the Sean McDermott Street Magdalene Laundry because it was no longer commercially viable. At that time though, there was a population of 40 women still in residence, the eldest in her late 70s the youngest in her early 40s. What society had so recently deemed 'historic' and part of the past was very much part of Ireland present.

And so I encourage us all here this evening to remember that Dublin Honours Magdalene Survivors must be about a new beginning rather than any attempt to close down the past and render it 'historic.' There is much still to be known and properly understood about Ireland's Magdalene Laundries. Your presence here in Dublin tonight—your life-stories, your testimony about your time spent in the different institutions, your resilience, your perseverance in the cause of justice and human rights, your good humour, and your decency—paves the way for a different kind of monument, one not sculpted in cast iron and fixed in place, but rather a process of remembering that is alive, still-emerging, open-ended, and looking toward the future.

If we are brave and if our leaders embrace this new path forward, then we will achieve two crucial objectives that lie at the foundation of Dublin Honours Magdalene Survivors. First, we will honour all survivors and their experiences. Second, we will guarantee no repetition of the past in the present or the future.

We need to make three resolutions.

Firstly – Never again! Never again must women or children or any section of our society be treated in this way.

Secondly – Truth. We need the full truth about what happened in these institutions and similar places – and the State and Church and all concerned must ensure full openness, accountability and transparency.

Thirdly – Justice. All survivors must have access to redress and to justice.

Today's events coincide with the 150th anniversary of the birth of James Connolly who was born on this day, 5 June 1868. James Connolly and the men and women of 1916 certainly did not die for the type of Ireland that maintained women in the slavery of the Magdalene laundries, the State that stood over the torture, abuse and murders that took place in industrial schools, and the robbery of children from their mothers in mother and baby homes. Connolly and his comrades did not die for a State in which women and children were accorded the status of the property of men. A society where powerful men in Church and State ruled by means of coercion, fear and secrecy. But no more.

The name 'Magdalene' was once imposed on women to bring shame and disgrace to those who bore it. Today the shame and disgrace are on those in Church and State who destroyed the lives of so many, while those who stand up for justice – you the women we welcome here tonight – can speak to the nation with pride. We stand with you.

# APPENDIX 7

## JFMR OP-ED AND A SHORT SELECTION OF MEDIA COVERAGE OF DHM

**Op-ed by Dr Katherine O'Donnell in the *Irish Times*, June 5th 2018**

### **Let's listen attentively to survivors of Magdalene Laundries**

Dublin's Mansion House Round Room has hosted many historic occasions: the first meeting of Dáil Éireann in January 1919 and the dramatic turnout of thousands in April 1971 when the Irish Women's Liberation Movement organised a public meeting.

Wednesday will see another historic occasion as hundreds of women who were incarcerated and forced to labour in Ireland's Magdalene Laundries will gather for a 'listening exercise'.

The women will address three questions: 'What should we know about the Magdalene Laundries?', 'What lessons should we learn from what happened there?' and finally 'How should we remember what happened?' The replies will be made publicly available (once personally identifying information has been removed).

The listening exercise is part of a two-day occasion where Magdalene survivors are being honoured by the State and Dublin's lord mayor. The gathering of the women fulfils key parts of the Magdalene Restorative Justice Scheme outlined by Justice John Quirke which recommended that women who wished to meet other survivors be facilitated and that survivors of the Magdalene institutions be publicly commemorated.

Until Charlie Flanagan became Minister for Justice it seemed these elements of the Magdalene scheme would never be realised. However, Flanagan is currently responding to the damning November 2017 report of the Ombudsman on the Magdalene Restorative Justice Scheme which found that the manner in which the scheme was administered by the department constituted maladministration within the meaning of the Ombudsman Act.

While the Central Area Committee of Dublin City Council generously put up the first amount of money for the event, Flanagan is funding the bulk of the costs. The organisation of the event is led by Norah Casey who was generous and skilled enough to take on such a complex operation.

The Ombudsman's report on the Magdalene scheme recommended that the Government develop guidelines so future restorative justice measures can be readily applied across government departments and public bodies.

