

Chapter 18:

Non-State Routes of Entry to the Magdalen Laundries

Summary of findings:

This Chapter sets out the routes of entry for girls and women to the Magdalen Laundries which were not attributable to the State. These consisted of referrals by

- *Family members (10.5% of known entries);*
- *Roman Catholic priests (8.8% of known entries);*
- *other non-state agencies, organisations and individuals (9.3% of known entries); and*
- *what were referred to as “self-referrals”, that is, girls and women themselves seeking admission to a Magdalen Laundry (16.4% of known entries).*

Some cases involving referrals made jointly by family members and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”) are also recorded here. Other referrals made by the NSPCC in the context of its work with and for social services are referred to in Chapter 11.

Some cases involving referrals made by the Legion of Mary are also recorded here, while other referrals made by officers of the Legion of Mary while acting as Voluntary Probation Officers are detailed in Chapter 9. Their role in relation to Industrial and Reformatory Schools in Chapter 10.

A very small number of referrals made by other non-State organisations including

- *Old I.R.A. (17 cases);*
- *Refugees, some of whom were placed by the Red Cross (7 cases);*
- *Simon Community (4 cases);*

- *Society of St Vincent de Paul (2 cases); and*
- *Samaritans (1 case)*

and a small number of referrals made by private individuals apparently in their position as employers are also recorded in this Chapter.

This Chapter presents patterns identified by the Committee within these overall categories, as well as sample cases of all such patterns. Some of the patterns identified related to poverty, homelessness, domestic abuse, physical disability, mental illness, intellectual disability and family disputes. Other patterns indicated that the Magdalen Laundries were regarded by some as places of temporary or short-term refuge (in some cases, involving repeated entering and leaving), or alternatively as a means of discipline for young girls, or providing for women in old age.

This Chapter also includes a brief summary, by way of context, of previous historical analysis on the possible reasons for high levels of institutionalisation in 20th century Ireland.

Introduction

1. As set out in Parts II and III of this Report, a significant number of routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries were referrals made or facilitated by the State. However these were not the only routes by which girls and women entered the Magdalan Laundries and this Report would not present an accurate or complete picture of this subject without recording some of the categories of non-State referrals found by the Committee.
2. A full statistical breakdown of routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries is included in Chapter 8 of this Report. As is clear from that Chapter, large numbers of girls and women also entered the Magdalen Laundries as a result of referrals made by:
 - Family members;

- Roman Catholic priests;
 - What were referred to as “self-referrals”, in other words, voluntary admissions or admissions sought by the girl or woman herself; and
 - A variety of non-state agencies and individuals.
3. This Chapter presents information relating to these non-State routes of entry, drawing primarily on the details contained in the records of the Religious Congregations as well as material found in other non-State archives.
 4. To illustrate patterns of referrals, sample cases taken from the Registers of the four Congregations which operated the Magdalen Laundries are included throughout this Chapter. These sample cases have been selected by the Committee, which is aware of the full recorded details of each case. However, to protect the privacy of the women and their families, all identifying information, including name, geographical origin, which institution was involved and the precise years in question, has been removed before inclusion in this Chapter.
 5. In today’s world, it is difficult to understand the circumstances which could in the past have led to daughters, sisters and mothers being abandoned or disowned by their own families. It may be equally difficult to understand the apparent acceptance by certain families of instructions from people in positions of authority, particularly priests, in relation to family matters.
 6. It would however be unfair to judge these cases or the people concerned by applying today’s standards and societal norms. Many of the case-studies which follow demonstrate the regular use of terms which are now offensive, as well as the widespread acceptance of practices that would be repugnant to us today. Many of these case-studies and patterns are accordingly of their own times and perhaps demonstrate some of the prevailing attitudes in Ireland across the years since 1922.

7. A study of the Registers of the Magdalen Laundries suggests that there were linkages between many of these non-State routes of entry. In particular, a significant number of referrals of girls and women to Magdalen Laundries are recorded as having been made jointly by a priest and a family member; while it also seems likely that some voluntary admissions of girls and women to Magdalen Laundries were influenced by the fact that no other door was open to them, either due to rejection by their families or a need to escape abuse or neglect in the home. These and other possible patterns are detailed in the sections which follow.

8. In broader context, historians have suggested a variety of factors which might have contributed to the very high levels of institutionalisation which existed in Ireland throughout much of the 20th century. Although it is not the task of this Report to take a view on these broad historical questions, these studies may be an interesting prism against which to consider the findings of the independent analysis carried out by the Committee on the Registers of the Magdalen Laundries.

9. This Chapter is, as a result, split in two parts:
 - A. The patterns identified by the Committee among the non-State routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries from direct analysis of the Entry Registers of these institutions; and

 - B. A summary of the views of historians, suggesting possible reasons for high levels of institutionalisation in 20th century Ireland.

A. Patterns among non-State routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries

10. This Part sets out the findings of the Committee in relation to non-State routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries. Through analysis of the Entry

Registers of the Magdalen Laundries, patterns of referrals within the broad headings of 'family', 'priest', 'self' and 'other' have, where possible been identified. The following sample cases have been selected from the Entry Registers by the Committee. All identifying information has been removed prior to inclusion in this Chapter, to protect the privacy of the women and families concerned.

11. Unless otherwise indicated, all quotations in the following section are taken directly from the Registers, namely the written records created by all four Religious Congregations on the date of entry or date of exit (as appropriate) of the girl or woman in question.

I. Family

12. Family referrals of girls and women to the Magdalen Laundries identified by the Committee spanned the whole range of family and extended families. In analysis of the Registers, the Committee found documentary evidence that significant numbers of girls and women were placed in the Magdalen Laundries by their mothers, fathers, brothers, sisters, husbands, sons, daughters, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents, grandaunts, foster parents, step-parents and sisters or brothers in law.
13. Family referrals of this kind amounted to 10.5% of known routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries. The youngest girl recorded as having been placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a family member was 12 years of age; while the oldest was 72 years of age.
14. Some were, after a period, accepted back in their former homes, while others were not. In some cases, the information recorded in the Registers gives a sense of why the girl or woman was placed in the Laundry by their family members, but in many cases it does not.

