

## Chapter 11:

### Routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries (C):

#### Health authorities and social services

**Summary of findings:**

*This Chapter addresses the placement of girls and women in the Magdalen Laundries by what can collectively be termed the health authorities and social services.*

*Both health policy and delivery of health services are considered in this respect, since the foundation of the State. The agencies and organisations covered include:*

- Public assistance authorities and institutions (local authorities, County and City Homes);*
- Health authorities, comprised in sequence of local authorities and Health Boards (predecessors to the HSE);*
- Social services;*
- Hospitals;*
- Mother and Baby Homes;*
- Psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric services; and*
- Institutions for the intellectually disabled,*

*The Committee found evidence that girls and women were placed in Magdalen Laundries by these authorities or organisations in a wide variety of circumstances.*

*With regard to the period 1922-1970, the Committee found that at least 5 and possibly 6 of the Magdalen Laundries were approved as 'extern institutions' for public assistance under successive pieces of legislation in the areas of public assistance and health. These approvals were made at Ministerial level. Approval of this kind meant that, although operated by organisations other than the State, these*

*Magdalen Laundries were approved for maintenance of people who qualified for public assistance. Where girls or women were referred to these institutions, legislation permitted payment by the State of their maintenance costs.*

*There was no obligation on a girl or woman referred in this way to enter the institution – and no penalty, including withdrawal of other forms of public assistance, arose if she refused to do so. However, the Committee is not in a position to determine whether or not this was made clear to the girls or women in question.*

*The Committee found cases, in the archives of various local authorities, of referrals of girls and women under these provisions. A number of these cases occurred in relation to girls who had formerly been ‘boarded out’ (i.e. fostered) and whose foster families had ceased to shelter them at the age of 15 or 16. A number of other cases involving local authorities under the ‘extern institution’ provision arose after a woman had a child or children outside marriage.*

*After the creation of the Health Boards in 1970, the health function passed to them from local authorities. During an initial transitional period, NSPCC Inspectors worked with and alongside Health Board social workers. Some records of placements of girls and young women in the Magdalen Laundries by these officers were identified and are included in this Chapter.*

*With regard to records of the Health Boards more broadly, the HSE, which holds these records, experienced difficulties in searches for any relevant cases, due to the broad range of materials held, all in hardcopy, for the period in question. However, it confirmed to the Committee that placements were made by social workers, health boards and psychiatric services and that in particular:*

*“as the Magdalen Homes became more of a refuge for the battered, the abused, the rejected and the dispossessed than a home for ‘fallen women’, social workers from the health authorities began a very close working relationship with them”.*

*This Chapter also addresses referrals from the (Religious operated) Mother and Baby Homes. Although considered by some to be closely linked to Magdalen Laundries, Mother and Baby Homes accounted for only 3.9% of known routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries. The cases identified by the Committee in this regard are included.*

*This Chapter also addresses linkages between the Magdalen Laundries and psychiatric hospitals – both as routes of entry but also routes of exit from the Laundries.*

*This Chapter presents patterns identified by the Committee within these overall categories, as well as sample cases illustrating these patterns.*

### **Introduction**

1. This Section sets out the findings of the Committee in relation to referrals of girls and women to Magdalen Laundries by what can be collectively categorised as health and social service authorities.
2. In light of the history and development of provision of health and social services in Ireland since the foundation of the State, this Chapter deals with a wide range of authorities and agencies. Responsibility for both health policy and delivery of health services has over time been the responsibility of a number of different agencies. The legislative basis for each of these was set out in Chapter 5. It is also true that social services in Ireland have developed considerably over time. All authorities and organisations which held responsibility in these areas since the foundation of the State are considered in this Chapter.

3. In addition to the authorities responsible for health policy or delivery of services, this Chapter also considers some other organisations or institutions, where records relating to them can shed light on health policy or patterns of delivery.
4. The authorities and organisations examined in this Chapter are:
  - a. Public assistance authorities and institutions (local authorities, County and City Homes);
  - b. Health authorities - the former Department of Local Government and Public Health, the successor Department of Health and, in sequence local authorities and the Health Boards (both now replaced by the HSE);
  - c. Social services, including delivery of child services through the NSPCC for a short period;
  - d. Hospitals;
  - e. Mother and Baby Homes;
  - f. Psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric services; and
  - g. Institutions for the intellectually disabled.
5. This is an informal categorisation solely for the purposes of clarity and it should be noted that the history and status of each of the organisations referred to in this Chapter differ.
6. Taking all the above sources of referrals collectively, these amounted to 13.1% of known routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries.
7. The case of Mother and Baby Homes (3.9% of known routes of entry) in particular should be noted. The Mother and Baby homes referred to in this Section were operated by a variety of Religious Congregations. These homes were funded by but not operated by the State. However, the Committee was

of the view that they should be included in the narrative and category of State referrals to the Magdalen Laundries because of their relevance to health policy. Further detail on the reasons for this is included in the relevant section of this Chapter.

8. The case of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”) may also be noted.<sup>1</sup> The role of the NSPCC in relation to Industrial and Reformatory School cases is detailed in Chapter 10 and referrals of girls and women by the NSPCC in its own right or jointly with families are detailed in Chapter 18. This Chapter includes only those cases of referrals by the NSPCC which were made in the context of its work with and for the health authorities and social services.
9. This Chapter includes all information identified by the Committee on referrals within these categories, the basis on which referrals were made and, where applicable, the procedures involved. Full detail on State funding of the Magdalen Laundries, including funding from the health sector, is contained in Chapter 13.
10. Difficulties in securing access to specific case-files on the State side in the health and social services sector mean that it was not always possible to determine what State follow-up, if any, occurred in relation to girls and women referred from these categories. However, where information on State follow-up was identified through other sources (including private archives) it is included in this Chapter.
11. Anonymised case-studies are included throughout this Chapter in order to illustrate more fully the types of circumstances in which referrals occurred.

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<sup>1</sup> Note: the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”) was re-named in 1956 as the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“ISPCC”). The ISPCC holds the surviving archives and case-files of the NSPCC. For avoidance of confusion and having regard to the time-periods of relevance to the Committee’s work, the Report refers throughout to the NSPCC rather than the ISPCC.

These case-studies are taken both from official State records identified by the Committee and from the records of the Religious Congregations which operated the Magdalen Laundries.

12. This Chapter first sets out the sources used for searches, and then deals with these areas in chronological order – public assistance authorities and institutions 1922-1970; social service authorities at and around the transition phase from local authorities to Health Boards; health and social services authorities following 1970 (primarily Health Boards). The particular cases of Mother and Baby Homes, general hospitals, psychiatric hospitals and institutions for the disabled are considered thereafter.

**A. Sources relating to possible health and social services related referrals**

13. The sources for the findings of the Committee in this Section are varied. Part I of this Report sets out the manner in which the health function transferred between Departments over time. In summary and at the central level, the Department of Local Government and Public Health was established in 1924. It held responsibility for the health function until 1947, when it was divided into two separate Departments – the Department of Local Government and the Department of Health. A new Department of Social Welfare was also established at that time.

14. At the operational level, responsibility for health also moved between different authorities over time. It was first the responsibility of Local Authorities (under the direction of the Departments noted above) until 1970, at which point the Regional Health Board structure was established and assumed responsibility for health. This remained the case until the creation of the Health Service Executive (“HSE”) which occurred after the closure of the last Magdalen Laundry.

15. In theory, relevant files and materials should have been transferred, along with the transfer of functions, between these agencies. However this did not always occur and the Committee was required to conduct searches among the records of each of these organisations in an attempt to identify any relevant records. Further information on the sources examined for this Chapter follows.

*a. Archives of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government*

16. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government is the successor Department to the Department of Local Government and Public Health in relation to local government function. It has retained responsibility for the records relating to this function from 1924-1947. Accordingly the Committee sought to identify and examine Departmental records deposited in National Archives.

17. National Archives confirmed to the Committee that it holds approximately 5,000 boxes of records deposited by the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government. However these records “are not cross-referenced to any index” and as a result “individual files or papers amongst these records cannot be accessed or retrieved for inspection”.<sup>2</sup> National Archives has begun to catalogue these records at box level, but individual files or papers are not yet accessible.

18. In an attempt to determine the likelihood of any relevant materials being stored in these inaccessible boxes, the Committee sought listings of files which had previously been deposited with the National Archives by the Department. An index of files deposited in 1992 was identified which included files covering the period 1895-1972. This handwritten index included

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<sup>2</sup> Report of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to the Inter Departmental Committee, October 2012

approximately 1,200 files of which, the majority did not appear from their titles to be relevant to the work of the Committee.

19. One file listed on the 1992 index would have been of interest to the Committee, namely a file entitled "Rating of Religious Congregations 1922-1935". However as the individual files within this collection are not accessible, the Committee did not have the opportunity to review it. Identifying this file would have involved manually checking approximately 5,000 uncatalogued boxes at the National Archives. The Committee was, however, able to determine the factual position regarding rating of the Magdalen Laundries through other sources (set out in Chapter 15).

20. A category of files dating to this period which would have been of particular interest to the Committee's work would have been any files relating to the Annual Reports of the Department of Local Government and Public Health between 1927 and 1945. The relevant contents of these Annual Reports are set out in this Chapter. Any files or materials in relation to their drafting could have shed additional light on the matters raised. However no files or records were identified in the holdings of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government in relation to these Annual Reports. The Department has suggested that the Reports may have been compiled thematically by Divisions or Sections within the Department, rather than centrally through one lead Division or Section. However, in the absence of documentary records to that effect, the Committee was unable to pursue this matter any further.

*b. Archives of Local Authorities*

21. Another source of importance for the purposes of this Chapter were the records of Local Authorities. Local authorities held progressively reducing responsibilities for public assistance and public health between 1922 and 1970.

22. There are today 114 local authorities in the State, comprising:



- 29 County Councils;
- 5 City Councils;
- 5 Borough councils;
- 49 Town councils (rating); and
- 26 Town councils (non-rating).

The Managers of the 34 City and County Councils also serve as Managers for the Borough and Town councils.

23. The Committee requested all 34 County and City Managers to conduct a search of each Council's records, including, in particular, records of the Boards of Health and Public Assistance (as existed while Local Authorities held the health function), registers of extern institutions and so on, in an attempt to identify possible cases relating to transfers of girls and women to the Magdalen Laundries by public assistance of health authorities over the period.

24. The task faced by Local Authorities in this regard was considerable. The records retained by Local Authorities for the period in which these Authorities held responsibility for public assistance and health are generally in hardcopy only. Although differences exist between the volume and types of records held by different Local Authorities, the relevant categories of records were generally as follows:

- Minutes books;
- Books containing Managers' Orders (generally in date order rather than thematic categories);
- Ledgers and Accounts; and
- Any surviving files relating to Public Health.

In some, but not all, cases indices of these archives were available.

25. Searches of these records were accordingly difficult and resource intensive. However, some relevant cases and records were identified and these are set out throughout this Chapter.

*c. Archives of the Department of Health and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs*

26. The Department of Health is the successor Department to the Department of Local Government and Public Health insofar as concerns the health function. The Department of Environment, Community and Local Government and the Department of Health indicated to the Committee their understanding that Departmental records (as opposed to local or operational-level records) relating to the health function during the years 1924-1947 were transferred to the newly established Department of Health in 1947.<sup>3</sup> Any Departmental records created thereafter remained under the control of and in the possession of the Department of Health.

27. The archived files of the Department of Health were accordingly also an important source for searches in relation to the Committee's mandate. The Department of Children and Youth Affairs, which is also relevant in particular as regards child services, shares its records and archive systems with the Department of Health.

28. Chapter 4 set out information on steps taken by the Department of Health and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs to searches on their Central Records and File Tracking System ("Crafts"). This system includes Departmental files which are inactive or held in the National Archives, including files dating back to the early 1920s. Searches for any records

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<sup>3</sup> Report of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to the Inter Departmental Committee, October 2012

relevant to possible referrals from the health services (in the broadest sense) to the Magalen Laundries were accordingly conducted on this system.

29. A separate indexation project (the “Access to Institutional and Related Records” project, known as “AIRR”) was completed by the Department of Children and Youth Affairs in relation to historic child care records. In light of the possible relevance of such records to the Committee’s work, searches on this database were carried out. The results of these searches are included in this Chapter.

*d. Archives of the Health Boards and HSE*

30. The Health Service Executive (“HSE”) was established under the Health Act 2004. As the creation of the HSE occurred after the closure of the last Magdalen Laundry in 1996, it would not have records of its own of relevance to the Committee’s work.

31. However, on establishment of the HSE, it inherited the files and archives of the Regional Health Boards which preceded it. Accordingly, records and archives relating to health from the creation of the Health Boards in 1970 onwards are today held by the HSE. In some cases (detailed below), the records of Local Authorities in relation to health, covering the period 1922-1970, were transferred to the relevant Health Boards on their creation in 1970. Where such a transfer happened in 1970, these historic records of the Local Authorities are now also held by the HSE. These records would all clearly be of significance to the Committee’s work.

32. Other than such state records, the HSE has also, in recent years, taken possession of a variety of other records created and previously maintained by private organisations. The Committee understands that these archives, now held by the HSE, include the records of the following Mother and Baby Homes, which were operated by Religious Congregations as approved external institutions with State funding:

- Sacred Heart, Bessboro, Cork;
- Sacred Heart, Castlepollard;
- Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea;
- St Clare's, Stamullen;
- Ard Mhuire, Dunboyne.

33. The Committee understands that the HSE also holds the records for two Mother and Baby Homes "maintained by poor law authorities at Pelletstown, Co. Dublin, which is under the control of the Dublin Board of Assistance, and at Tuam, Co Galway, under the Galway Board of Health and Public Assistance".<sup>4</sup> The institution referred to as Pelletstown was later named St Patrick's, Navan Road.