### **Magdalene redress**

The concept of restorative justice is relatively new in the Irish context and perhaps Justice for Magdalenes Research (JFMR) might claim they inspired Quirke in this regard through the document authored in 2011 which recommended restorative justice should be part of Magdalene redress.

JFMR's thinking continues to evolve in working with other academics to consider how transitional justice might be applied to Ireland.

The first century of Irish independence was typical of post-colonial states in being marred by endemic poverty, a Border dispute and the assertion of nationalist social and cultural purity projects.

Women, the working classes and the poor (who ironically had participated greatly in winning independence) suffered inordinately at the hands of those newly established in power.

Successive Irish governments continued the colonial Victorian apparatus, established post-Famine, which empowered Catholic religious orders to take charge of the welfare of the socio-economically vulnerable.

By privatising social welfare, the British Empire in Ireland was able to absolve itself of direct care for its subjects and allowed a burgeoning Irish middle class to assert itself as a powerful force.

### **Widespread incarceration**

Throughout the 20th century, the large Victorian Catholic institutions which laced the landscape continued to be filled as the Irish State incarcerated its population in proportions higher than any other country in the world, including Soviet Russia, and continued the practice of handsomely paying Catholic religious orders, as private operators, to deliver educational, health and social welfare services.

Before we mark the centennial of the first Dáil meeting in the Mansion House, we ought to deal with the legacy of what went wrong in that first century. Transitional justice as practiced in regions attempting to deal with gross and systemic human rights abuse (such as the treatment of indigenous people in Australia and Canada) offers us examples of how we can revitalise our justice system in the manner that the Ombudsman has recently told the government we need.

Listening to Magdalene survivors is a small but historically significant step in the transitional justice movement towards establishing governance in Ireland that is founded on recognising the dignity and value of (even) the most economically and socially vulnerable.

We have much to learn from those who managed to survive the Magdalene institutions. We can be very grateful that they are generously willing to speak to us.

## **A selection of news reports covering the Dublin Honours Magdalenes event:**

'Magdalene Survivors – An Emotional Week' RTE multimedia feature (9 June 2018)

<https://www.rte.ie/news/ireland/2018/0607/968854-magdalene-survivors/>

Ed O'Loughlin, 'These Women Survived Ireland's Magdalene Laundries. They're Ready to Talk' The New York Times (6 June 2018)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/06/world/europe/magdalene-laundry-reunion-ireland.html>

Ed O'Loughlin, 'Survivors fill in the blanks; Dublin, Ireland' The Toronto Star (17 June 2018)

<https://www.pressreader.com/canada/toronto-star/20180617/281706910396052>

Patsy McGarry, 'Magdalene women gather in Dublin; Hundreds to take part in two-day event to meet and talk about their experience' The Irish Times (5 June 2018)

<https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/hundreds-of-magdalene-women-gather-in-dublin-for-event-in-their-honour-1.3519343>

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<https://www.irishexaminer.com/ireland/i-would-say-prison-was-better-magdalene-survivors-tell-their-story-471564.html>

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<https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/views/analysis/sorry-still-seems-to-be-the-hardest-word-for-church-847716.html>

Catherine Sanz, 'Magdalenes given guard of honour at Dublin reception' The Times (5 June 2018)

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/magdalenes-given-guard-of-honour-at-dublin-reception-g9mm7nh5k>

# APPENDIX 8

## REQUEST FORM FOR TRANSCRIPTS

If you are a Magdalene survivor and you would like the Department of Justice to send you a copy of the transcripts from the Listening Exercise, please fill out the form below and send it to:

**The Restorative Justice Implementation Team  
Operations and Service Delivery  
Department of Justice & Equality  
2nd Floor Bishops Square  
Redmond's Hill  
Dublin 2  
D02 TD99**

To whom it concerns:

Please send me a copy of the transcripts from the Dublin Honours Magdalenes Listening Exercise.

My name is: \_\_\_\_\_

My address is: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Yours sincerely,