15. Nonetheless and quite aside from any assumptions which might be made based on general societal conditions, a number of possible patterns of family referrals to the Magdalen Laundries can be identified in the documentary records.
16. In summary, the patterns of family referrals which appeared to the Committee to emerge from the study of the Registers of all four Congregations include placements of girls or women in Magdalen Laundries by members of their family as a means of disciplining young girls; or to provide for girls or women with physical disabilities, with mental or psychiatric illness, with intellectual disabilities and special needs or for those in advanced age. In other cases, girls or women were placed in Magdalen Laundries by their families following family disputes, as a result of abuse or neglect in the home; or after having been rejected by their families for having a child outside of marriage.
17. In most cases in which a girl or woman returned to her family after time in a Magdalen Laundry, it is unclear how or why this occurred. But in a very small number of cases, additional information is included which suggests that some women were reclaimed by their families when they had a need for them; or that some girls or women were reclaimed by their families from a Magdalen Laundry, with the intention of taking them out of Ireland, typically to England or America.

Patterns of family referrals suggested by analysis of the Registers of all 4 Congregations

18. Some placements of young girls in the laundries by their parents or other family members were for short periods, with family members reclaiming them thereafter. It is possible that in such cases the Magdalen Laundries were being used by some families as a means of discipline, or alternatively as a type of informal respite. Possible examples of cases such as these are the following:

- A girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s by her sister “as she would not do anything she was told”. She was taken out of the institution by her sister over a year later.
 - A girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1980s “until her sick mother recovers”. Her departure thereafter is recorded as “went home, unsettled”.
 - A 15-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her mother in the 1930s. Three days later she was “taken out by her mother”.
 - In the 1950s, a girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry “by her mother for a month”. Her departure is recorded as “father took her out”.
 - An 18-year old woman was “brought here by her father” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. It is recorded that she was “keeping suspicious company, late home”. Her mother had “abandoned family” and left the country. After approximately 10 months, she was “taken home by her father”.
19. In other cases, the information available suggests that some families used the Magdalen Laundries as a place to provide for girls or women with physical disabilities, illnesses or advanced age. Possible examples of cases such as these are the following:
- Another girl, aged 13, was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s by her mother “because of fits”. She was “taken out by her sister” a few days later. She was again brought to the same Magdalen Laundry by her mother a year later, being noted to be “subject to epileptic fits”. After 6 days, she was “sent to the County Home”.

- A woman aged 20 was in the 1920s “brought by her mother” to a Magdalen Laundry, from where she was “ordered to hospital by the doctor – T.B.” She was thereafter “taken home by her mother”.
- A woman was in the 1950s placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her aunt and uncle. The Register records that she had previously been employed in an identified location but had had a “breakdown in health”. She ultimately left the Magdalen Laundry for a job.
- A 42-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her brother in the 1950s. The Register records that he placed her there “to take care of her”. No further details are recorded.
- A 72-year old woman was “brought by her nephew” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. The date of her departure is not recorded – but the Register records that she “went to hospital” and no further information appears thereafter.
- A 25-year old woman was “brought by her mother” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. She was “sent home” the next day, with the Register recording that she was “getting epileptic fits, could not be kept”.
- A 16-year old girl, whose parents were dead, was “brought by her brother” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. The Register records that she had a particular (named) heart condition. She was “taken home by her brother” a month later.
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s by her sisters. She was discharged to a named institution for the deaf and blind.

20. In other cases, the information available suggests that some families used the Magdalen Laundries as a place to provide for girls or women with intellectual disabilities or special needs. Possible examples of cases such as these are the following:

- A girl whose parents were dead was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her siblings in the 1920s. Her previous history suggests she may have had special needs. A teenager at the time, the remainder of her family emigrated while she remained in the institution for the rest of her life (some 50 years more).
- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s, being recorded as “mentally deficient”. She was “taken out by her brother” 2 weeks later.
- A 43-year old woman was “brought by her mother and sister” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. She had previously been in an institution for persons with special needs. After more than 4 years, she was “sent to a Mental Ward”.
- A 20-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s, having been “brought here by her aunt”. The Register records the cause of her placement as “Mentally defective. Unable to mind herself”.
- A woman was “brought by her father” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. She had previously been in an institution for children with intellectual disabilities. No additional details are recorded in the Register and it is not known how long she remained in the Magdalen Laundry.
- A teenage girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her aunt in the 1970s. At the time, her mother was dead but her father was living. She was, less than a year later, placed in an identified “training school for adult mentally retarded”.

21. In other cases, the records tend to suggest that mental or psychiatric illness may have been a factor leading to a family member or members placing a girl or woman in a Magdalen Laundry. Some possible examples of this include:
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her mother in the 1930s. Less than 2 weeks later she was “dismissed. Mind deranged. Given to her sister”.
 - A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by “her sister” in the 1960s. The details of her exit are recorded as “sent to [named psychiatric hospital] by her sister”.
22. In other cases, the family background reflected in the Registers suggests that abuse or neglect might have been occurring, with family members sometimes being the perpetrator. Possible examples of cases such as these are the following:
- One girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s, with the register simply recording that she had been “locked in her room by mother 15 years”. She spent just over 3 months in the Magdalen Laundry before leaving.
 - In another case, a young teenager entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, having been “taken away from a wicked bad father”. The Register is unusually explicit, recording it as “a terrible case”, noting prior sexual abuse against her equally young sister (who was not in the Magdalen Laundry) and that “a court case revealed crimes and sins”.
23. In some cases, the information contained in the Register suggests that the girl or woman was rejected by her family either having had a child or for other reasons. It should be noted in this regard that pregnant women were

not allowed in the Magdalen Laundries, and any such cases of placements would have arisen after the woman in question had had her child elsewhere. Examples of cases such as these are the following:

- A 21-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s from a Mother & Baby Home “having fallen twice her mother refused to take [name] at home”. The Register also notes “a brother of hers in mental home”.
- A 21-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry from a named County Home in the 1950s. The Register records that “her people refuse to have her home owing to her history” and that she had while a teenager been in a “mental hospital” and had subsequently given birth to a child in a Mother & Baby Home. The details of her departure from the Magdalen Laundry are not recorded.
- A woman was brought from an identified County Home “by her mother” and a named priest, in the 1950s. She was “taken home by her mother” 6 months thereafter.
- A girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s by her mother, with the Register recording that she was “brought by her mother from St Patrick’s”. The details of her departure are not recorded.
- A teenage girl was “brought by her step-sister” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. The Register records that she had had a child a specified number of years earlier; and that there was a “second baby awaiting adoption”. No further information is recorded and it is not known how long she remained in the institution.