34. The records held by the HSE also include the historic registers of a number of psychiatric institutions, although some of these have now been deposited with National Archives.

35. The HSE was unable, in the time available, to carry out full searches of its archives or of the other materials over which it has now assumed control (the Registers of the Mother and Baby Homes listed above or of psychiatric institutions). It did, however, carry out spot-checks on the Registers of two Mother and Baby Homes and a number of other searches, the results of which are detailed below.

## **B. Public assistance authorities and institutions 1922-1970**

### *Approval of Magdalen Laundries as extern institutions for public assistance*

36. A series of Acts, from the foundation of the State onwards, provided for what was termed "public assistance". This was essentially a forerunner to social welfare provision. These Acts established a basis for direct financial assistance by the State to eligible persons, as well as so-called "institutional

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<sup>4</sup> Annual Report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, 1938-1939 at page 71

assistance”, that is, provision of assistance to eligible persons by way of providing for them in institutions. County and City Homes were the locations in which many eligible persons received “institutional assistance”.

37. However as set out in the legislative sketch contained in Chapter 5, in addition to State-operated institutions, the Acts provided that so-called “extern institutions” operated by organisations other than the State could be approved for maintenance of persons who qualified for public assistance.

38. The first relevant legislative provision was quite a simple one. It provided as follows:

“Boards of Health and Public Assistance may provide for the reception of a person eligible for relief in an institution not maintained by them but approved by the Minister and may pay the expenses of maintenance, education or treatment in such Institution”.<sup>5</sup>

39. The approval process referred to was not one which required Statutory Instruments or any other such formal process – rather, internal Departmental approval (typically by internal note under the signature or seal of the Minister) was sufficient.

40. No files have been identified to explain the administrative process which would have been involved in selection of institutions for approval. This means that it is not known whether approval was on the basis of an application by the institutions in question, or whether the reverse was the case, that is, whether institutions were identified by the health authorities and invited to apply for approval as an extern institution. However it is clear that the required approval went to Ministerial level.

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<sup>5</sup> County Scheme Orders pursuant to the Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act 1923, article 15 (iii)

41. The first Annual Report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health was for the period 1927-1928. The full list of 68 extern institutions approved by the Minister to that date is appended to the Annual Report.<sup>6</sup> The list of approved institutions included a wide range of institutions, including District hospitals, Industrial Schools, Mother and Baby Homes, specialist institutions for the blind, the deaf, “mentally deficient children”, “tubercular children” and so on.

42. The list of approved extern institutions also included three Magdalen Laundries which fall within the scope of this Report, as follows:

- “The Magdalen Asylum, Galway”
- “St Mary Magdalen Asylum, Lower Gloucester Street”
- “Good Shepherd Convent, Limerick”.<sup>7</sup>

43. The second Annual Report of the Department, for the year 1928-1929, recalled that:

“a board of health and public assistance may contract for the reception with special institutions approved by the Minister of persons eligible for relief”.<sup>8</sup>

It also noted that, in addition to the extern institutions listed in the previous Annual Report:

“during 1928-1929 the following additional institutions were approved: -  
.... St Mary’s Asylum and Reformatory, High Park”.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Appendix XXXIII, Annual Report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health at pages 196-197

<sup>7</sup> Id. Note: The list also included the Good Shepherd Home in Derry, which is outside the scope of this Report.

<sup>8</sup> Annual Report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, 1928-1929, at page 115

<sup>9</sup> Id

44. This means that by 1929 at least 4 Magdalen Laundries were approved by the Minister for Local Government and Health as extern institutions for the “maintenance, education or treatment” of women eligible for public assistance. The effect of these approvals was to permit the referral of women eligible for public assistance to the Magdalen Laundries and further, to authorise payment of the expenses of their maintenance there.

45. The Department’s Annual Report for 1938-1939 described the categories of people maintained in approved extern institutions during the year:

“This class comprises afflicted persons (deaf and dumb, blind, mentally defective, etc.) unmarried mothers and persons requiring special treatment in outside hospitals”.<sup>10</sup>

46. The continued application of the extern institutions list was referred to in other Annual Reports, including the Reports for 1937-1938 and 1941-1942. During this period, however, the legislative basis of the use of extern institutions changed, with enactment of the Public Assistance Act 1939.

47. Section 35 of the 1939 Act (now repealed) provided:

“Subject to the consent of the Minister, a public assistance authority may, if they so think proper, make provision for the assistance in a home, hospital, or other institution not provided or maintained by such authority of persons, or particular classes of persons, eligible for public assistance, and where a public assistance authority makes such provision, such authority may defray the expenses of the conveyance of the persons for whose assistance such provision is made to and from such institution and the expenses of their maintenance, treatment, instruction, or training therein”.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Annual Report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, 1938-1939 at page 70

<sup>11</sup> Section 35 of the Public Assistance Act 1939

48. A document was identified by the Committee in the archives of the Department of Health which approved a range of institutions, including four Magdalen Laundries, as extern institutions for the purposes of section 35. This approval was effected under Ministerial seal, dated 19 March 1943. The approval provided in full as follows:

“Whereas it is enacted by Section 35 of the Public Assistance Act 1939, that subject to the consent of the Minister for Local Government and Public Health, a public assistance authority may, if they think so proper, make provision for the assistance in a home, hospital, or other institutions not provided or maintained by such authority of persons, or particular classes of persons, eligible for public assistance, and where a public assistance authority makes such provision, such authority may defray the expenses of the conveyance of the persons for whose assistance such provision is made to and from such institution and the expenses of their maintenance, treatment, instruction or training therein.

Now therefore, the Minister for Local Government and Public Health does hereby consent to the making of provisions by any public assistance authority, under the said recited section for the assistance of persons or particular classes of persons, eligible for public assistance, in any of the institutions the names of which are set out in the Schedule hereunto annexed”.

49. The Schedule included the following four Magdalen Laundries:

“Magdalen Asylum, Donnybrook, Dublin”;

“Magdalen Asylum, Galway”;

“Magdalen Asylum, Gloucester Street, Dublin”;

“Magdalen Asylum, High Park Convent, Drumcondra.”



50. The effect of this was precisely as applied under the original provision, namely it authorised public assistance authorities, that is, Local Authorities, to provide public assistance to individuals or categories of individuals by placing them in these approved extern institutions and making payments towards their maintenance there.

51. There was no geographic limitation on this authorisation – Local Authorities anywhere in the State were permitted to utilise any or all of the scheduled institutions, including the approved Magdalen Laundries, regardless of whether the institution was located in their region or not.

52. A file dating to the 1950s confirms the re-approval of the Magdalen Laundry at Limerick (which had been included in the extern institutions annexed to the Department of Local Government and Public Health Annual Report 1927-28) under the Public Assistance Act 1939. In response to a request by a County Council for the approval of that institution for “reception of Public Assistance Patients”, the Department of Health provided the necessary sanction. A letter of approval issued, stating:

“I am directed by the Minister for Health to refer to your letter of 26 February last and County Manager’s Order No. 53/64 and to state that he approves the provision of assistance in accordance with Section 35 of the Public Assistance Act 1939 in the Good Shepherd Convent, Limerick”.<sup>12</sup>

53. A file identified in the archives of the Department of Health makes clear that the Good Shepherd Convent at Sunday’s Well, Cork, was also proposed in 1952 for approval as an extern institution under section 35 of the Public Assistance Act 1939. The file confirms that the Board of Public Assistance for the South Cork District wrote to the Department of Health in 1952 proposing recognition of the “Good Shepherd Convent School” in Sunday’s Well, Cork as an extern institution. In doing so, the Board explained its practice of

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<sup>12</sup> Letter dated 27 March 1953 Department of Health to Secretary Tipperary (SR) County Council. File Ref Good Shepherd Convent Limerick Approval. INACT/INA/0/538512

identifying institutions “for maintenance and instruction of certain classes of girls whose admission to County Homes or foster homes was not considered advisable”.<sup>13</sup>

54. The proposal was made in the context of two girls, formerly boarded out children, who had been admitted to the Industrial School at Sunday’s Well but who had now reached the age of 16 (general age of discharge from Industrial School). The Board said that their discharge “owing to the circumstances of their case, was considered highly undesirable in their own interests”.<sup>14</sup> Although no record was found of its formal approval as an extern institution, the Minister’s sanction for payment of assistance to the Good Shepherd Convent for the two girls under section 35 of the 1939 Act was subsequently granted.<sup>15</sup> Although not clear-cut (in light of the confusion in the correspondence between the School and the Convent; and as the girls names are not recorded, which makes it impossible to confirm their entry to the Magdalen Laundry on site), this decision suggests that the Good Shepherd Convent, Sunday’s Well, Cork may have been approved as an extern institution as proposed by the Board of Health.<sup>16</sup>

55. A similar provision also applied under the Health Act 1953, continuing to allow health authorities to provide “institutional services” to people entitled to assistance in external institutions not operated by a health authority. Section 10 of the 1953 Act provided:

“(1) A health authority may, with the consent of the Minister, make and carry out an arrangement for the giving of institutional services to any person or to persons of any class, being a person or persons who is or

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<sup>13</sup> Section 35: Good Shepherd Convent School, Sunday’s Well, Cork. File ref A121/155 (NATARCH/ARC/0/412239).

<sup>14</sup> Id

<sup>15</sup> Letter dated 18 December 1952 from the Department of Health to the Board of Assistance for the South Cork Public Assistance District to the Department of Health. File ref Id.

<sup>16</sup> Letter dated 18 December 1952 from the Department of Health to the Board of Health and Public Assistance. File Ref Id

are entitled to receive institutional services from such authority otherwise than under section 26 of this Act, in an institution not managed by such authority or another health authority.

(2) Payments shall be made by the health authority for institutional services provided pursuant to an arrangement under subsection (1) of this section and the payments shall be in accordance with such scale as may be approved of or directed by the Minister.”<sup>17</sup>

56. The provision also ensured smooth transition from earlier legislation by providing that any such arrangements in force prior to enactment of the 1953 Act to be deemed as arrangements under section 10 of the Act. This means that the approvals previously given to at least 5 (or, if Sunday's Well is counted, 6) Magdalen Laundries as extern institutions continued to apply. As a result health and public assistance authorities continued to be authorised to refer eligible girls or women to these Magdalen Laundries as a means of providing public assistance.

57. In light of the time-period in question, the archives of Local Authorities and the HSE (as successor to the various health authorities concerned) were the most likely to contain records suggesting or confirming referrals of girls and women to these Magdalen Laundries, in their status as extern institutions, by Local Authorities.

58. The Committee accordingly requested all 34 County and City Managers to conduct a search of their records, including in particular records of the Boards of Health and Public Assistance, in an attempt to identify any such referrals or transfers. County archivists, librarians and Local Authority staff carried out searches of available records.

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<sup>17</sup> Section 10(1) and (2) of the 1953 Health Act

59. Significant difficulties were faced by Local Authorities in searching available records in this regard, particularly because of the way in which these records were retained. For example many of the records identified and set out below were not segregated by topic and were simply included among Manager's Orders dealing with the whole range of matters of County administration. Nonetheless some relevant records were identified, details of which follow.<sup>18</sup>

60. Two Councils confirmed that records relating to the health function had been given to the newly established Health Boards in the early 1970s:

- Dublin City Council informed the Committee that records relevant to the health function were transferred to the Eastern Health Board on its creation in 1970.<sup>19</sup>
- Monaghan County Council confirmed that it "handed over any records it had to the health board when it was set up in the early 1970s. Any payment vouchers it may have retained were destroyed about ten years later as a matter of routine".

61. Six Councils identified records relevant to Magdalen Laundries in general, but not to the question of referral of girls or women to these institutions:

- Cork City Council reviewed all available files and found a number of relevant records relating to laundry services and grants in the latter phases of the Sunday's Well and Peacock Lane Magdalen Laundries. These details are included in Chapters 13 and 14.

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<sup>18</sup> All following reports of County Councils summarised, original replies appended to the Report of the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government to the Inter-Departmental Committee.

<sup>19</sup> The results of other searches carried out by Dublin City Council, unrelated to the health function, are contained in Chapter 12

- Cork County Council carried out sample searches of each category of record retained. Some records relevant to rationing (Chapter 17) and to the Industrial School located on the same site as the Magdalen Laundry at Sunday's Well were identified, but no records relevant to referrals.
- Fingal County Council only located records relating to an institution not within the scope of this Report, namely the institution termed "Magdalen Asylum, Leeson Street", which was in fact a home for expectant mothers and their children and not a Magdalen Laundry (none of which accepted pregnant women or their children).
- Leitrim County Council examined sample records from the 1920s to the 1940s. One reference was identified in the 1920-1924 Council Minute Book to Magdalen Asylums in the context of a discussion on options for dealing with expectant mothers and unmarried mothers (on which see further below).
- Waterford City Council conducted searches on a sampling basis of Minute books, Manager's Orders from 1954-1960, rate books and financial records. Information relevant to rates was identified which is included in Chapter 15, but no records of referrals were found.
- Kildare County Council identified some material, originating in a Mother & Baby Home, which is dealt with in a later section.

62. Two other Councils identified material of possible interest but lacking sufficient detail to confirm its relevance, or otherwise, to the Magdalen Laundries within the scope of the Report.

- Limerick County Council, by contrast, identified 4 references to referrals to or removals from the Good Shepherd Convent in

Limerick, but these appear to refer to the Industrial and Reformatory Schools on site rather than to the Magdalen Laundry.

- Wexford County Council searched Manager's Orders and Council minutes and identified three cases of referral of and payment for women in "an extern institution/home for unmarried mothers" in 1954.<sup>20</sup> Further details are not recorded and it is not possible to say what extern institutions – the vast majority of which were *not* Magdalen Laundries – were involved. Nor is it clear from the Manager's Orders whether the cases concerned unmarried women who were pregnant (in which case they could not have been admitted to a Magdalen Laundry, as no pregnant women were permitted in any Magdalen Laundry) or whether they were women who had previously given birth to a child. And as the names of the women concerned were not recorded by the Council at the time of the Order, it is not possible to cross-check these names against the records of the Magdalen Laundries to determine if they had been admitted.

63. However, the following 4 County Councils identified in their archives records of referrals of girls and women to Magdalen Laundries by the Council (acting as health authority) of individual women:

- Clare County Council;
- Galway County Council;
- Waterford County Council; and
- Westmeath County Council.

*Referrals by Clare County Council*

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<sup>20</sup> Orders 963, 964, 1531 dated 31 May 1954, 31 May 1954 and 1 September 1954 respectively.

64. Relevant records identified in the archives of Clare County Council included a number of general records as well as documents confirming referrals of individual women by the health authorities to Magdalen Laundries.

65. The Clare County Archive includes records from the Clare Board of Health and Public Assistance from 1915-1966, as well as records on the operation of the County Home and County Hospital. Extensive searches were carried out, including searches of:

- Minute Books of the Board of Health and Public Assistance 1915-1942;<sup>21</sup>
- Managers' Orders, relating to the approval of assistance to persons in need of clothing allowances, admissions to the County Home and other institutions, letting and maintenance of old labourers cottages, provision of pumps and sewerage schemes and the boarding out of children;<sup>22</sup>
- Minutes of Finance Committee meetings (1923-38) and Committee Minute Books (1912-1927) covering general financial matters of various committees such as Dispensary Committee, County Hospital Committee, County Infirmary, Sanatorium Benefit Committee, Tuberculosis Committee, Rural District Councils, Board of Guardians and Ennis District Asylum;
- General Assistance Minutes County Home and County Nursery (June 1926-March 1927); and
- Medical Assistance Minutes (June 1926-March 1927).

66. Among the general records identified were some referring to unmarried mothers and their children - however these records refer only to admission of

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<sup>21</sup> CE/MIN/4,9,13,15,19,23,25,26,28,41,42,48

<sup>22</sup> CC/MO/2/1,3,4,8,14,20,23

these women to Mother and Baby Homes, not to the Magdalen Laundries within the scope of this Report.<sup>23</sup>

67. The records of referrals of girls and women to Magdalen Laundries by the health authorities in Clare do not arise in the context of the birth of children outside marriage. Rather, the three cases identified, which date to the 1940s and 1950s, appear to have arisen in the context of fostering arrangements which had broken down (“boarded-out children”).

68. With regard to “boarded-out children” generally, it can be noted that the financial payments to foster parents (“boarding out allowances”) ceased when the child reached the age of 15 during this time period.<sup>24</sup> Records of the Department of Health suggest a pattern in that respect, with one Inspector in 1941 referring to a lack of “ties of affection” which:

“is shown by the frequent refusal of foster parents to provide a home for the children after the age of 15 unless the Board continues to maintain them. Recently a girl of 15 was returned to the County Home by her foster parents when payments for maintenance ceased. Nothing is gained by rearing children in foster homes if they are returned to the County Home at the age of 15”.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> For example, a minute of the Clare Board of Health and Public Assistance in 1932 resolved: “That when the county nursery is closed unmarried mothers to be accommodated at the County Home pending arrangements for their transfer to other suitable institutions”. Minute Books of the Board of Health and Public Assistance, October 1931-September 1934, CE/MIN/19, 25 February 1932. There were also references in the Minutes for the early 1930s to the Mother and Baby Home at Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea, with which the Board of Health and Public Assistance made an agreement “for admission of unmarried mothers and children to that institution”. Minute Books of the Board of Health and Public Assistance, October 1931-September 1934, CE/MIN/19. Includes a letter from the Minister of Local Government and Public Health “requesting to be furnished with a copy of the agreement entered into by the Board with the Authorities of Shan Ross Abbey, Roscrea, for the admission of unmarried mothers and children to that institution”. 31 December, 1932

<sup>24</sup> See e.g. Maguire, Moira: *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland* at 66

<sup>25</sup> Inspection Report, 1941, Miss Murray. Offaly Board of Health and Public assistance Minutes 13 September 1941. Cited at Maguire, *supra*, at 68



69. One historian has, following research of certain relevant archives, drawn attention to the way some local authorities dealt with children unwanted by their foster families when they reached the age at which boarding out allowances ceased. She suggests that at least some boarded-out children effectively rotated between boarded-out homes and the County Home, in a cycle which ended only with them reaching the age of majority.<sup>26</sup>

70. The following 3 cases relating to boarded out children were taken from the Clare Manager's Order series and in all cases are identified in the records of the Religious Congregation concerned as having entered the Magdalen Laundry from the County Home.

71. The first case identified was described in the Manager's Order in 1948 as follows:

"I hereby approve of the removal of [name], boarded out girl, to the Good Shephard Convent, Limerick on 20<sup>th</sup> Dec 1947 on the recommendation of [name], Acting Superintendent Assistance Officer".<sup>27</sup>

72. From the records of the relevant Religious Congregations, the Committee has determined that this girl was 17 years old at the time of her referral. Her mother was alive, although the girl was not living with her. The girl's last address is noted as the County Home. She remained in the Magdalen Laundry for slightly less than 2 years, before she "went to a situation" (i.e. a job).

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<sup>26</sup> Moira Maguire, *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland* at 97, see e.g.

"experienced a revolving door at county homes: they were boarded out, returned to the county home for whatever reason, boarded out again, and returned to the county home in a cycle that only ended when they were sent to industrial schools or when they reached the age of sixteen years and were pushed out into the world to fend for themselves".

<sup>27</sup> Managers' Orders 1946-1948 (CC/MO/2/8), Order No. 8128, January 1948.

73. The second case identified was from the following year, 1949. The Manager's Order provided as follows:

"I hereby approve of the removal of the girl [name], aged 17 years, hired out to Mrs. [name and townland], to the Good Shepherd Convent Limerick".<sup>28</sup>

74. From the records of the relevant Religious Congregations, the Committee has confirmed the entry of this girl to the Magdalen Laundry at the age of 17, with her recommendation similarly described as being from the County Home. There was "no account of parents". She remained in the Magdalen Laundry for just over 5 years, at which point she "went to Magdalen Sisters, Belfast".

75. The third case identified in the records of Clare County Council occurred in 1950. The Manager's Order in that case indicated as follows:

"I hereby approve of the admission of the girl [name] to the Good Shepherd Convent, Limerick, on 19 June 1950 on the recommendation of [name] Superintendent Assistance Officer".<sup>29</sup>

76. The records of the relevant Religious Congregations identify her (under a slightly adjusted name) as having entered the Laundry at the age of 16. She is recorded as entering on the recommendation of a named person at the County Home. There was "no account of parents". The girl spent almost 3 months at the Magdalen Laundry, before she "went to the convent [named]". The convent to which she went was not a Magdalen Laundry.

#### *Referrals by Galway County Council*

77. Galway County Council carried out "an extensive search of our archives catalogue and various collections" and identified general materials of

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<sup>28</sup> Managers' Orders 1946-1948 (CC/MO/2/8), Order No. 10718, 20 June 1949.

<sup>29</sup> Managers' Orders 1946-1948 (CC/MO/2/8), Order No. 12848, 27 June 1950.

relevance as well as referrals of a number of girls and women to Magdalen Laundries.

78. Some general records were first identified, including detail of discussions in the Council on whether arrangements could be made with two Magdalen Laundries for admission of women having had two or more children outside marriage. The term “second offenders” is used in these records in relation to such women.

79. The first such reference occurred in records predating the establishment of the State. The minutes of Galway County Council in 1921 include an account of a discussion on amalgamation of workhouses and general arrangements for provision of institutional relief. The Minutes noted that:

“the Council resolved to have one central hospital in Galway with ambulances and have one central home for old and infirm in Tuam or Loughrea. Children were to be sent to an institution for which one of the workhouse hospitals was used. Unmarried mothers were to be dealt with according to whether they were ‘first offenders’ or ‘older offenders’, with the former sent to the same institution as the children and the latter sent to the Magdalen Asylum, according to the number of offences”.<sup>30</sup>

80. It appears that, after the foundation of the State, the County Council attempted to formalise this policy, although apparently seeking to do so without any accompanying payment by the Council. Minutes of the County Council, dated October 1924 indicate as follows:

“Magdalen Asylum: the Secretary reported that as instructed at the last meeting he interviewed the Rev. Mother of the Mercy Convent, Galway, to see if an arrangement could be arrived at whereby second

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<sup>30</sup> Galway County Council Minutes GC1, 1899 in continuation, GC1/3 at 308.

offenders would be admitted to the Asylum as heretofore, without any success.

A letter was submitted from the Good Shepherd Convent, Cork, stating they would take two of such women, provided they are prepared to work for their upkeep.

Order- [Health & Home Assistance] Committee to approach the Sister in charge of the Magdalen Asylum, Galway, and ascertain if she is prepared to admit second offenders without any payment, which would obviate the signing of an agreement".<sup>31</sup>

81. As set out in Chapter 5 of this Report, the Galway County Scheme proposed by the County authorities in connection with the Local Government (Temporary Provisions) Act 1923 included a provision, building on these references, which suggested that women having their second child outside marriage would not be eligible for any public assistance should they refuse to enter the Magdalen Laundry. However as set out in full in Chapter 5, due to the provisions of the Act itself and as confirmed during Oireachtas debates during passage of the Act, this provision never had any legal force and was never operable. Further, the provision, although of no legal effect, was in any event removed in the amended County Scheme for Galway approved by the Minister in June 1923.<sup>32</sup> Accordingly, there was never a legal basis on which Galway County Council could have sought to withhold public assistance from a woman on grounds of her being an unmarried mother or due to refusal to enter a Magdalen Laundry.

82. It remained lawful for all County Councils, including Galway, in their role as health authorities, to refer girls or women to approved Magdalen Laundries – along with the whole range of other institutions approved as extern institutions

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<sup>31</sup> Minutes GC5/ - date range 1922-1932, 1938-1941

<sup>32</sup> County Scheme Order, Galway No. 1, 1923 of 28 June 1923

– as a form of institutional relief. There would, however, have been no penalty and no loss of entitlement to alternative forms of public assistance for a girl or woman refusing to enter an extern institution.

83. Decisions on referrals of individual women to Magdalen Laundries (or any other extern institution) occurred at the level of the County Council (then operating as a health authority) and were effected by way of Order of the County Manager.

84. Four Orders of the County Manager, Galway County Council, were identified which confirm three cases of referral of women to the Magdalen Laundries. The basis on which such referrals could have occurred would have been the approval of the Magdalen Laundries in question as extern institutions for provision of public assistance. In all three cases, the women concerned had had a child in the Tuam home.

- “[Name] – that this girl be sent to the Magdalen Asylum when due for discharge”.<sup>33</sup> A further Manager’s Order was made in respect of this girl shortly thereafter: “that this girl be sent to the Magdalen Asylum when child is 12 months old”.<sup>34</sup>
- “[Name] – that application be made to the putative father of this girl’s child for maintenance charges and that she be discharged to the Magdalen Asylum when child is twelve months old”.<sup>35</sup>
- “[Name] - that this girl be sent to the Magdalen Asylum when child is 12 months old”.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Manager’s Orders GC/CS02, MO8204/3785, 4 March 1947

<sup>34</sup> MO8388/3934, 28 March 1947

<sup>35</sup> MO8388/3934, 28 March 1947.

<sup>36</sup> Id. MO/8388/3394, 28 March 1947

85. The Committee searched for these women in the records of the Religious Congregation which operated the Magdalen Laundries. In two of these cases, a matching record was identified by the Committee among the partial records of the Galway Magdalen Laundry, which confirm that at least these two women were admitted to the institution.
86. The first Order noted above related to a woman, recorded in the Register as having been 22 years of age. She was admitted to the Magdalen Laundry within a few days of the making of the County Manager's Order. The Register records her referral as "Tuam Home, for protection and instruction" (not referring to the County Manager's Order which was the basis of the transfer). The date of her discharge was not recorded in the Register.
87. No record of the second woman entering a Magdalen Laundry was identified by the Committee. As the records for the Galway Magdalen Laundry are partial only, it cannot be said definitely whether she did not enter that institution, or whether she did and the relevant record has not survived.
88. The woman who was the subject of the third Manager's Order above was also identified by the Committee in the Register of the Galway Magdalen Laundry. She was recorded in that Register as being 25 years of age at the time of her admission, a number of months after the Manager's Order. Again, her referral route is recorded as "Tuam Home". The Register indicates that less than a month after her admission, she "escaped".
89. Although there was no legal basis for the withholding of any alternative public assistance to these women, if they chose not to enter the Magdalen Laundry, it is nonetheless possible that financial considerations played a part in these decisions of the Council. Financial considerations appear, at a minimum, to have been a factor in decisions of the Council in relation to admissions to the Mother and Baby Home in Tuam, as follows. One month after these referrals a Manager's Order was made which provided that:

“Future admissions of unmarried mothers to the Children’s Home Tuam: I hereby direct that admissions to the Children’s Home, Tuam, in future be only made on order issued direct from the County Council office after receipt of application form completed by expectant mother giving name and means of putative father, whether she is willing to swear against him with particulars as to her own means and contribution (if any) proposed to be made. This form must be endorsed by her medical attendant giving probable date of confinement and stating whether admission is recommended”.<sup>37</sup>

*Referrals by Waterford County Council*

90. Waterford County Council searched available records including

- County Hospital Committee Minutes,
- Manager’s Orders,
- Finance Committee Minutes and
- Files relating to public health.

91. Records were identified in relation to transport of two women to a Magdalen Laundry. The cases of these women arose jointly in 1931 and were identified in searches of the minutes of the County Hospital Committee. The minutes noted that the Matron of the hospital asked:

“for the use of the Ambulance to convey two unmarried mothers to a Good Shepherd Home outside the county – they are deplorable cases and in the interests of public morality should be placed under restraint – it is the second offence in both cases”.<sup>38</sup>

92. The outcome of the discussion was that the Committee approved use of the ambulance, but on condition that the women consented to the transfer.

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<sup>37</sup> MO 8553/3962 29 April 1947

<sup>38</sup> County Hospital Committee minutes, WCC/GNA/270 Minutes 1931-1938, April 1931

“The Ambulance to convey them to their destination (Dublin) provided they are willing to go”.<sup>39</sup>

93. As the names of the two women in question were not recorded in these Minutes, it was not possible for the Committee to identify, through the records of the Religious Congregations, whether or not they had subsequently agreed to this proposal and entered a Magdalen Laundry.

*Referrals by Westmeath County Council*

94. Westmeath County Council searched relevant records including:

- Westmeath County Board of Health and Public Assistance Minute Books 1922-1942 including financial minutes
- Westmeath County Board of Health and Public Assistance – North Westmeath Sub-Committee Minute Books 1927-1935
- Manager’s Orders Health and Public Assistance October 1944-October 1954.

95. A case was identified, dating to 1939, and relating to a boarded-out child. A letter was received by the County Council from the Department of Local Government and Public Health:

“stating that they have before them the return of children admitted to and discharged from the County Home, Mullingar, during the month of March last, and they desire to be informed why the boarded out child, [name] was taken from her foster parents and sent to the Magdalen Asylum, Gloucester Street, Dublin”.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Id

<sup>40</sup> No P. 130/5/39 dated 8 May 1939



96. The response of the Council was to order “Superintendent Home Assistance Officer to report” on the matter. The Council appears to have responded to the Department on the matter, but a copy of that letter has not been found.

97. A replying letter from the Department noted that the child in question should not have been sent to the Magdalen Laundry and identified a convent (not a Magdalen Laundry) to which it suggested that she might instead be admitted. In that regard, the Department’s letter stated as follows:

“the Secretary’s letter of the 23<sup>rd</sup> May last in regard to the case of the girl, [name], who was taken from her foster parents and sent to the Magdalen Asylum, Dublin and stating that it was not proper to have this child sent to this Institution and she should be removed from there. They state that it is open to the Commissioner to address the authorities of the Convent [identified convent – not a Magdalen Laundry], Dublin, with a view to having her admitted to this Institution”.<sup>41</sup>

The Order made by the Council was as follows:

“Have child removed to County Home and request Authorities of [named Convent] to inform Board of Health of cost of maintenance”.<sup>42</sup>

98. Subsequent records among the Manager’s Orders indicate that the alternative named Convent (not a Magdalen Laundry):

“stated that there is a vacancy in their Convent and that they can take the girl named in the Secretary’s letter. They would accept 7/6 which is the usual allowance of the Board”.

99. The Committee, through the records of the relevant Religious Congregations, confirmed that the girl in question had entered the Magdalen Laundry and was

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<sup>41</sup> NCBHPA – 1 – 28

<sup>42</sup> Id

recorded as being “sent from [place] County Home”. She was 16 years of age at the time of her admission. She was recorded under a slight variant of her name (shortened). She is recorded as having “left”, on an unrecorded date. Judging her date of departure from the official records noted above, it appears that she had spent approximately 3 months in the Magdalen Laundry prior to her departure.

*Referrals by Wicklow County Council*

100. Records held by Wicklow County Council also suggest placement of at least one boarded out child in a Magdalen Laundry. The Minutes of the Wicklow Board of Health and Public Assistance for 1926 include information on the sequential placements of a girl in a range of institutions by the local authority after her foster mother decided not to keep her when the boarding-out allowance ceased when she reached 15 years of age.

101. The Minutes indicate that she had “no home or relatives who would be responsible for her, and she was not eligible for admission to the County Home”.<sup>43</sup> She was placed by the Wicklow Assistance Officer in two different jobs (neither employer would “keep her”), in two religious-operated institutions for training in domestic service (both of which had, after a short time also contacted the Assistance Officer to indicate that they “refused to keep her”) and ultimately also in the Magdalen Laundry at Gloucester Street, Dublin “for a trial”.

102. A number of other Councils indicated that despite extensive searches, they had not identified any relevant records:

- Carlow County Council reviewed the registers of Manager’s Orders for the period 8 September 1942 – 16 February 1963 and found no

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<sup>43</sup> Wicklow Board of Health and Public Assistance Minutes 25 January 1926. Also cited by Maguire, *supra*, at 69

references to Magdalen Laundries. Manager's Orders for the 1930s and the relevant period after February 1963 were not available.

- Cavan County Council reviewed all minute books for the period 1921-1942 but found no reference to the Magdalen Laundries.
- Donegal County Council conducted a sample search of Minutes of the Board of Health & Public Assistance, County Council Managers' Orders, County Council Abstracts of Accounts, County Council Finance Committee Minutes and Donegal County Council general minutes. No relevant records were identified.
- Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council carried out extensive sample searches and found no "direct or indirect reference to the Magdalen Laundry or Asylum, or any comparable institution".
- Galway City Council conducted "a thorough search" of its listed documentation but was unable to locate any relevant files.
- Meath County Council reviewed the Board of Health and Public Assistance General Ledgers, March 1925–March 1943, the Annual Reports of the Meath County Medical Officer on the Health and Sanitary Conditions of the County 1936-1957, the Home Assistance Applications and Report Books 1925-1953 and the County Board of Health Medical Returns 1936-1957, with no findings of relevance.
- Mayo County Council confirmed that "all records relating to health matters in Mayo County Council were transferred to the Western Health Board in 1970". Although it retains the minutes of Council meetings and Manager's Orders, the Council informed the Department of Environment, Community and Local Government

that it “does not have the resources to research and extract from these records the information you require”.

- Kerry County Council did not identify any relevant records.
- Kilkenny County Council carried out “a thorough search” of archives but did not identify any relevant materials.
- Laois County Council searched archives but did not identify any relevant materials.
- Limerick City Council has digitised records including the records of the Public Health and Assistance Board and the Minutes of the City Council. These were searched in full. Sample searches were also carried out on the (non-digitised) Manager’s Orders covering the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. No records of referrals to the Magdalen Laundry were identified.
- Longford County Council reviewed the minutes of the Boards of Health and Public Assistance on a sampling basis for the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s; as well as Managers Orders for the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. No relevant records were identified.
- Louth County Council searched financial records, Managers Orders and index of minutes of the Council but did not identify any relevant records
- North Tipperary County Council searched all available records in relation to the local authorities in the area but did not identify any relevant records.

- Offaly County Council searched available materials on a sampling basis but did not identify any relevant records.
- Roscommon County Council searched all available records but found no relevant records.
- Sligo County Council searched all records included minutes of the Board of Health, Manager's Orders, Council minutes and other records relating to health and public assistance. No relevant records were identified.
- South Dublin County Council was established only on 1 January 1994 and accordingly did not have records for the period during which local authorities held the health function.
- South Tipperary County Council confirmed that it held minutes of the Boards of Health and Public Assistance and Manager's Orders for the period. A search was carried out on a sampling basis for the 1930s, 1940s and 1950s, with no relevant records identified.

103. It is highly unlikely that the cases described above are the only cases of referral of girls and women by County Councils, in their capacity as health authorities, to the Magdalen Laundries. The difficulties in searches referred to above may mean that other such referrals were made by County Councils

104. These searches by all 34 Councils accordingly resulted in only 10 identified cases of referrals of girls or women to the Magdalen Laundries by Councils in their role as health authorities. As an indication of scale, for the equivalent period it may be noted that records were identified of approximately 135 cases of referrals by the Councils to Mother and Baby Homes (which are not within the scope of this Report).

105. These ten cases are clearly not the only referrals made during the period by the health and public assistance authorities, as evidenced by the records of the Religious Congregations which operated the Magdalen Laundries. They are, nonetheless, indicative of a pattern of referrals and the basis on which they were made. On the basis of the records identified, two general categories of girls and women appear, on the face of these records, to have been referred to Magdalen Laundries by local authorities performing the health function prior to establishment of the Health Boards in 1970:

- Girls above the age of 15 who had formerly been boarded-out (fostered); and
- Unmarried mothers, after the birth of their children.

106. The approval of at least 5 and possibly 6 Magdalen Laundries as extern institutions in which local authorities could place girls or women eligible for institutional relief or assistance permitted local authorities to lawfully refer girls or women to approved Magdalen Laundries. Approval of these institutions occurred at Ministerial level; while approval of individual referrals was made at the level of County/City Council and effected by way of Order of the County/City Manager.

107. No penalty, including the withdrawal of other forms of assistance, applied to any girl or woman who did not comply with such a referral. What is less clear is whether the girls or women concerned, and especially those young girls who had previously been boarded out, were aware of the alternative options available to them.

108. The records of the Religious Congregations further supplement the information identified in official records. At least 349 cases were identified in these records of referrals of girls and women from City and County Home to Magdalen Laundries. This amounts to 4.4% of all known entries to the

Magdalen Laundries. The youngest girl referred from a City or County Home was 13 years of age, while the oldest woman referred was 61 years of age. A number of broad patterns can be identified among the cases of girls and women recorded as entering Magdalen Laundries from County or City Homes or by the health authorities during this (pre-1970) period.

109. A small number of cases are specific enough to confirm the pattern, already identified in the records of County Councils, that some young girls were returned to County Homes and from there placed in Magdalen Laundries at or around the age of 15, when boarding-out allowances to their foster-families ceased. For example:

- A 15-year old girl was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s from a named County Home. The Register records “has no relatives” but included an address for her “foster mother”. This girl became a consecrate approximately 10 years after her entry to the Magdalen Laundry and remained there until her death.
- A 15-year old girl placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s by the “Sister in Charge, County Home”. She was recorded as having “no family or friends”. She remained there for approximately 3 months before she “left for a situation” (a job).
- A 15-year old girl was “sent by the Matron, County Home [place]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. She had “no address” and no family. The details of her departure are not recorded.

110. In other cases, poverty seems to have been a factor, with a number of young girls admitted to Magdalen Laundries from County Homes in which one or their parents also resided. For example:

- A 17-year old girl was “sent from the Co. Home [place]” in the 1920s. Her “father living in Co. Home [place]”. She was “sent back again” after 2 months.
- An 18-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. She was “brought from County Home”. Her “mother lives in County Home, [place]”. She remained there approximately 6 months.
- A 17-year old girl was “sent from County Home [place]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. It was recorded that her “father an inmate of [place] County Home”. She remained there for approximately 2 months, after which she was “sent to County Home for treatment”.
- A 19-year old girl “came from County Home [place]” in the 1930s. Her “mother resides at County Home [place]”. She was “sent to County Home” 7 months later, but “returned” again 3 months subsequently. The details of her subsequent departure are not recorded.
- A 14-year old girl was sent to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s by “Matron, County Home, [place]”. The Register records that her “mother in County Home, [place]”. The details of her departure are not recorded.

111. Poverty also appeared as a factor in admissions of older girls or women to the Magdalen Laundries from County Homes, with some women moving between those two institutions a number of times. For example:



- A 17-year old girl was “sent from the Union” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. No family is recorded and her “friends dead”. After 4 months she left and went to another Magdalen Laundry.
- A 19-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s from “the Union”. After approximately 3 months she “returned to the Union”, but “returned here again” to the Magdalen Laundry less than a week later.
- A 35-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s, sent by a named County Home. She had “no address”. She remained there until her death many years later.
- An 18-year old girl was “sent by [name], Co. Home [place]” in the 1930s. She “left at own request” after approximately a year and “went to Co. Home”. She returned to the Magalene Laundry approximately a year and a half later, staying for about a year.
- A 24-year old girl was “sent by the Matron, [place] County Home in the 1930s. She was recorded as having spent “many years in County Home”. After 5 months, she was “sent to her step-mother”.
- A 17-year old girl sent by County Home to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. Her parents were dead. She remained there only 5 days before she “left at her own request”. She returned approximately a week later and again remained less than a week.
- A 17-year old girl “came from County Home” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. A “step-mother” is recorded on the Register. She remained there 6 years, after which she “left at her own request”

- A 16-year old girl was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s from a named County Home. Her parents were dead. She remained there 7 years before leaving for a job.
- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, “sent by [name], City Home [place]”. She had no relatives. She was “sent back to [place] at own request” 8 months later.
- A 19-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry from “the County Home, [place]”. The Register records that her parents were living but that they had “no home address”. She remained in the Magdalen Laundry one month before she was dismissed.
- A 20-year old woman with “no address” entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, having been “sent by the Matron, County Home, [place]”. She remained there for 4 years.
- A 16-year old girl was brought to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s by “[name], County Home, [place]”. There was “no account of parents”. She remained there 3 months and then “left”.
- A 17-year old girl was “sent by the Matron, County Home [place] in the 1950s. She had in her earlier life been in an Industrial School and had “no relatives”. She remained there almost 16 years, before she was “sent to” a named Industrial School (presumably for employment).
- A 17-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in 1970, referred by the “County Clinic”. Her parents were dead. She remained there approximately a year and a half, before she left for a job.

112. In a small number of cases, intellectual disability or psychiatric illness is suggested by available records. For example:

- A girl was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry from “the Union” in the 1930s. She was “sent back to Union- mental”.
- A 28-year old girl was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s by “the Matron” of a named County Home. On an unspecified date thereafter, she was “taken back by Matron as she is a bit mental”.
- A 16-year old girl was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s, “brought by [name], County Manager, [place], arrangements made by [name], Asst Co Manager [place]”. Her mother was listed as living outside the State. She remained there for 7 years, after which she was sent to an institution for the intellectually disabled.

113. In other cases, old age or the absence of family members to care for them seems to have been a factor behind the referral of women to Magdalen Laundries from County Homes. For example:

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s having been sent from a named County Home. Her husband was dead. She stayed there almost a month.
- A 61-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s from a named county Home. She “left at her own request” 5 months later, but subsequently “returned from County Home”.
- A woman recorded as a “widow for 10 years” entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s from a named County Hospital. The details of her departure are not recorded.

114. These and many other referrals by County and City Homes would have been approved by the appropriate County structures, but the records of these referrals, on the basis of searches by Local Authorities, do not appear to have survived intact or in easily accessible format.

**C. Referrals from health authorities carrying out a social services role, prior to establishment of the Health Boards, and from social services thereafter**

115. Social-services type roles, were also performed by the health and public assistance authorities prior to establishment of the Health Boards in 1970. Cases of referrals, in this regard, of girls and women to Magdalen Laundries were also identified by the Committee. Sample cases follow:

- A 21-year old woman was “brought by the social workers of the city” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. After three months, her “parents took her home”.
- A 15-year old girl was “sent by Board, [place]” in the 1950s. She became a consecrate and remained there for 12 years, before leaving for an outside institution (not a Magdalen Laundry).
- A child (age not recorded) was “brought by [name], Children’s Officer, [place]” in the 1950s. After 9 months she “ran away”.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s, having been referred by a named “Almoner” at a named hospital. (Almoners were early social workers in some hospitals). She remained there until her death.

- A 14-year old girl was sent to a Magdalen Laundry in the the 1960s by a named person, described as “Welfare Officer, Health Authorities, [place]”. The only listed family was her “foster-parents”. She remained there over 2 years, at which point she was transferred to another Magdalen Laundry.
- A woman aged in her 40s was sent to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s by a named person at “Health Authority, [address]”. She remained there almost 2 years, at which point she was “sent home with her two brothers and sister”.
- A 15-year old girl was sent to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s by “[place] Health Authority”. Her only recorded family was a foster-mother. The Register records that she was undergoing treatment at a named psychiatric hospital. After less than a month, she was “taken by [name], social worker” to a named psychiatric hospital.
- A woman (age not recorded) who had been in a named institution for intellectually disabled children was “sent by [name], Health Authority” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. She remained there approximately 4 months.
- A woman (age not recorded) who had grown up in named orphanages was “brought by social worker” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. The details of her departure are not recorded.
- A woman was sent to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s by “Welfare Officer, Health Dept., County Clinic [place]”. The Register records that she was “missing for a few days, in need of care”. She remained at the Magdalen Laundry for approximately 4 months.

116. Prior to the establishment of the Health Boards, much of the work of child protection, which would today be carried out by social services, was conducted by the officers of the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”).<sup>44</sup>
117. The referrals of girls made on its own behalf by the NSPCC to Magdalen Laundries are referred to in Chapter 18 of this Report (non-State referrals). However there was also a practice, centered in particular on the first years of the establishment of the Health Boards, for officers of the NSPCC to work with and alongside the newly created social worker posts in the Health Boards.
118. The HSE (which inherited the records of the Health Boards) had difficulties in identifying any relevant records in relation to this period. However the Committee found evidence, in private archives, of certain referrals during this period.
119. The Committee also found evidence of referrals of girls and women to the Magdalen Laundries made during this period by the NSPCC and Social Workers of the Health Boards jointly. Samples of these cases are recorded here. It can be noted that a number of these cases also establish that social workers both of the Health Boards and the Officers of the NSPCC in at least some cases conducted follow-up visits to the girls placed in this way during their time at a Magdalen Laundry.
120. The involvement of NSPCC inspectors as well as the Health Boards in the same cases around this time is due to a historical arrangement between those bodies. On establishment of the Health Boards in 1970, officers of the NSPCC – who had effectively been carrying out the role of social workers until that point – worked with and alongside the newly appointed officials of the Health Boards on cases involving children. In some cases, the NSPCC

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<sup>44</sup> See Note 1 above

inspector was physically based in the offices of the Health Board, in others the working relationship was that the NSPCC inspector would (in light of their years of experience) take responsibility for more 'serious' cases while the Health Board officers took responsibility for less serious or more standard cases during this overlap or bedding-down phase.<sup>45</sup>

121. A detailed file, identified in the NSPCC archives and including records originating in the South Eastern Health Board, relates to a woman whose marriage had broken down and whose children had been taken into care due to her "inability to care for the children". The Health Board, in the 1970s, sought all old case-files in relation to the family from the NSPCC. The Health Board refers to the woman having recently left her employment (which was a live-in position) and that she was now "c/o" a named Magdalen Laundry.

122. A letter of the Health Board confirms that an official of that Board had met with the woman in the Magdalen Laundry ("I saw [name] in the [place] on [date] and ..."), where she was "being temporarily accommodated ... for a few nights". The remainder of the file relates to attempts to assist in family reunification, which failed when "she left unit in Good Shepherd Convent and told children not to tell anyone about her absence". The file details subsequent efforts to trace her, on behalf of her children, without success.

123. Another case involving both the NSPCC and the Health Authorities arose in the late 1960s, when a man sought the advice of the organisation in relation to his daughter (aged in her twenties) and her child.<sup>46</sup> The woman was described in the file as:

"somewhat retarded. She wants the child placed in care and is not interested in keeping it. This child was previously boarded out by the [place] health authority".

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<sup>45</sup> See e.g. ISPCC Annual Reports

<sup>46</sup> Ref 18451

124. The file confirms that the relevant health authority was advised and had “promised” to have the child boarded out again. Meanwhile, the Registers of a Magdalen Laundry records that the woman was brought to that institution by the NSPCC Inspector. She remained there for almost two years before she “left for a situation” (a job).

125. Another such case involving both the NSPCC and Health Board Social Workers related to a 14-year old girl placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s.<sup>47</sup> Her mother was of no fixed abode and a complaint of neglect had been made in relation to the girl and her younger siblings. At the time of initial involvement with the case, the girl “was in the county home having run away from her mother. [Mother] agreed to let Inspector take this girl to the Good Shepherd [place].” The girl’s younger siblings were shortly thereafter committed to Industrial School. The case remained open and was in the 1970s taken over by a named (Health Authority) Social Worker. The girl in question was, however, according to the Register of the Magdalen Laundry “taken out by her aunt”.

126. Another file identified in a private archive includes a letter in the 1970s from the Western Health Board, referring to a girl it had referred to a Magdalen Laundry. The girl in question entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s at the age of 15. The Register records that she was:

“mixed up with a married man; parents anxious to break her contact with him; a/c to [name] Social Worker, [place]”.

127. A letter on file at the Magdalen Laundry from the Western Health Board referred to a report to them in relation to the girl and said:

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<sup>47</sup> Ref 15897



“I am very pleased indeed that [name] has settled in so well and now feel that she should show progress. .... Once more thank you for your fine work with [name]”.<sup>48</sup>

The girl in question remained in the Magdalen Laundry for an unspecified period, after which she was transferred to an identified unit for teenagers.

128. Another case, dating to the early 1970s, is more detailed still in recording the hand-in-glove approach of the Health Board Social Workers and NSPCC officials in relation to a girl placed in a Magdalen Laundry at that time and follow-up of her case.<sup>49</sup>

129. The girl in question had, at the age of 15, left home and taken up a job at a hotel. The file records that:

“She left there after a month because of a quarrel with the assistant manager. From there she went to [identified relative] who put her up for few weeks, but then gave her some money and told her to go and look for a job”.

130. An Inspector of the NSPCC “brought her to [identified Magdalen Laundry], having arranged with Sr [name] earlier that day re accommodating [name] on a temporary basis.”

131. The file records visits on at least 15 different dates by either the NSPCC Inspector or a named Social Worker from the local Health Authority to the girl at the Magdalen Laundry. Details are recorded of the nature of the conversation and the girl’s mood on each occasion (e.g. on one visit “she said she was unhappy and wanted to go to her brother [name] in England. [Brother’s name]’s whereabouts are not known however“, while on another

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<sup>48</sup> Letter dated 8 March 1973, Western Health Board to relevant Magdalen Laundry

<sup>49</sup> Ref H/01/73/21

occasion she was “in much better form and said that the [name of place] was not so bad after all”.) All visits appear to have been unsupervised, and many involved time outside the Magdalen Laundry – including on different occasions both attending “to the unemployment exchange” from which they were “referred ... to the national manpower service, where [name] was interviewed in the hope of being able to find her employment”, to her former place of employment to see her insurance card, as well as to her family home.

132. The file does not indicate that any complaints were made by the girl to the Social Workers about the place in which she was, other than on one occasion:

“[name] was not in the best of form and was complaining rather a lot. Said she had not been allowed out of the [place] since Saturday because she did not get back until 8.30pm. ... [Name] and myself went to [name] Park. When I suggested returning to the [place] she refused to move. Said she did not like it there - that the girls were fighting with her and that she had nothing to do up there. She was very annoyed that I had not got her a job and felt, I think, that we were not interested in her. I could not get her to come back with me to [place] so I left her in the park. I went up to [place] at [time]pm, [name] had returned and apologised to me for her behaviour”.

133. On another visit shortly thereafter, however, the girl:

“was in good form and talked about the escapade over Easter weekend. She had gone out with someone and wandered about most of the night and finally got in to the convent about 4am. She thought it was great fun”.

134. One report, after a home-visit to her father, suggested that her previous behaviour may have been an attempt to provoke a response and that previously:

“all her actions resulted in people rejecting her. As this has not happened for the past few weeks, maybe she is feeling more secure and this might have made her feel able to tell her father – knowing that even if he rejected her again, at least the convent and myself would not”.

135. The remainder of the file details events including repeat home visits by the girl to her family, some with social workers and some without, as well as some additional difficulties the girl encountered due to the fact that she had “been shoplifting around town” while living at the Magdalen Laundry. The file ends when the “Children’s Dept” took over sole responsibility for the case later that year.

136. Another case from the same period involved the Southern Health Board and the NSPCC. The girl, who was in a Magdalen Laundry at the time of interest of the Health Board, was 16 years of age. A record exists in the NSPCC archives of the Health Board seeking a case-history on the girl, and a copy of the response issued is also filed. In the absence of the Health Board file it is not possible to say what action, if any was taken. However from the Registers of the Religious Congregation in question it is clear that 7 months after the Health Board’s request for a case-history, the girl was still in the Magdalen Laundry. The Register records that at that point, she “ran away”.

137. Another case, which arose in the early 1970s and also involved both the NSPCC and the “Children’s Dept.” of a Health Board, concerned a young girl of 14 years of age who was living with her parents.<sup>50</sup> An initial complaint was made to the NSPCC regarding a child being in danger. It was reported that “a number of men were visiting the house”. The Inspector met the child’s mother who:

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<sup>50</sup> Ref 18719

“admitted having affairs with the men and some of them give her money. She is mentally retarded. [Father’s name] does not work. He is also retarded. The child was attending the name school in place [named school for intellectually disabled]. ... The parents are unfit to have the custody care or charge of their child. I shall get in touch with the [place] Health Authority about the case”.

138. The Registers of the Religious Congregations indicate that the child was, within a few months thereafter, admitted to a Magdalen Laundry. She was transferred to a named psychiatric hospital from the Magdalen Laundry.

139. A subsequent file of the NSPCC – confirming on its face that a named officer of the “Children’s Dept” was the “other agenc[y] ... involved” contains records of the child’s subsequent experiences. At this point the child was 16 years of age. The file records that from psychiatric hospital, she had been discharged to her family. The NSPCC handed the case over fully to the Health Authority and no further records were kept.

#### **D. Health and social authorities following 1970 (Health Boards)**

140. With the creation of the Health Boards in 1970, the health function passed to them from the Local Authorities. The records of the Health Boards were inherited by the HSE, upon its establishment pursuant to the Health Act 2004.

141. The HSE experienced difficulties in searches for any relevant cases, due to the broad range of materials held – all in hardcopy – for the period in question. However during much of the period of operation of the Health Boards, the provisions of the 1953 Act in relation to extern institutions continued. The Committee is also aware from the records of the Religious Congregations that referrals by health authorities continued to occur during the period.

142. Some sample cases, drawn from the area of the nascent social services of the Health Boards, were recorded in the preceding Section. This Section deals with the period after establishment of the Health Boards and full assumption of their role.
143. In most cases, the information available in the records of the Religious Congregations is confined to the Entry Registers, described throughout this Report. However in a number of cases, ancillary documents are also held and were examined by the Committee.
144. One such case arose in the Magdalen Laundry in Limerick, operated by the Good Shepherd Sisters. The archives of the Congregation include quite a complete set of documents relating to a 14-year old girl admitted to the Magdalen Laundry, including a letter from the Southern Health Board dated 1971. It was a case in which the NSPCC, the Southern Health Board and the girl's family all worked together to facilitate – and in the case of the Southern Health Board to pay for – her time in a Magdalen Laundry.
145. The letter of the Southern Health Board, which was addressed to a named Sister at the Good Shepherd Convent, provided significant detail on the background to the admission of this girl to the Magdalen Laundry. She had repeatedly gone missing from her home and was on a number of occasions found by the Gardaí and/or her family “on board ship on the Cork Quays”.<sup>51</sup> It is noted by the Southern Health Board that her family was “very concerned” and “most cooperative” and that, following assessment including psychiatric assessment, it was decided to send her to a training centre. As a result she was placed in a job in a (named) commercial laundry but she kept this job “for exactly one month. This was when she disappeared” again and was missing for a month:

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<sup>51</sup> Letter dated 27 April 1971 from Southern Health Board, Cork to Good Shepherd Convent Limerick

“when she was taken from a ship among others to the Bridewell Barracks, Cork. She appeared same day at Cork District Court. As she had committed no criminal act, her case was adjourned for six months and she was taken home”.<sup>52</sup>

The letter of the Southern Health Board records that four days later “she was gone again”.

146. According to the description of the Southern Health Board, less than two weeks later “[name] was found by her father – hence her hasty admission under your centre’s Supervision”. The remainder of the letter consists of the view of the relevant official on the girl’s character, a suggestion that she be “medically checked” in light of the fact that she was “exposed to infection” and a suggestion that:

“it is possible you may succeed in doing a lot with her in whatever you find her fitted for, away from the environment where she was finding herself”.<sup>53</sup>

147. Finally, the Health Board requested:

“some report on [name] approximately each month, as to her progress etc: I trust she will respond to whatever routine programme you consider is best for her, I shall look forward to hearing from you in due course”.<sup>54</sup>

148. As the HSE was unable to identify specific cases of this kind in its archives, the Committee was unable to determine whether or not requested Reports were provided to the Southern Health Board.

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<sup>52</sup> Id

<sup>53</sup> Id

<sup>54</sup> Id

149. The archive included some other documents in relation to this girl, a letter which confirms that admission of the girl to the Magdalen Laundry in Limerick had been agreed and arranged in advance of her being found again by her family, on the last occasion on which she ran away.

150. A letter from a named Sister in the Good Shepherd Convent Cork to the Convent in Limerick, in advance of her admission, records that:

“her father is again searching for and when she is found she will be sent directly to Limerick. [Named NSPCC Inspector] will probably take her and if he is not available [girl’s name] father will hire a car and take her there himself. Cork Health Authority will pay for this girl”.<sup>55</sup>

151. A letter from the girl’s mother to the Good Shepherd Convent in Limerick provides further information on the circumstances. The letter was written “in answer to your letter” (no copy of which was retained by the Sister who sent it) and refers both to the earlier sequence of events as well as to her mother’s instructions for the future. In that regard, the girl’s mother’s letter says that:

“I was anxious to get her back to you for I know that you are the only ones who can help her now. ... [Girl’s name] needs to be watched because she will probable (sic) try to run away again so don’t be to (sic) soft with her and give her plenty of work to do. Of course she thinks that she is only away for three months. But I will leave her there much longer than that, I won’t be going down to see her for a good many weeks and when I will be going I’ll write to you first and you can let me know if it will be alright to see her”.

152. There is no copy on file of any possible response to the girl’s mother, but other documents are, including medical reports indicating that the suggestion of the Southern Health Board for certain medical tests (including pregnancy

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<sup>55</sup> Letter dated 15 April 1971 from Good Shepherd Convent Cork to Good Shepherd Convent Limerick

tests) were carried out at a local hospital during the girl's time in the Magdalen Laundry.

153. A internal note records that:

“we find her quarrelsome and a bad temper. [specified date] Lost her temper and went to get a knife”.

A few days after this event – and less than 2 months after her admission to the Magdalen Laundry – the girl was sent back to her home.

154. Other than this specific case, a number of broad patterns can also be identified in the records of the Religious Congregations among the cases of girls and women recorded as entering Magdalen Laundries pursuant to referrals by health or social services authorities during this (post-1970) period.

155. The youngest known girl referred by the health or social services to a Magdalen Laundry during this period was 11 years old. The oldest was 61. Some referrals were of very young girls. It is not always clear what prompted the Health Boards to refer these girls. In one case, the referral is made for “protection”, while in other cases it appears the girl had nowhere else to go:

- A 12-year old girl was referred to a Magdalen Laundry by “Children’s Dept” at an identified Health Board in the early 1970s. Her father was dead at the time of her referral. No other details are recorded.
- A 14-year old girl was referred to a Magdalen Laundry by “Social Work Dept.” in an identified Health Board in the early 1970s. She “ran away” after just over a month, but “returned” a few weeks later. After another approximately 2 weeks in the Magdalen Laundry, she left to begin “part-time work”.



- A 15-year old girl was sent by the “Children’s Officer, [place] Health Board – nowhere to stay”. After less than a month, she “got job in [name] Hospital”.
- A 15-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s by “Children’s Officer, H.B.”. She “went to a job” at a named hospital 5 months later.
- A girl (age not recorded) was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s following referral by a social worker. The Register records “needs to be protected”.
- A girl (age not recorded) was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry by reference of a social worker in the 1970s and was recorded as being a “problem girl at home and work”.

156. Some of these placements were plainly temporary and intended as such, for example:

- A girl (age not recorded) is entered in the Register of a Magdalen Laundry as having been “taken in for a couple of nights until the Social Worker found accommodation”.
- A 16-year old girl referred to a Magdalen Laundry by “Social Work Dept.” was entered in the register as “overnight acc. only, left following day”.

157. Others were of very short duration – but seemingly not by design. For example:

- A 17-year old girl referred to a Magdalen Laundry by “Child Care Officer, Dublin H.Authority” was within 5 days of admission “sent back to Dublin” to that officer.
- In another case, a girl who had been referred to a Magdalen Laundry by a named social worker is recorded as having left 4 times (sometimes within days of return). On the last occasion, she “walked out with boyfriend”.

158. In other cases these placements may have been due to disability or infirmity, for example:

- A woman (age not recorded) was referred to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s by “Rehab Placement Officer and CLO”. She remained there approximately one year.
- In another case, a woman was referred by a Public Health Nurse and a social worker. The details of her departure are not recorded.

### **Hospitals**

159. Chapter 7 of this Report sets out the reasons why the category of referral to a Magdalen Laundry from a hospital (regardless of whether public or private) is a complex one.

160. The information identified by the Committee suggests that the vast majority of such cases were referrals of a girl or women in employment in a hospital. Some of these cases of referrals of a girl or woman in employment in a hospital arise in the context of the period of supervision which followed discharge from an Industrial or Reformatory School. Such cases are dealt with in detail in the Chapter 10. However, it is also likely that a small number of cases of referrals, identified in the records of the Religious Congregations

as being from a hospital or a named doctor in a hospital, related to a patient in that hospital.

161. This is difficult to establish conclusively from official records, but the most likely circumstances of such referrals probably involved women ready for discharge from hospital but due to homelessness or disability needed accommodation, whether temporary or permanent.

162. In cases such as these, it appears that there may have been a practice at some points in past decades (particularly during the periods in which welfare provision was minimal) of referral of such patients to either the County Home or a religious-operated institution (including, but by no means limited to Magdalen Laundries). The Committee was informed that such a practice certainly applied in psychiatric hospitals and that it is likely to have also occurred in general hospitals.

163. The youngest known girl referred from a hospital or by a medical professional was 13 years of age. The oldest was 71 years of age. The records of the Religious Congregations suggest that there were some patients referred to Magdalen Laundries from hospitals on the basis outlined above. Some appear to have been intended as short-stays, while others, particularly of more elderly women, may have been intended to provide for them for the remainder of their lives.

- A 71-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry “from hospital” in the 1920s. She remained there until her death.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s from an identified County Hospital. She “died of consumption” there.

- A 19-year old woman was sent by a named District Hospital to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. After a number of months, she “left for County Home”.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry “from Sanatorium” in the 1920s. The details of her departure are not recorded.
- A 46-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry from an identified “convalescent home” in the 1930s. She remained there for over 10 years, at which point she was “taken out by her sister”.
- A 15-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named officer at “Rehab Institute” in the 1960s. She was “taken home by her father” one month later.
- A 17-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named “Rehabilitation Officer” following a number of months in a named hospital in the 1960s. She remained there for approximately 10 months, after which she was “taken to hostel by [name], Rehab. Officer”.

### **Mother and Baby Homes**

164. Admissions to Magdalen Laundries from Mother and Baby Homes have been the subject of much public comment. Mother and Baby Homes have also, in some cases, been confused with Magdalen Laundries, which did not admit either pregnant women or babies and young children.

165. Although funded by the State, Mother & Baby Homes were generally operated by Religious Congregations. At least one such institution was established by

a Congregation at the request of the State<sup>56</sup>, and at least two of these Homes were described in official records as being “maintained by” or “under the control of” County Boards of Health.<sup>57</sup>

166. Nonetheless and as set out at the outset of this Chapter, the Committee decided (without taking a view on the formal status of these institutions), that in light of their relevance to health policy, they should be included in this Chapter of the Report.

167. Although there were others over the decades (including one Mother and Baby Home somewhat confusingly called “the Magdalen Asylum, Leeson Street”), the principal such Mother and Baby Homes relevant here are:

- Ard Mhuire, Dunboyne;
- Pelletstown / St Patrick’s, Navan Road;
- Sacred Heart, Bessboro, Cork;
- Sacred Heart, Castlepollard;
- Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea;
- St Clare’s, Stamullen; and
- Tuam, Co Galway.

The Committee understands that the HSE has taken possession of the archives of all of these institutions.

168. Following a request in that regard by the Committee, the HSE carried out a number of searches on these formerly external archives which are now within its control. First, the HSE carried out a review of the records of St Patrick’s, Navan Road, Dublin, and identified the following transfers from this Mother and Baby Home to various Magalen Laundries:

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<sup>56</sup> Ard Mhuire, Dunboyne. File ref KA121179. INACT/INA/0/53818

<sup>57</sup> Annual Report of the Department of Local Government and Public Health, 1938-1939 at page 71

Referral source	Place to which the woman was discharged	Number of referrals identified
St Patrick's Mother & Baby Home Register	Donnybrook	18
St Patrick's Mother & Baby Home Register	Gloucester Street	46
St Patrick's Mother & Baby Home Register	"Magdalen Home"	3
St Patrick's Mother & Baby Home Register	High Park	33

169. The HSE was unable to confirm which institution was referred to as "Magdalen Home", although it is possible this refers to the Magdalen Laundry operated in Galway by the Sisters of Mercy.

170. As the HSE was unable to provide the names and other relevant details of these cases – 100 in total - to the Committee before the publication date of this Report, it was not possible for the Committee to track these cases in the records of the Religious Congregations. It was accordingly not possible for the Committee to confirm the details provided or to determine what became of the women after their referral to a Magdalen Laundry.

171. The HSE also conducted a sample search of the records it holds from the Sacred Heart, Bessboro, Mother and Baby Home. The HSE informed the Committee of the following break-down of discharges from Bessboro between 1933 and 1953:

From	Destination	Number of cases identified
Bessboro	Magdalen Laundry at	11

	Peacock Lane, Cork	
Bessboro	“Good Shepherd Order”	7
Bessboro	County Home	3
Bessboro	“Mental hospital”	2
Bessboro	County Hospital	6
Bessboro	Named locations in the United Kingdom	5
Bessboro	Named industrial school	1

172. Of this total of 35 cases, and assuming that “Good Shepherd Order” refers to a Magdalen Laundry operated by the Congregation rather than an Industrial or Reformatory school, 18 were discharges of women from Bessboro Mother and Baby Home to Magdalen Laundries.

173. Samples of these cases were provided to the Committee. Some entries are bare, indicating only e.g. “Sent to the Good Shepherd Convent” and a date. Others were more detailed e.g. in relation to an 18 year old girl, “having already spent three years in the care of the Good Shepherd Nuns in Co. Kilkenny was admitted to Bessboro on the [date] (two years after the birth of her baby on [date]). This young woman was returned to the Good Shepherds on [date].

174. As the HSE was unable to provide the names or further details of these women to the Committee before the publication date of this Report, it was not possible for the Committee to track these cases in the records of the Religious Congregations or to determine what became of these women after their admission to a Magdalen Laundry.

175. Although the HSE was unable to carry out a similar study of the archives of other Mother and Baby Homes that it holds before the publication date of this

Report, it accepts that a similar pattern is likely to have applied in those cases.

176. Other sources were also examined by the Committee in order to establish further information on Mother and Baby Homes as a route of entry to the Magdalen Laundries. For the period in question, Mother and Baby Homes made annual returns to the Department of Health. These annual returns had a standard format – recording the number of mothers in the institution, the numbers admitted and discharged or deceased, a breakdown of whether those in the institution were “awaiting confinement” or “after confinement”. Details on discharge were also required, broken down into the following categories:

- Number sent to situations
- Number sent to parents or relatives
- Number married
- Number sent to other Homes
- Number of other discharges.

177. Typically, only the number of cases is recorded under each heading, not the names of the women involved nor, in the majority of cases, which institutions were, in any given year, included in the category “other homes”.

178. Accordingly while it is possible that Magdalen Laundries were included among the “other homes” to which some women were discharged from Mother and Baby Homes, these Annual Returns records do not generally specify if this was the case or whether such transfers were recorded in some other way.

179. There are some exceptions. In the following cases, discharge to a Magdalen Laundry was explicitly noted in Annual Returns of this kind:

<b>From</b>	<b>Year</b>	<b>Discharged to</b>
St Patrick’s	1956	St Patrick’s Refuge, Dun Laoghaire



St Patrick's	1962	High Park
St Patrick's	1962	Gloucester Street

Note: in 1962, the two discharges specified to Magdalen Laundries were 2 from a total of 35 "other discharges".

180. As an indication of proportion, the following sample returns from Bessboro and St Patrick's can be noted:

St Patricks 1964:

- Number sent to situations	49
- Number sent to parents or relatives	177
- Number married	1
- Number sent to other Homes	2
- Number of other discharges	30

Bessboro, 1969:

- Number sent to situations	42
- Number sent to parents or relatives	152
- Number married	3
- Number sent to other Homes	2
- Number of other discharges	-

181. Information was also identified in the annual returns of the Tuam Home to the Department of Health. The information recorded in those cases differs, as it is focused primarily on the children in the home. Nonetheless, between 1950 and 1965, the returns calculating the number of and providing information on children in Tuam identified that the mothers of 24 of these children were in a Magdalen Laundry ("Mother in Magdalen Home"). As some of these children

remained in the Tuam Home for a number of years, certain cases are reported more than once.<sup>58</sup>

182. The files in question identify the women and children by initials only, with the result that the Committee was unable to track these cases in the records of the Religious Congregations to determine what subsequently became of the women in question.

183. A letter was also identified in the archives of Kildare County Council which is relevant to this question. The letter, dated August 1930, was from Bessboro Mother and Baby Home to the Superintendent of the Kildare County Home. The letter concerned a girl, previously in the County Home, who had had a child outside marriage and was resident in Bessboro. The letter indicates:

“I regret to say it was compulsory for me to have the girl [name] transferred to the Sisters of Charity Peacock Lane Cork (where she had been formerly) owing to ill treatment of her child when in bad tempers.”<sup>59</sup>

184. The records of the Religious Congregations which operated the Magdalen Laundries also include detail on referrals from these institutions. Although perhaps closely associated in the public consciousness, referrals of girls and women from Mother and Baby Homes to Magdalen Laundries consisted of only 3.9% of known entries to the Magdalen Laundries.

185. These referrals included cases from all the Mother and Baby Homes listed above. One case referred to a girl “brought from Sean Ross Abbey, Roscrea, by Social Welfare Officer” in the 1960s. She remained in the Magdalen Laundry for 4 years.

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<sup>58</sup> Files: Natarch/arc?0/516714, Natarch/arc?0/409589, Natarch/arc/0/411131, Natarch/arc?0/411768

<sup>59</sup> Letter dated August 1930 from Bessboro to Kildare County authorities

186. However there was no typical pattern to the duration of stay for this category of women. For example, in two cases referred from Sean Ross Abbey to the same Magdalen Laundry within days of one another in the 1950s:

- One left the Magdalen Laundry exactly 1 month after admission; while
- the other girl remained there for more than one and a half years.

187. Bearing in mind the great variation between cases, samples drawn from the records of the Religious Congregations are as follows:

- A 19-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry from the Tuam Home in the 1930s. Her parents were listed as alive. She remained there for 9 years.
- A girl who entered a different Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s did so from Castlepollard. She was “dismissed” after less than two months. The Register states that she was “not to be re-admitted, a bit mental”.
- One woman, who entered a Magdalen Laundry from Bessboro at the age of 17, remained there as a consecrate for over 30 years. When she left, it was to “help [identified family member], widow and family”.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s from the Navan Road. She was “very discontent. Sent back to St Patrick’s Home, Navan Road”.
- A 32-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry from Dunboyne in the 1950s. Her parents were living at the time. She remained in the Magdalen Laundry 12 years, at which point she was “taken home by her mother”.

- A woman “brought by Sean Ross Abbey Sisters” entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. She remained there for over two years, after which “her mother took her home”.
- A 33-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry from Bessboro in the 1960s. She was “taken home by her sister” approximately a month after admission.
- Another woman (age not recorded) entered a different Magdalen Laundry from the Navan Road in the 1960s. The Register described her time there and departure as follows “very bold and troublesome. Wanted own flat which she got”.
- Another woman who entered in the 1960s from the Navan Road was described, at a different Magdalen Laundry, as “Troublesome... epileptic... bad spirit.....parents pleased with her improvement when returned”. The date of her departure is not recorded.

**Psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric services (including intellectual disability services for many years)**

188. As part of its exploration of State routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries, the Committee also considered and examined the possibility of a relationship between the Magdalen Laundries and psychiatric hospitals and psychiatric services. In light of the fact that, for many decades, psychiatric institutions also housed people with intellectual disabilities, it is difficult for long periods of time to distinguish between these two very different categories in the early records of the Religious Congregations.

189. The Committee was interested in psychiatric hospitals from two perspectives:

- the possibility of a woman entering a Magdalen Laundry from a psychiatric hospital; and
- the reverse, namely the possibility of a woman transferred from a Magdalen Laundry to a psychiatric hospital.

190. To attempt to identify any such cases and to understand the circumstances in which they may have arisen, the Committee undertook a number of complementary searches and steps.

- First, the Committee examined the records of the Religious Congregations to identify and extract any cases which appeared to suggest a link to psychiatric hospitals or psychiatric services.
- Second, the Department of Health and Department of Children and Youth Affairs were requested to search all records (including historic records) for any possible cases of such transfers as well as any broader policy material which might exist.
- Third, the HSE was requested to carry out a similar exercise, with a focus on the (historic) registers of psychiatric hospitals.
- And fourth, the Committee sought input from mental health professionals, in an attempt to supplement any records identified to enable it to better understand practices which may formerly have applied in the area of mental health.

191. As a result the Committee confirmed that transfers between psychiatric hospitals and Magdalen Laundries did occur from the 1920s right up until the 1980s. The circumstances surrounding these transfers varied over time and were influenced by a range of factors, including the absence of effective medication for psychiatric illnesses for much of the relevant period, as well as the informal requirements for committal to psychiatric institutions until at least

the late 1940s. Transfers from psychiatric hospitals amounted to 1.3% of known entries to the Magdalen Laundries.

192. A very helpful insight into former practices in this regard was provided to the Committee by Dr Dermot Walsh, retired inspector of Mental Hospitals. He shared a number of observations and insights with the Committee in relation to psychiatric hospitals as both routes of entry to and exit from the Magdalen Laundries. Dr Walsh's input included some general observations, based on his experience, on how these circumstances might have arisen. He stated as follows:

"I was employed as a clinical clerk (equivalent to medical registrar in today's terminology) in Grangegorman Mental Hospital in the years 1956 and 1957 and during 1962 as junior assistant medical officer in the same hospital which by now had become St Brendan's Hospital. During these times my recollection is that a number of young women residing in various institutions run by Religious Congregations were admitted involuntarily either:

- as a person of unsound mind where there was no time limit on the period of detention or
- as a person suffering from mental illness (undefined) where the period of detention was for six months in the first instance renewable to a total of two years without provision for external review.

In the former instance, persons the subject to committal as being of unsound mind, and therefore likely to be considered irrecoverable, were more likely to be mentally defective (to use the terminology of the day), whereas those admitted temporally were more likely to suffer from mental illness and therefore recoverable.

I have the recall, fallible though it may be, that some young women in the latter category were disposed of by the relevant institution because they were perceived as misbehaving themselves by the rules of conduct as set out by the institution and were identified as trouble makers, perhaps with personality characteristics or disorders which would not qualify for committal by the standards and legislation of today. I am unable to attempt to convey the quantities extent of this practice but do believe that it occurred, particularly in the late 1950s”.

193. Regarding the reverse circumstances, that is, women entered a Magdalen Laundry from a psychiatric hospital, Dr Walsh made the following observation:

“Until comparatively recent times - say to the 1970s - homeless females admitted to psychiatric inpatient facilities, deemed ready for discharge but homeless, were often placed in residential premises run by Religious Congregations for accommodation, with what degree of consent is difficult to determine.”

The category “residential premises run by Religious Congregations” may include Magdalen Laundries, but it is of course considerably broader than those institutions alone.

194. Dr Walsh also commented more broadly on the context of psychiatric care in Ireland prior to the Mental Treatment Act 1945.

“Dealing with an earlier period I would point out that prior to the commencement of the 1945 Mental Treatment Act in 1947, the largest proportion of admissions were under the provisions of the Lunacy (Ireland) Act of 1867 which provided for the involuntary admission/committal of persons designated as Dangerous Lunatics, this being the case as late as 1946 (voluntary admission, other than as "voluntary boarders" in private hospitals, was not possible before the 1945 Act.)

I am researching District Asylum case books up to 1900 and note that committal as a dangerous lunatic was effected on very tenuous grounds; indeed in many cases admission records refer to the persons committed as having struck their father etc.”

*HSE searches and records*

195. In light of the two-way traffic between psychiatric institutions and Magdalen Laundries demonstrated by the records of the Religious Congregations and the observations of Dr Dermot Walsh, the Committee requested the HSE to address this issue in its broader searches for relevant records.

196. In order to determine the scale and nature of the relationship between Magdalen Laundries and psychiatric hospitals the Committee asked the HSE to examine the historic registers of psychiatric hospitals (or ‘mental hospitals’ and ‘asylums’ as they were formerly known). These records potentially would provide important information, relevant to the Committee’s work, in relation to where a patient was admitted from, the reason for admission, discharge details, and so on.

197. The HSE was unable, before the date of publication of the Report, to provide the Committee with input in relation to patterns of admission and discharge based on the (historic) registers of psychiatric institutions. However it provided the following information in relation to this subject, based on other records.

198. Following searches and referring to its own records, the HSE informed the Committee as follows:

“It is not possible to determine the proportion of women or girls referred into the system with psychiatric conditions. ... Very few cases of direct transfer between psychiatric institutions and the Magdalene orders



were turned up during the document search. It is therefore difficult to determine what the culture of referral was between the institutions”.<sup>60</sup>

199. The HSE identified and reported to the Committee one relevant case among its records. The case dates to the 1970s and involved an underage girl. The Eastern Health Board (Children’s Section) consulted the Department of Health, seeking authorisation for capitation payments for a number of children to be placed in different institutions.

200. One of the girls is noted as being “referred to High Park by [named doctor], St Loman’s Hospital”. Her previous history is detailed in the letter, including family breakdown and the suicide of the remaining parent. Two of her grandparents were also noted as being patients at a named psychiatric facility. The notes refer to involvement by the ISPCC in an earlier placement of the girl and her siblings, including a period at industrial school before her transfer to St Lomans.<sup>61</sup>

201. The HSE also identified materials confirming the use of psychiatric services and the assistance of the National Rehabilitation Board by women admitted to the Magdalen Laundry at High Park, as well as possible referrals by these teams to this Magdalen Laundry.<sup>62</sup>

202. The conclusion reached by the HSE was that:

“it appeared that there was a close working relationship between the order(s) and psychiatric services locally, to the extent that case conferences were held on the premises, but whether this relationship extended to involuntary committals is not evidenced.”

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<sup>60</sup> HSE letter to the Inter Departmental Committee, dated 11 November 2012, at para 4.18

<sup>61</sup> Id

<sup>62</sup> Id

*Searches by the Department of Health and Department of Children and Youth Affairs*

203. The Department of Health and the Department of Children and Youth Affairs carried out extensive searches on their shared file system, which includes files dating back to the early 1920s, for records relevant to possible psychiatric system referrals to the Magdalen Laundries.

204. The majority of files identified among the records of the Department of Health which are relevant to the placement of girls and women in Magdalen Laundries from psychiatric institutions or services or from bodies for the intellectually disabled relate not to individual cases, but to overall financial provision.

205. The reason for this is that for the relevant time period, day-to-day health functions, including referrals or placements of girls and women, were carried out at a local or regional level, within the general policies and directions of the Department of Health and, where necessary, with the authorisation of the Department. Departmental authority was necessary for payment of capitation payments under the Public Assistance Acts or for generalised grants including the so-called section 65 grants (as explained in Chapter 5 of the Report) and so on. As a result, relevant records were identified within the Department of Health which related to local or regional health authorities seeking and receiving sanction for payments in a range of cases, including cases of placements of girls and women in Magdalen Laundries.

206. As the matching files of the local or regional health authorities relating to requests for approval of grants from the Minister were not identified, it is not possible to be definitive in all cases on:

- the role and frequency of inspections by the health authorities in these placements; or
- whether, in some cases, the girls or women concerned were placed in the Magdalen Laundries by the health authorities, or whether the health authorities simply decided to provide funding in the case of girls or women with psychiatric illnesses or mental disability after their placement in the Magdalen Laundries by other referral routes.

207. Nonetheless a number of cases were identified in the files of the Departments of Health and Children and Youth Affairs which relate to girls or women with psychiatric illnesses or intellectual disability.

208. Documents, dating to the 1950s, were identified relating to what was referred to as “accommodation of mentally defective persons” at the Good Shepherd Convent in Limerick in its role as an extern institution for the purposes of public assistance.<sup>63</sup> The issue first arose when the relevant County Council consulted the Department of Health in 1953 in relation to a proposed transfer of two “mental defectives” to the Good Shepherd Convent, Limerick. Both were underage – one aged 17 and one aged 14.

209. The internal consideration of this proposal by the Department of Health noted that the Convent had been approved for reception of patients under section 35 of the Public Assistance Act 1939. The position taken was that as the 17-year old girl was “only slightly sub-normal”, there would be no objection to her

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<sup>63</sup> Following comments and quotes taken from unregistered file - Loose papers in envelope dating from 1953 – 1957 “Accommodation of mentally defective persons in Good Shepherd Convent Limerick”

being sent by the County Council to the “Penitents side” of the Convent (i.e. the Magdalen Laundry). By contrast, the Departmental note suggests that the 14-year old girl should not be admitted to the Laundry. She was ultimately placed in an industrial school.

210. There was an exchange thereafter between the County Council and the Department on the matter – with the Council pointing out that the institution had not been approved for reception of “mental defective patients” (as opposed to other persons) under the Public Assistance Act 1939. However ultimately, the outcome of this matter was the placement of a girl in a Magdalen Laundry by State authorities on mental health grounds. The financial aspects of this case are explored more fully in Chapter 13.

211. Later records identified among the files of the Department of Health confirm that intellectually disabled women remained among the categories of women living and working in the Magdalen Laundries throughout the 1960s and thereafter. A series of files, detailed more fully in Chapter 13 relating to State funding of Magdalen Laundries, concern grants to Magdalen Laundries in relation to “disabled” or so-called “subnormal” women there. In later years, terminology began to refer to “mentally disabled women” rather than terms such as those. Grants were approved in many such cases (at least Waterford, Limerick, High Park, Donnybrook and Sean McDermott Street), sometimes on an annual basis (see Chapter 13). These grants were often approved on the grounds of cost-effectiveness, that is, that the Health Authorities would have the responsibility to provide for these women if they were not in the Magdalen Laundry, and that the grant sought for that institution was “only a fraction of what it would cost to keep them in one of the Health Authority’s institutions”.

212. In these cases and unlike the first example given, it is not clear whether these women were placed in the Laundry by official agencies or agents, or whether they were admitted to the Magdalen Laundries through other means, such as their families. It is most likely that the cases comprise of a mixture of all types

of referrals. At a minimum, these grant applications and payments confirm that the State was aware of the placement of these women in the Magdalen Laundries, even if it was not in itself responsible for their referrals.

213. It appears that the Minister for Health announced approval of funding during a visit to High Park later that year, where he referred to the “happy relationship between the health authority and the Sisters” and the doubling of the pre-existing grant.<sup>64</sup>

214. In at least one case, conditions were attached to the approval of the grant, including that the women concerned be given pocket-money and provided with non-institutional clothing.<sup>65</sup>

215. These and other general files searches allowed the Departments of Health and Children and Youth Affairs to jointly conclude as follows in relation to psychiatric institutions and services:

“The records ... indicate that it was agreed to pay state subvention in respect of a number of women/girls who were considered unable to support themselves because of a mental or physical incapacity, and who would have to have had alternative arrangements provided for them by the health authorities if they had not been in a Magdalen centre. ... The Magdalen centres were regarded by the health authorities as places of refuge for vulnerable women or girls. In the case of the health authorities, referrals were made by professionals, including general practitioners, psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers.”<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Dated 22 June 1970

<sup>65</sup> Id

<sup>66</sup> Joint Report of the Departments of Health and Children and Youth Affairs to the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement in the Magdalen Laundries

216. The Departments described some of the categories of people referred to the Magdalen Laundries in this context as “persons who had been in psychiatric hospitals”, “problem girls between the ages of 12 and 19 ... referred by psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, welfare officers etc” and what were referred to in earlier times as “mental defectives”.<sup>67</sup>

*Material identified in other archives and the records of the Religious Congregations*

217. Other materials identified by the Committee in non-State archives also have a bearing on this issue. One case identified by the Committee includes documents confirming that a girl placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1960s was assessed by the National Organisation for Rehabilitation. The organisation, which under a Statutory Instrument made by the Minister for Health had the function to “supervise or operate or arrange for the operation of services ... for the welfare of persons who are disabled as a result of physical defect or injury, mental handicap or mental illness”<sup>68</sup>, arranged for a “vocational report” on an 18-year old girl then in a Magdalen Laundry.

218. The Report provides an assessment of her intelligence, categorising her as “mild mental handicap” and identifies a number of anxiety and other related conditions. It concludes that she:

“needs psychiatric treatment. It is recommended that she should gradually be allowed more freedom in order to prepare her for open employment. A position involving routine work such as assembling, packing, filing would be within her capacity, if personality problems can be resolved.”

219. As detailed more fully elsewhere in this Chapter, while the records of the Religious Congregations in some cases provide clear information on the route

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<sup>67</sup> Id

<sup>68</sup> The National Rehabilitation Board (Establishment) Order 1967, SI No. 300/1967

of referral, they generally do not provide information on the circumstances leading to that referral. For instance, although the Registers might record that a woman entered a Magdalen Laundry from a particular psychiatric institution, they generally do not provide additional detail such as whether she had been committed or was a voluntary patient at that psychiatric hospital, what condition she suffered from, whether she was transferred to the Magdalen Laundry on a voluntary basis or otherwise, and so on.

220. The Registers do, nonetheless, in some cases provide a picture of the circumstances in which women transferred from psychiatric facilities to Magdalen Laundries and, in some cases, back again.

221. In most of the cases examined, the ages of the girls or women are not recorded. However, the age of the youngest girl recorded as having been transferred from a psychiatric hospital to a Magdalen Laundry was 14 years.

222. A number of broad patterns appeared from a study of these cases. Many of those who were admitted from psychiatric facilities or institutions, on leaving the Laundry, returned to the same or another psychiatric institution.

- A woman (age not recorded) was sent by a “lady almoner” at a named psychiatric institution in the 1950s. She was “sent back to [name of institution], not suitable for House (mental)”.
- A woman, whose age is not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry from St Loman’s. It is not specified how long she remained there, but her departure is recorded as follows “Went as voluntary patient to St Brendan’s”.

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s having been sent by “St Lomans Hospital, [named doctor]”. She was “Sent back to St Lomans, most unsuitable”.
- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s from St Ita’s, Portrane. The date of her departure is not recorded but it is noted that she was “sent back to Portrane”.
- A 17-year old girl, whose parents were alive, was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named doctor at “Our Lady’s Hospital, Lee Road, Cork” (a psychiatric hospital) in the 1970s. She remained there for 8 months, before being returned to the same psychiatric hospital (“sent to Our Lady’s Hospital”).
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1980s from St Brendan’s psychiatric hospital. She returned to St Brendan’s thereafter, on a date not recorded.

223. Many of those admitted to a Magdalen Laundry from a psychiatric institution also appear to have entered psychiatric institutions on more than one occasion.

- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s from “[named doctor] St Loman’s”. After less than a year, she was “sent to St Brendan’s, was there before”. 19 years later, she entered the same Magdalen Laundry from St Brendan’s psychiatric hospital. The date of her departure is not recorded, but the Register notes that on departure, she again returned to St Brendan’s.

224. In a number of cases, women transferred repeatedly between psychiatric facilities and a Magdalen Laundry or Laundries.



- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital in the 1960s. After 7 months, she was "taken home by mother". She entered the same laundry twice more: she "presented herself" to the Laundry and voluntarily entered two years after her earlier departure. On that occasion, she stayed 18 months before she "went at own request". Approximately a year and a half later again, she entered the Magdalen Laundry for the third time from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital. On this occasion she stayed only a month. On departure, the Register was marked "not to be taken back".
  
- A young girl spent periods in 6 different Magdalen Laundries in the 1960s, in all but one case entering the laundry from a psychiatric facility. The information recorded by each different laundry varied, but when all 6 entries are reviewed together, the following story emerges: the girl was "reared in [named orphanage]". Her mother was alive but lived outside the State. She spent time in St Anne's Kilmacud (industrial school) and while still underage had "prison record, mental case". Her first entry to a Magdalen Laundry was at the age of 17 from a specified rural "mental hospital". She spent approximately 2 weeks in the Laundry before leaving. Two and a half years later, she entered a different Magdalen Laundry from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital in Dublin. Within the space of the following year, she had entered and left two different Magdalen Laundries (once on an inter-laundry transfer). At the age of 21, she entered another Magdalen Laundry, this time "brought by [named priest], Chaplain [named rural "mental hospital]". The Register records that she had "spent a short time in most of our convents". On this occasion she "left at her own request" slightly more than a month after entry. Her final recorded entry to a Magdalen Laundry was to a different one again - she entered there from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital approximately 8 months after she had

left the last Laundry. Her final departure is recorded as being “to St Brendan’s again”.

- Another woman entered two different Magdalen Laundries on 7 different occasions over the space of 13 years, with periods in psychiatric institutions occurring a number of times in between these admissions. Her first entry to a Magdalen Laundry was by way of a transfer from St Loman’s psychiatric hospital in the 1960s. After less than 3 weeks, she was “sent to St Brendan’s”. She was re-admitted to that same Laundry 5 years later from St Brendans, this time staying only 3 days. 7 years later, she entered a different Magdalen Laundry, the Register for which recorded that she had “been for some years in St Brendan’s where doctor and social worker asked for her”. Over the next 9 months, she entered and left two Magdalen Laundries 4 times. Her first stay was for approximately 2 weeks. 4 days after leaving that Laundry, she re-entered the first Magdalen Laundry she had been in, staying for 3 months. Only two weeks after leaving, she was re-admitted to the same laundry, remaining approximately a month before again being sent to St Brendans. Her stay in St Brendan’s on this occasion was short, as within 2 months she had re-entered the Magdalen Laundry again. After a few days she left, with the register recording she was “not to be taken anymore”. Within a month, she had entered the other Magdalen Laundry again. The Register records that she had, in the intervening years spent “time in [name of Laundry] and then in St Brendan’s”. She was “on month’s trial”, but left again on an unspecified date.
  
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry from St Brendan’s psychiatric hospital in the 1970s. Less than a month later, she “walked out”. She returned to the Magdalen Laundry less than a fortnight after walking out. On this occasion she stayed less than 2 months, after which she returned to St Brendan’s psychiatric hospital.

Within a month she had again returned to the Magdalen Laundry, with the register recording “not suit for work” (sic) in relation to that entry. She left again 4 weeks later. Her final entry was 2 years later – on this occasion she remained in the Magdalen Laundry for 8 months, before she again “walked out”.

225. Some of the early cases suggest that intellectual disability and mental illnesses were confused with one another or considered in some way equivalent, with the same girl or woman entering psychiatric institutions as well as institutions for people with intellectual disabilities. For example,

- A 15-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s “came from Portrane Mental Home”. She had previously been at an identified institution for children with intellectual disabilities. The details of her departure are not recorded.

226. In other cases, perhaps after the development of a clearer understanding of the distinction between the nature of psychiatric conditions and intellectual disability, women entered the Magdalen Laundries from institutions for people with intellectual disabilities:

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s from a named institution for intellectually disabled. Approximately a year and a half later she was “let go”. The Register notes that she was “very, very troublesome, mental”.
- A 30-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s from a named institution for people with intellectual disabilities. She remained there for over 5 years.
- A 24-year old woman “came from [named institution for intellectually disabled]” and entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. The

Register does not record her departure, but notes only “mentally retarded, very difficult”.

- A 17-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s from a named institution for intellectually disabled. She “ran away” 6 months later, and was thereafter “sent back to [name of institution]”.

227. In some cases, it appears that poverty was a factor along with possible mental illness, with women spending time in a County Home as well as a Magdalen Laundry. For example:

- A woman aged in her twenties was “sent from [named] Asylum” to a Magdalen Laundry by [named Doctor] in the 1920s. The Register notes that her mother was “an inmate in” a named County Home. After approximately 6 months, she was “sent to County Home”.
- A 24-year old woman was “brought from the Mental Ward, County Home by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. At the time, her father was living but her mother was not. She remained at the Laundry for over three years, before being “sent to hospital”. She returned from hospital after approximately 2 weeks and spent more than another 3 years in the Magdalen Laundry until her discharge, again “sent to hospital”.

228. Most transfers occurred between local Magdalen Laundries and psychiatric facilities, e.g. transfers from psychiatric hospitals in the Dublin region to Magdalen Laundries in the Dublin region. However, some transfers from psychiatric hospitals to Magdalen Laundries were not confined to the nearby hospital. For instance:

- A woman (age not recorded) in the 1970s “returned from St Brendan’s Hospital, Dublin” to a Magdalen Laundry in Munster. The duration of her stay in this Magdalen Laundry is not recorded.

229. In the more modern era, from the 1960s onwards, it appears that some of the cases of women entering Magdalen Laundries from psychiatric hospitals may have arisen due to homelessness. In some cases this is explicit, with the Registers recording that the woman was homeless; in others it appears a reasonable assumption based on the duration of stay and discharge details. Possible cases where women who were due for discharge from psychiatric institutions were placed in Magdalen Laundries as they had nowhere else to go to include the following:

- A 28-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s “from Lee Road, father and sister in England”. The details of her departure are not recorded.
- A woman, who is recorded as being of no fixed abode, spent time in two different Magdalen Laundries, both times entering from psychiatric facilities. In the 1970s she entered a Magdalen Laundry from St Brendan’s psychiatric hospital. She returned to St Brendan’s the same day. Two years later (in the 1980s), she entered a different Magdalen Laundry from Cuan Mhuire (attached to St John of God Hospital). The date of her exit is not recorded but the reason for it is – “Got drunk again, sent her to hospital”.
- A woman, who is recorded as being homeless (“no fixed abode”) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s from St Brendan’s psychiatric hospital. The Register records her entry as follows “St Brendans. Difficult girl, psychiatric”. She remained in the Laundry for less than 2 months (over the winter period) before leaving. It is not recorded where she went on departure.

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital. She was "sent to a flat" on an unspecified date thereafter.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital. She "left to go to a hostel" on an unrecorded date thereafter.
- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital. She left for Regina Coeli hostel (hostel for homeless).

230. Some cases suggest that women entering Magdalen Laundries from psychiatric institutions were accepted home by their families, while some were not. For example:

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital. She was "taken home, not suitable for here".
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital. She "went to her sister in London" thereafter.
- A 14-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named psychiatrist in the 1970s. The Register records that she came from a situation of family breakdown and that one of her parents was living abroad (in a specified country). The date of her departure is not recorded, but her destination is – a named industrial school.

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1980s from St Loman's. The Register records that she "went home, unsuitable".

231. Specific references to women, who were referred from psychiatric hospitals, leaving a Magdalen Laundry for an external job were very rare. Two contrasting examples of this are as follows:

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry from St Brendan's psychiatric hospital in the 1960s. She left the Laundry and "went to work" in external employment.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry from Vergemount psychiatric hospital in the 1980s. Slightly over a year later, she left for "job [named location]". It appears that her employment did not last, however, as very shortly thereafter she re-entered the Magdalen Laundry from an identified rural psychiatric hospital. Approximately 5 months later, she transferred from the Laundry to St Brendan's psychiatric hospital.

232. Other entries are more generic both in terms of the description of the women's possible condition and background. For example:

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. The Register records that she was "very respectable but mentally deficient – lost her speech". She remained there for approximately 3 months.
- A 20-year old entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s from a psychiatric institution. She spent over 6 years there before leaving. The Register says that she was "Very bold, terrible language, a bit mental. Should not be taken back".

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry from [St Kevins] in the 1950s. She remained in the laundry until her death, with the Register noting that she was “never any trouble”.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s from [St Kevins]. She “left at her own request, not to be taken back”.
- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s from St Brendan’s psychiatric hospital. She remained there until her death.
- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s from Vergemount. She subsequently “walked out”.
- Another woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1980s from St Loman’s psychiatric hospital. After less than a month, she returned to St Loman’s. She appears to have re-entered the Magdalen Laundry within a short space of time, but later that year she again left the Laundry – the register records this as “Left – not to come back”.