



WRDA Response to the Published Report into the Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries in Northern Ireland

This week Stormont published its report into Mother and Baby Homes and Magdalene Laundries here in Northern Ireland. It shows us that at least 10,500 women passed through the Homes and around 3,000 through the Laundries. The report covers the period between 1922 and 1990 when the last Mother and Baby Home closed, and highlights the harsh conditions, back-breaking work for no pay, and the cruel separation of mother and child that took place there. We can see how similar it was to the situation in the Republic of Ireland, but there are also unique elements to this report that highlight the role of the conflict here in what happened. We know also that records are incomplete in many cases, which means that the real numbers may be far higher.

Stormont's decision to hold an independent investigation following the publication of the report is welcomed. This must lead to a full public inquiry with statutory powers that will expose those responsible and it must be focused on justice for the women and children who suffered as a result of this regime. It is important that the victims and survivors are included in the process in a meaningful way, which means it has to be victim-centred, victim-led and framed around the needs and concerns of the victims recognising that this is a far-reaching issue.

There can be no delay as the mothers and children have suffered long enough and there needs to be full co-operation from all those institutions involved, whether church or state bodies. The institutions should provide compensation for the victims and survivors from the assets of the institutions responsible, and must facilitate any measures that the victims need, including access to birth certificates and other records, including when babies were moved across the border to institutions in the Republic of Ireland.

The First Minister recognises that this was a "significant wrong" and the Deputy First Minister added that the victims were "failed on every level". Having seen the issues around the approach taken in the South we urge Stormont to seek to get this right from this point forward and to ensure that every step possible is taken to honour the experiences and deliver justice to the victims of these institutions.