24. In others, family disputes may have led to a girl or woman being placed in or herself seeking admission to a Magdalen Laundry. Possible examples of cases such as these are the following:

- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s of her own choice (“presented herself”). She remained there until an identified family member died, after which she “went back to her old home”.
 - A 30-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. The Register records “Had another man and her husband sent her off”. The details of her departure are not recorded.
25. In most cases in which a girl or woman returned to her family after time in a Magdalen Laundry, it is unclear how or why this occurred. However in a very small number of cases, additional information is included in the Register which suggests that a woman was reclaimed by her family when they had a need for her. Possible examples of cases such as these are the following:
- A girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her aunt in the 1950s and remained there for over 2 years, eventually being “taken out” by her aunt “to housekeep for her father”.
 - A girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, aged 17, from a named Mother and Baby Home and remained there for over 30 years. When she left, it was “to help” her widowed sister-in-law.
 - A girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s, but “went home to look after her father”.
26. In a more significant number of other cases, the Registers indicate that when a girl or woman was reclaimed by her family from a Magdalen Laundry, it was with the intention of taking her out of Ireland, typically to England or America. Some of these cases appear to have been for family re-unification; while in others, the other members of the family were not

emigrating with the girl or woman. Examples of cases such as these are the following:

- A girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her parents in the 1920s. Her departure is recorded as “taken out by her father who sent her to America”.
- An 18-year old woman, who had earlier been in an industrial school, was sent to a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1930s. Almost two years later in the 1940s, she was “taken to England by her aunt”.
- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s and was “taken to England by her sister”.
- A former industrial school child entered a Magdalen Laundry on the recommendation of a named nun in the 1950s. She remained there over 6 years until she was “taken to England by her brother”.
- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. The route of her entry is not recorded, but her departure is reflected as “taken to England by her father”.
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her mother in the 1960s. Over a year later, she was “taken to England by her uncle”.
- A 16-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry on the recommendation of a named priest in the 1960s. She remained there for over 5 years, until she was “taken to England by her sister”.
- A woman, who had spent her childhood in an industrial school, was “taken to England by her brother” from a Magdalen Laundry, the Register also recording “mother and brothers in England”.

27. And in many cases, the Registers simply do not include sufficient information to explain what circumstances might have caused a person to place a family member in a Magdalen Laundry, or their reasons either for leaving them there, or alternatively for allowing them to return home. Some examples of the very many cases of this kind include the following:

- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by her brother in the 1930s. The date of her departure is not recorded, but the manner of her departure is – she was “taken out by her husband”.
- A 36-year old woman was “brought by father” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. Three years later she was “sent to the County Home”.
- A 17-year old girl was “brought by her father” to a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1930s. The Register records that she “ran away” and was “brought back” and “her father signed a paper promising to let her be here for 2 years”. She left some months afterwards in the 1940s.
- A 20-year old woman was “brought by her mother” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. Almost 2 months later, she was “taken home by mother”.
- A 15-year old girl was “brought by her aunt” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. 11 months later she was “taken home by her aunt”.
- A woman was “brought by her husband and son” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. The Register records that she was “sent home after a week”.
- A 55-year old woman was “brought by her sisters” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. Slightly over a year later, she was “taken home by sisters”.

- A 26-year old woman was “brought by her father” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. The Register records that she “ran away”, but the date on which she did so is not identified.
- A woman was brought to a Magdalen Laundry by her sister-in-law in the 1960s. She remained there until her death.
- Two sisters were in the 1960s placed in a Magdalen Laundry by an identified family member. They both remained there for just over a year, leaving on the same date.
- A 15-year old girl was brought to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s by her father and uncle. Approximately 3 weeks later, she was “sent home with her sister”.
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s by her brother, who was recorded as living in another country. She remained there over 4 years.

II. Priests

28. A significant number of referrals are also recorded in the Registers as having been made by Roman Catholic priests, either alone or together with a family member. These amounted to 8.8% of known routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries.
29. For the vast majority of referrals made by priests, it is not recorded how old the relevant girls and women were at the time of their entry to the Magdalen Laundries. Of those cases where age is recorded, the youngest girl referred to a Magdalen Laundry by a priest was 13 years of age; and the oldest woman referred to a Magdalen Laundry by a priest was 63 years of age.

30. In many cases, the Registers simply record the name of a priest as the person who recommended that a girl or woman should enter the Magdalen Laundry. In a smaller number of cases, the Registers give a fairly complete explanation for the process by which a referral was made, or influenced, by a priest.
31. In the following sections, an attempt has been made by the Committee to identify possible patterns of referrals made by priests, with all cases and quotations drawn from the Registers of the four Religious Congregations.

Patterns of referrals involving priests

32. A significant number of girls and women were placed in Magdalen Laundries jointly by a priest and a family member or members. Priests are recorded as having made referrals in combination, in individual cases, with both parents, or mothers or fathers alone, or the aunts, uncles, sisters, brothers, husbands or grandparents of the girls and women in question.
33. In some cases the Register makes clear whether it was the priest or the family member who instigated the move - in other words, whether the named priest insisted on the placement of a girl or woman in a Magdalen Laundry by her family; or alternatively whether a family consulted a priest for guidance or advice on placement options for their daughters, sisters or mothers in a variety of circumstances, including illness, family breakdown, homelessness and so on.
34. Samples of cases of joint referrals by families and priests, in which it is clear which party instigated the action include the following:

- A girl was “brought by her mother through [named priest]’s influence” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. After approximately 3 weeks, “her mother took her out”.
- A woman aged in her mid-twenties is recorded as having been referred by her parents to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. The Register notes that she had had a child outside marriage. Although it was her parents who brought her to the Laundry, the Register notes that a named priest “insisted on her coming here”. Approximately 4 months after her entry to the Magdalen Laundry, she was committed to a psychiatric hospital by a doctor, Garda and two Peace Commissioners.
- A girl (age not recorded) was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. She was recorded as having entered “at the request of a named priest”, however the Register also records “mother left here of her own free will to go to Mental Hos[pital]”.

35. However in most cases, it is not clear from the Registers whether it was the family member or the priest who set in train the events leading to a girl or woman entering a Magdalen Laundry. In relation to referrals by families alone, there were some cases where the girls and women were accepted back by their families, in others, they were not. Samples of joint referrals by priests and families include the following:

- A woman, whose parents were dead, was “sent by [named priest]; brought by her aunt” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. She was “taken home by her aunt” a year later.
- A 17-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s “brought by father at request of [named priest]”. Just over 4 years later, she “left at her own request”.

- A 15-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry having been “brought by mother; recommended by [named priest]” in the 1930s. She remained there for over a year and a half, until she “ran away”.
- A girl, whose parents were dead, was “sent by” a named priest and “brought by” her aunt to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. She remained there for more than 5 years, but was at that point (in the 1940s) “sent to her aunt”.
- An 18-year old woman was brought to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s “by sister on advice of [named priest]”. Her mother was alive at the time, but no details of her father are recorded. She remained in the Magdalen Laundry for approximately 2 years, after which she “ran away” on an unrecorded date. She “returned” and spent approximately two weeks in the institution before being dismissed (“sent away”). No further details are recorded.
- A 30-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1930s. She was “brought by her father; recommended by [named priest]”. There is no further mention in the Register of her family. After approximately 8 months in the Magdalen Laundry, she was “sent to Mental Ward, County Home”. She “returned” 4 months later, before running away approximately 5 months later. There are two further entries in relation to her – she was “brought back” (by whom is not specified) two months after running away, but within 2 days of that return she was “taken to Mental Ward” (presumably at the County Home). She does not seem to have entered a Magdalen Laundry again thereafter.
- A 20-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, “brought by her father and recommended by [named priest]”. After approximately 3 months, she was “taken home by her father”.

- A 22-year old woman was “brought by [named priest] and her mother” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. No further mention is made of her family. Almost a year later, she “left at her own request”.
- A woman (age unrecorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, “brought by her brother on the advice of [named priest]”. She remained in the Magdalen Laundry until her death approximately 10 years later.
- A woman (age not recorded) had been living with her brother until she was in the 1930s “sent by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry. It is not recorded how long she spent there, but she was thereafter “sent to County Home”.
- A woman was “brought by her father – sent by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. She had previously spent time in two other Magdalen Laundries. After a year in the Magdalen Laundry, she is recorded as having “run away”.
- A woman, whose parents were both recorded as alive, was “brought by her father at the request of [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. She remained there until her “father took her” slightly more than a year later.
- A girl (age unrecorded) was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s, a “[named priest], her mother & aunt brought her”. After less than a week she was sent back to her family- the Register records that she “had to be sent back under escort”.
- An 18-year old woman was in the 1950s “brought by her aunt and [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry. After almost a year, she was “taken out by her aunt”.

- A 19-year old woman was in the 1950s brought to a Magdalen Laundry “by her sister at the request of [named priest]”. No further mention is made of her family in the Register. She remained there for 14 years, until she was placed in a job in the late 1960s – she “went to a situation” with a named doctor.
- A 17-year old girl whose parents were dead entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s “brought by her uncle [named] at the request of [named priest]”. After almost two years she was “taken out by her brother”.
- A girl, whose parents were recorded as living outside the State, was brought to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s “by her uncle on the advice of [named priest]”. After a month, she was “sent to” a named psychiatric hospital “under police escort”.
- A girl was sent to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s by her parents and a named priest. No further details, of the duration of her stay or ultimate departure, are recorded.
- A girl was “brought by [named priest] & Legionary with consent of parents” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. After 3 months, she was “taken home by her mother”.
- A 16-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s, having been brought by a named priest and her mother. After 5 months, she was “taken home by her mother”. She “returned” 6 months later and spent approximately another two months in the Magdalen Laundry before again being “taken out by her mother”.
- A woman was “brought by her sister and [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. There is no further mention in the Register of her family- she remained in the Magdalen Laundry for over 3 years, after

which she was transferred to another Magdalen Laundry, where she remained for another 5 years, finally leaving in the 1970s.

- A girl (age unrecorded) was in the 1960s “brought by her grandparents on recommendation of [named priest] and [Order of Sisters]” to a Magdalen Laundry. The Register notes that her mother was alive but includes no other details in relation to her. After approximately a year, she was “taken home by grandparents”.
- A woman (age not recorded) was in the 1960s brought to a Magdalen Laundry “by mother and [named priest]”. No further mention is made in the Register of her family. She “ran away” after 3 years in the institution.

36. Although ordinarily not so detailed, in a very small number of cases, the Registers record the opposition of a priest to the return of a girl or woman to her former home after birth of a child outside marriage, which may have left the girls or women without any alternative place to go. These cases are as follows:

- A 28-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s from a named Mother and Baby Home. She had no known family, having been “a boarded out child”. The cause of her entry is described as “no protection and not fit to mind herself”. Prior to her pregnancy she had been a domestic servant for a named family. The Register records that she was “left alone all day. [Named priest] does not want her back to his parish”.
- A 27-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s from a named Mother and Baby Home. The Register notes that “her parish priest [name recorded] would not allow her into [his?] parish. As soon as [named priest] was ... away from there, [her] father came to take her

and [she] refused to go with him". She left the Magdalen Laundry less than 2 years after entering.

37. A similarly small number of Register entries refer to prostitution as the reason for the referral of a girl or woman to a Magdalen Laundry by a priest. Such cases are:

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry on the recommendation of a named priest in 1870. The Register records that she was "sent here because of prostitution". In the 1930s she left the institution "to housekeep for her niece". She returned after a year, although the circumstances of her return are not recorded. She stayed in the Magdalen Laundry for the rest of her life, dying in the 1940s.
- A 32-year old woman of no fixed abode was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named priest in the 1940s, having been "found loitering about the streets." The Register is unusually detailed and notes that she had an "infectious disease" and that the named doctor (who is known to have provided medical attention to women in that Magdalen Laundry) "sent her to [Hospital] and thence to her own county". Four months later, she returned to the Magdalen Laundry from the named hospital. After 3 months, she was "committed to" a named psychiatric hospital by the doctor.
- A 37-year old woman of no fixed abode is recorded as having been placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s having been "found straying". The Register notes that she "had infection". She was "discharged a few days after arrival. Injections and isolation ordered. No room for isolation. She insisted on going away, smashed and broke windows if not. Notified Civic Guards and priests to get her out of [city name]."

38. In a somewhat larger number of cases, the Registers provide details which suggest that homelessness or the social role performed by the priest for many years was the background to the referral of a girl or woman to a Magdalen Laundry by a priest. Such cases are:

- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s having been “sent by” a named priest “as he found her in the ... Church”. She left the institution 4 months later.
- A 16-year old girl, with no fixed abode, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s on the recommendation of a named priest. The Register records that she was dismissed – she “had to be discharged – a dangerous character”.
- A 63-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s by a named priest. She spent 3 winter months there, with the Register recording that she “left” thereafter.
- Two young sisters entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, having been “found loitering and sent to [named nun] by [named priest]. [named nun] brought her here with her sister”. The Register records that they “ran off from their home”, which was a considerable distance from the city in which they were found. After less than 2 weeks, “their mother [name] came and took them”.
- A 23-year old woman and her sister were placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s by an identified priest and nun, having been “found wandering”. Both were “taken by their mother” shortly thereafter, with the Register noting that she “thanked us for minding them for the time”.

- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s “brought by” a named priest, having gone to the Presbytery having “thumbed a lift” to get there. She left on an unknown date for a job.
39. A small number of referrals to Magdalen Laundries by priests explicitly refer to the need for “protection” for a girl or woman. Cases include:
- A 20-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named priest “for protection” in the 1940s. The details of her departure are not recorded.
 - A 17-year old girl was brought to a Magdalen Laundry by a named lay person (female) and a named priest in the late 1940s. The Register records that she was “in great danger, sleeping out at night”. She remained in the Laundry for over 3 years, until she was “taken out by her brother” in the 1950s.
 - A 19-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s by a named priest. The Register states that she was “out at night in dangerous surroundings”. The details of her departure are not recorded.
40. A relatively small number of cases refer to a priest together with either a Judge or a Garda as the source of referral of a girl or woman to a Magdalen Laundry. In early cases, it is possible that cases like this arose, for example, when a priest was entrusted with the task of transporting a girl or woman from court to a Magdalen Laundry on foot of conviction of an offence; or to a Magdalen Laundry for a period of detention on remand. In other cases and particularly in early decades, these joint referrals may have arisen in circumstances where families consulted local priests and members of An Garda Síochána on problems of a social nature.

41. Other referrals attributed in the Registers to priests may similarly have arisen in these kinds of circumstances, but without the additional background detail being recorded in the Registers. Where applicable, these cases have been computed in the total of 'State' referrals set out in Chapter 8 and Part III of this Report and the legislative basis set out therein would apply to them. Nonetheless, a sample is included here to illustrate the pattern:

- A woman, whose mother was dead, was "sent by" a named Judge and a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1920s. She left the institution three years later.
- An 18-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. Her entry is described as "sent by [named priest]". However after 12 days, she was "taken by Civic Guards for trial".
- A 17-year old girl (whose parents were both alive) was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s. A named priest and named Garda are identified by the Register as "instrumental in having her admitted here". After four months she was "taken home by her parents".

42. A very small number of girls or women referred to Magdalen Laundries were, within a short time of their arrival, discovered to be pregnant. As set out elsewhere in this Report, pregnant women were not permitted in Magdalen Laundries and these girls or women were accordingly dismissed, or sent to hospital, the County Home, or Mother and Baby Homes. These cases are as follows:

- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s on the recommendation of a named priest. "Sent to Dublin Union. Circumstances necessitated her going". (The Dublin Union was the equivalent of a County Home).

- A 19-year old woman, whose parents appear to have been dead, was brought to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s by a named priest. She had previously been working in an identified nursing home. After 3 months, it seems she was discovered to be pregnant as the Register records “sent to hospital, maternity case”.
 - An 18-year old woman was “sent by” a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1930s. Within 2 weeks she was “sent to Bessboro Convent”. Approximately 2 and a half years later in the 1940s, she “returned” to the same Magdalen Laundry. After 3 months, she was “sent to the sisters of Charity”.
43. Just as in the case of family referrals, some referrals to Magdalen Laundries by priests appear to have arisen due to physical illness or intellectual disability of the girl or woman. Possible examples of this include:
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1920s on the recommendation of a named priest. She was “sent to the Dublin Union, subject to fits”. She was readmitted to the Magdalen Laundry a number of years after her original entry, but four days later she was “dismissed”. No further details are recorded.
 - A woman (age not recorded) was placed in a Magdalen Laundry on the recommendation of a named priest in the 1920s. The duration of her stay is not recorded, but she was “given to her sister (subject to fits)”.
 - A 50-year old woman was “sent by” a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. She died there approximately a month after entry.
 - A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s on the recommendation of a named priest. The Register notes that she

was “mentally defective”. “Her brother came and took this girl away. She was not fit for this place”. “All clothes and case etc given back”.

- A woman (age unrecorded) with no known relatives entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1950s. She “came on advice of [named priest]”. A month later, she was “sent to [named hospital] for treatment” and did not return to the Laundry thereafter.
 - A woman (age not recorded) was “brought by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s, having “suffered nervous breakdown”. No further details of her life are recorded.
44. A number of referrals attributed to priests relate to girls or women who are identified in the Registers as having been, in their earlier lives, in Industrial Schools. In some of these cases, given the ages of the women concerned and the fact that they had been in Industrial Schools, it is apparent that these referrals occurred during the period of their post-discharge supervision (the legislative basis for which is set out in Chapter 10 of this Report). It is possible that in some of these cases, this was the basis on which they were referred to Magdalen Laundries, although they were recorded as having been referred by priests. In other cases, (including the first case recorded below), the fact that the woman had previously been in an Industrial School seems to have been recorded as additional information on her past life, rather than as the reason for her referral. Samples of such cases are as follows:
- A 21-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s on the recommendation of a named priest. She had previously been in an Industrial School and had no known family. After a period of approximately 9 months, she was “sent to County Home”.

- An 18-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s by the Industrial School she had attended “at request of” a named priest. She was discharged to a named sanatorium.
 - A 15-year old girl was “brought by” a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. She is recorded as having previously been in an Industrial School. Her parents were alive, and the number of her siblings was recorded. The Register records that at the time of her admission to the Magdalen Laundry she had been living with a named (unrelated) man. She “ran away” from the Magdalen Laundry on an unspecified date.
45. Some very young girls were placed in the Magdalen Laundries by priests and were thereafter placed in employment outside the Magdalen Laundry. Cases include:
- A 14-year old girl, whose parents were alive, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s, having been recommended by a named priest. Within a week, she had been placed in employment with a named person. The Register records that she “returned” to the Magdalen Laundry approximately 6 weeks later, staying 2 days before leaving again.
 - A 15-year old girl, whose father was dead, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s. She was recommended by a named doctor and a named priest, for whom the girl’s mother was employed as housekeeper. Almost 2 years later, she left for a job in a named hotel.
 - A 13-year old girl was “sent by” a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. Her father was recorded in the Register as being alive at the time of her entry to the Laundry. She remained there for approximately 4 years, after which time she left for a job.

- Siblings, whose parents were living, entered a Magdalen Laundry on the same day in the 1950s having been “brought by” a named priest “to be trained”. One was “sent home” to her family within a short time, while the exit details of her sister are not recorded.
46. There remain many cases, unfortunately where it is not possible to determine what prompted the referral of a girl or woman to a Magdalen Laundry by a priest. Some were accepted home by their families, some were not, again for reasons unspecified. Some of these girls and women, having left the Magdalen Laundries, returned to them in later years. A small selection of the very many cases of this kind follows:
- A 13-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named priest in 1890. Her mother was recorded as being alive at the time of her placement in the laundry. She spent the rest of her life there, and died in the 1960s.
 - A 45-year old woman was “brought by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. Her husband’s details were noted in the Register. She “left at her own request” 4 months later.
 - A woman (age not recorded) was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s on the recommendation of a named priest. Five days after entry, she was “dismissed, would not stay.” Over two years later she returned to the Magdalen Laundry, spending approximately 2 weeks there before again being “dismissed”.
 - A 14-year old girl and her 18-year old sister were “sent by” a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. Both their parents were living, although their father was living in another (named) country. After almost a year and a half in the Magdalen Laundry, their father “sent for her” and both left the institution to rejoin him outside the State.

- A married woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s on the recommendation of a named priest. The date of her exit was not recorded, rather only that she was “given to her daughter”.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s on the referral of a named religious. After approximately 2 weeks, she was “dismissed for quarrelling and throwing a bucket”.
- A 17-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the mid 1920s on the recommendation of a named priest. At the time of her entry, her father was living but her mother was dead. After approximately a year and a half, she was sent “to the Union for bad conduct” (Comment: the Union was the County Home)
- A 48-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s on the recommendation of a named priest. Less than 2 weeks later, she “left at her own request”.
- A 22-year old girl was “sent by” a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1920s. The Register notes that she had previously spent almost a year in a Magdalen Laundry in the United Kingdom. She was sent to the County Home 2 months after entry, but returned to the Magdalen Laundry within a month of that transfer. After approximately another week in the Magdalen Laundry, she was again “sent to County Home”.
- A 40-year old woman was “brought by” a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. She was recorded as having been “sent to County Home after a few days”.
- A 38-year old woman was “brought by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1930s. After 3 months she was “left back to her mother”.

- A 17-year old girl was “brought by” a named priest and a named lay person (female) to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. Her parents appear to have been dead, with a sister listed as her family. She was “sent home” after 2 months.
- A 42-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s on the recommendation of a named priest. Her only listed family was her married sister. After less than a month, she “left at her own request”.
- A 36-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. She “came in a boat from England, sent by a priest”. She is recorded as having left approximately 6 months later.
- A woman (age not recorded) was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s by a named priest. After 6 months, she was “dismissed for giving great disrespect to a sister”.
- A 31-year old woman was “brought by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. The only listed family was her step-father. She remained there until her death in the 1980s.
- A 19-year old woman with no known family was “brought by” a named priest to a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1930s. After more than 13 years, she was “sent to a situation in Dublin” (a job).
- A 14-year old girl was “sent by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. After 8 months she was “taken home by her mother”.
- A 16-year old girl was “sent by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. After approximately 2 years, she was “taken home by her father”.

- A 16-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, recorded as being “sent by” a named priest. She remained there for over a year, at which point she was “taken out by her mother”. She entered and left the Laundry two more times. First, approximately a month after she had been taken out by her mother, she was brought back. Approximately 3 months later she was “taken out by her father”. Her final entry to the Magdalen Laundry is recorded as having taken place four months later, and then she “left” a month later.
- A 20-year old woman was “sent by [named priest]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. Her father was alive at the time. Approximately a year and a half later, she was “sent to a situation” (a job).
- A 26-year old woman was brought to a Magdalen Laundry “by a Legionary from [town] on advice of [named priest]”. After approximately 3 weeks, she “went home at own request”.
- A 35-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s on the recommendation of a named priest. Her “sister came here with her. On the way they called at bank and got deposit receipt transferred”.
- A 17-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a priest in the late 1940s. Her parents were alive at the time. She remained there for over a year until she is recorded as having “run away”.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s on the recommendation of a named priest. The date on which she left is not recorded, but the manner in which she left is – she “left at her own request to go to work”.
- An 18-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s on the recommendation of a named priest. After approximately a year and a half, she was “taken home by her foster parents”.

- A 39-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s on the recommendation of a named priest. She remained there for over twenty years until her death in the 1980s. She was buried in her homeplace at the request of an identified family member.
- A 16-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s by a named priest. Her parents were living- her mother was in the State, but her father was living in another (named) country. She remained there for 5 years until she was “taken to England by her sister”.
- A 15-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s on the recommendation of a named priest. Her parents were alive at the time of her entry to the Laundry. She was “taken home by her mother” after approximately 10 months, but returned again after 4 months at home. After one month in the Magdalen Laundry, she “went to her sister”.
- A 17-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named priest in the 1960s. The Register records that her father was “not known” but notes the details of her mother. She remained there for 2 years, after which she was “taken home by her mother”.
- A 44-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named priest in the 1960s. Her closest relative appeared to be an aunt (whose name and address was listed). She remained there for over 10 years, at which point she left for a job – the Register records that she “left for a situation” (named lay person listed as employer).
- A 16-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s by a named priest. She was “taken home by her father” a week later.
- A 46-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s on the recommendation of a named priest. Her only listed family was

her foster mother. She remained in the Magdalen Laundry until its closure.

- A 15-year old girl, whose parents were alive, was placed in a Magdalen Laundry by a named priest in the 1970s. After slightly more than a month, she was “taken out by her father”.
 - A 14-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s, on the recommendation of a named priest. The Register notes that she had brothers and sisters, but no details of her parents are listed. After approximately a month, she “ran away”.
 - A 15-year old girl, whose parents were alive, was placed in a Magdalen Laundry on the recommendation of a named priest in the 1970s. After approximately a month, her married sister (who lived outside the State) “returned ... to take” her.
 - A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1980s on the recommended of a named Religious Brother. After 3 days she “left. Offering drugs to others”.
47. Two interesting cases were identified where the *departure* of a girl or woman from a Magdalen Laundry was linked to a priest. Although neither had been placed there by a priest, the records suggest that in both cases (both occurring in the same year in the same Magdalen Laundry) a family member reclaimed the girl or woman with a letter from their parish priest:
- A 15-year old girl was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. She is recorded as having been placed there on the recommendation of a member of the Legion of Mary, although the Register also notes that she “stole and was committed by a district justice”. Her placement in a Magdalen Laundry therefore is likely to have been as a condition of probation following conviction of theft (the legislative basis for which is

set out in Chapter 9 of this Report). Nonetheless, she left the Laundry “taken away by her brother having parish priest’s letter”. The Register also records that “her whole family went to England and [she] with them”.

- A 33-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s “sent in ambulance from [named Mother & Baby Home]”. 9 months later, she was “taken by her father, had letter from parish priest [named] and curate”.

III. Self

48. As detailed in Chapter 8 of the Report, a large number of referrals are recorded in the Registers of the Magdalen Laundries as “self-referrals”, that is, voluntary admissions or admissions sought by the girls and women themselves. These amounted to 16.4% of known routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries.
49. The ages of these girls and women is not always known, but of those for whom age is recorded, the youngest voluntary entry was by a 13-year old girl, and the oldest voluntary entry was by an 84-year old woman. The shortest duration of stay by these women was one day, while the longest was approximately 60 years.
50. In some cases, the reasons which caused a girl or woman to choose to enter a Magdalen Laundry can be determined from the contemporaneous short entries made in the Registers of the Religious Congregations. For many other girls and women, we will never know what prompted them to seek admission to a Magdalen Laundry.

51. In the following sections, patterns identified among the voluntary entries of girls and women are detailed, through the use of anonymised case-studies drawn from the Registers of the four Religious Congregations.
52. The most common patterns identified in this category were girls or women affected by poverty and homelessness, domestic abuse, older women perhaps seeking a safe place to live or die (particularly in earlier decades), and women with nowhere else to turn, who made frequent repeat entries to the Magdalen Laundries.

Patterns of voluntary entries

53. A substantial number of women appear to have entered Magdalen Laundries voluntarily due to poverty or homelessness. Likely cases of this include the following:
 - A 50-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry as a “self-referral” in the 1930s. The Register states “all relatives in America”. She spent almost 3 (winter) months there before she “left at her own request”.
 - A 22-year old married woman voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1920s. Her parents and husband were all living outside the State (America). Almost 10 months later, she left for a County Home.
 - A 22-year old woman with no known family voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. After 3 days she was “sent to County Home”.
 - A 57-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry at her own request in the 1930s. The only family recorded in the Register is her brother. She had previously spent “about 30 years in [another Magdalen Laundry]”. She spent almost 4 winter months there before she “left at her own request”.

- A woman (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1950s (“self-referral”). After two days she was “directed to Legion of Mary Hostel” in a named place.
- A 37-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry as a “self-referral” in the 1950s. She was of no fixed abode and her parents were recorded to be dead. She “ran away” two years later.
- A married woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1960s- she was “brought by husband; no place to stay”. She subsequently (on an unrecorded date) “walked out”.

54. In a similar vein, some women appear to have used the Magdalen Laundries as places of temporary refuge. Examples include the following:

- A woman with no fixed abode entered a Magdalen Laundry voluntarily in the 1970s. The Register records that she “came at 2a.m.”. She left 2 days later.
- A woman (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the mid 1920s. She “left in a couple of days”.
- A woman of no fixed abode (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s, having “walked out of job”. She left after less than 2 weeks.
- A woman (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s. She was at the time living at a named hostel for the homeless. The Register records that she came “Self. Locked out of hostel, needed accommodation for one night”. She remained there for one night and left the next day.

- A 22-year old woman requested entry to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s. She did so “while awaiting for her parents to send her fare” to return to England. When the money arrived from her parents (5 days later), she left the institution and travelled to England. The details of her life afterwards are not known – but she was never again in a Magdalen Laundry.

55. A number of women entered Magdalen Laundries voluntarily due to disputes or abuse in the home. Possible examples include the following:

- A woman (age not recorded) voluntarily entered after she “left husband”. The date of her departure was not recorded, but her destination was; she went to a job in a named hospital.
- A girl, (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. The Register notes that she “ran away from her uncle”. The details of her departure are not recorded.
- A girl, whose age was not recorded, voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s. The Register records that she “ran away from her home- cannot agree with her mother”. The details of her departure are not recorded.
- A married woman with two young children entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s at her own request. She was recorded as having entered the institution “having left her husband”. The Register recorded that her two children were being cared for by a different (identified) family member. After a month in the institution, she left and went to the home of the family member minding her children. She remained there only 2 days before returning to the Magdalen Laundry again. She spent only 1 more week in the institution, after which she is recorded as having ‘left with her husband’. She never again spent time in any other Magdalen Laundry.

56. Others seem to have entered Magdalen Laundries to be cared when they had nowhere else to turn to for care in old age or with an illness. Possible examples include the following:

- A married woman (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1960s. She entered “from home after death of daughter”. She remained there until her death.
- A 16-year old girl entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, with her previous address being the institution in which she had been raised. The Register records that she “got epileptic fits” and “could not be kept here. Sent to [named] Hospital by [named Doctor]. Discharged from [named Hospital] to [named] County Home”.
- A 20-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry voluntarily in the 1930s (“self-referral”). Approximately a week later, she was “transferred to County Hospital, epileptic”.

57. Some women with psychiatric illnesses or suffering mental distress also appear to have voluntarily entered the Magdalen Laundries. Some of these women may have turned to the Laundries as a place of refuge. Some examples include:

- A woman (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s. She “worked, not able to cope”. After an unspecified time there, she left and was admitted to a named psychiatric hospital.
- A woman (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry as a “self-referral from County Home” in the late 1920s. Within 3 weeks she had been “sent away for bad conduct”. More than a year later, she again voluntarily entered that same Magdalen Laundry “from Mental

Hospital [city] at own request". Approximately 3 years later in the 1930s she was "sent to Mental Ward, County Home".

- A woman (age not recorded) "presented herself" to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. On an unspecified later date, she was "sent to [named City Home]. Not right in her mind".
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry voluntarily ("herself") in the 1960s. On an unspecified date thereafter, she was "sent back to St Brendans by her mother".

58. A number of women entered Magdalen Laundries voluntarily, having returned from abroad. Some examples are the following:

- A woman (age not recorded) "returned from England" and entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. She "ran away" on an unspecified date thereafter.
- A 55-year old woman voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1923 ("self-referral"). The register notes that she had previously "been in America". The details of her departure are not recorded.
- A 49-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry of her own request, "came from USA". The date of her departure is not recorded.

59. A substantial number of women entered and left Magdalen Laundries on repeated occasions, sometimes over a long number of years. Some examples include the following:

- A woman (age not recorded) "presented herself" at a Magdalen Laundry in the early 1940s. She was "dismissed for striking" another woman after approximately 4 months. The following year, she again "presented herself" at the same Magdalen Laundry. After a month, she

was “dismissed at her own request. Troublesome at times”. A full year later, she again “presented herself” and sought admittance. However after a month living there, she was “dismissed, very discontent”.

- A 50-year old woman voluntarily entered Magdalen Laundries 5 times in the 1920s. At the time of her first entry in the early 1920s, the Register noted that “all friends are dead”. She spent six months there before leaving. After approximately 3 months she returned, again as a “self-referral”, this time spending 2 months at the Magdalen Laundry. It is not know what became of here immediately thereafter, but 2 years later she voluntarily entered a different Magdalen Laundry and spent 2 months there. Later that year, she once more voluntarily entered the Magdalen Laundry she had first entered. A year later (4 years after her first entry), she entered a different Magdalen Laundry again presenting as a self-referral and remaining there for 6 months, until she left for hospital.
- Another woman entered 6 different Magdalen Laundries, entering a total of 14 times in her life over the course of 4 decades (1950s-1980s),

Her first entry to a Magdalen Laundry was recorded as having been at the age of 15. Her mother was alive, although the girl had been in an industrial school prior to her admission to the laundry. She is recorded as having been referred to the laundry by a priest. After 9 months in that institution, she was transferred to another Magdalen laundry. Her age was at that time recorded as 17. She spent two months there before she was again transferred to another laundry. After 4 years, she was dismissed from that laundry. The reason is not recorded, but she was “sent home to her mother”.

One year later, she appears again in the records of the Magdalen Laundries. She is recorded as having entered “returned” and from that time on, she entered and departed the same Magdalen Laundry 9

times. Twice she left to take up employment – both times she returned and asked to be readmitted. Twice she ran away – once she is recorded as having ‘[run] out the laundry gate and came back the following day’, while another time she ‘left in a temper because she could not have a bath’- both times, she is recorded as having returned to the institution the following day. Twice she was hospitalised – once for routine tests; and once for psychiatric treatment. Her final departure was in the 1980s.

60. A variety of other circumstances led in different cases to women seeking entry to a Magdalen Laundry. Examples of these miscellaneous cases are:

- Two women entered the same Magdalen Laundry on the same day in the late 1960s, both being listed as “came looking for a job”. One left the next day, the other left just over a week later.
- A woman (age not recorded) is recorded as having entered a Magdalen Laundry “daily from brother’s flat” in the 1970s. She is recorded as having been admitted to a named psychiatric hospital thereafter.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magdalen Laundry voluntarily in the 1980s. She had a sister there and “wanted to come. Stayed a few months”.
- A 22-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry voluntarily in the 1940s. The Register records that she “Came herself to gate brought by bus conductor, came to Galway by bus in hopes of getting employment”. The Register also records that she “hadn’t a penny in her possession. She states she worked in a [named workplace] and stole money” and that she had also previously had a child. At some point (date not recorded), she “escaped from here by night, came back again didn't pretend, was at mass next morning and worked all day quietly”. The date of her departure is not recorded but the Register

notes that she was sent away by the Doctor who “as she made an almost successful attempt to take her own life”.

61. For many girls and women, the Registers do not provide sufficient information to identify why they might have voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry. