

Restorative Justice Scheme for former Magdalen Residents announced - Government accepts all recommendations of Quirke Report

Minister Shatter and Minister Lynch today (Wednesday 26 June, 2013) announced a scheme of payments for women who were admitted to and worked in the Magdalen Laundries, St Mary's Training Centre Stanhope Street and House of Mercy Training School, Summerhill, Wexford. This follows the publication of the report by Justice Quirke, President of the Law Reform Commission, on the establishment of an ex-gratia scheme and supports for the women affected.

Speaking on the publication of the Quirke Report today, the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Alan Shatter, TD, said, **"For the former residents of the Magdalen Laundries; St Mary's Training Centre Stanhope Street and House of Mercy Training School, Summerhill, Wexford, today is a profoundly important day. They have given so much of their time, their energy, their courage, and their vision of human dignity to make this day come true. Today is about justice."**

"For far too long the plight of the Magdalen women was ignored by the State. This Government was determined to see justice done. The publication of the McAleese report and that historic day in Dáil Eireann when An Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, apologised to the Magdalen women on behalf of the State, the Government and our citizens have led us to today. And today, in accepting the recommendations contained in Judge Quirke's Report, we are not only acknowledging the painful past experiences of the Magdalen women but are taking steps to address, in very real and practical ways, their present and future needs."

Minister for State, Kathleen Lynch added, **"I want to thank the women who came forward to tell their stories of their experiences in a Magdalen Laundry and the effect this had on their lives. Their stories were told with great dignity and, most importantly of all, they have been believed. I would also like to thank the representative groups who so actively and for many years campaigned diligently on their behalf. I know only too well the work involved - I long campaigned on their behalf - and I appreciate fully the difficulties faced but which thankfully were eventually overcome."**

The Government would like to express their sincere appreciation to Mr Justice Quirke for producing such a comprehensive and professional report in such a short period of time.

The Government has decided to accept all recommendations in Judge Quirke's report.

Mr Justice Quirke's most significant recommendation is that the women in question should all receive cash payments in the range €11,500 (duration of stay 3 months or less) to €100,000 (duration of stay of 10 years or more). Full details of payments are in Appendix A and Appendix D of the Report. If the cash payment due is above €50,000, Justice Quirke recommends that it should be paid in the form of a lump sum of €50,000 plus an annual payment related to the notional remaining lump sum to be paid weekly. The amount to be paid depends on the duration of stay of a resident in a Magdalen home.

Arrangements have been put in place in the Department of Justice and Equality to start processing applications immediately. A copy of Justice Quirke's report and an application form with appropriate detail was posted on Tuesday 25 June 2013 to women who have already registered an expression of interest with the Department. If they do not receive an application form within the next 7 days they should contact the Department. For those who have not yet registered an interest, they may contact the Department to obtain an application form.

Queries can be directed to

Telephone Number: 01-476 8660

Email: info@idcmagdalen.ie

Postal Address: Restorative Justice Scheme, Department of Justice and Equality, Montague Court, 7-11 Montague Street, Dublin 2

The Citizen's Information Board is being invited to assist and advise any person who wishes to receive independent advice on the matter.

The verification process for some applicants will take time depending on the availability and extent of records.

The Department of Justice and Equality is in discussions with the Office of the Ombudsman regarding the establishment of an independent appeals process.

Judge Quirke also made a range of other recommendations. These include that:

- (a) the Magdalen women should all be granted access without charge to a wide range of services (GP, hospital, drugs, dental counselling etc.) i.e. an enhanced medical card;
- (b) all Magdalen women who have reached pensionable age should have an income equivalent to the State contributory pension;
- (c) all Magdalen women who have not reached pensionable age should have an income from the State of €100 per week;
- (d) the cash payments should be exempt from income and other taxes and should not be taken into account for the purposes of means testing social welfare or other entitlements and should not affect funding under sections 38 and 39 of the Health Act 2004;
- (e) the creation of a dedicated unit to provide advice and support, assistance in meeting with the religious congregations, social opportunities to meet other such women and to provide for the creation and maintenance of a memorial park;
- (f) the extension of the Nursing Homes Support Scheme Act 2009 so that persons are appointed to look after on an individual basis the best interests of Magdalen women;
- (g) any previous payments made to these women under the Residential Redress Scheme should not be taken into account.

The Government has decided in principle to implement these recommendations in full but, as implementation of some of them is quite complicated and may require legislation, the Government has established a committee with key Departments and the Office of the Attorney General who are to examine how best to implement these other recommendations and to report back within a 4-6 week time frame.

Minister Shatter and Minister Lynch have met with the religious congregations and they have been asked to make a contribution to the implementation of the Quirke recommendations.

26 June 2013

ENDS

Note to Editors:

The Magdalen Commission Report is available to download in full here: <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PB13000255>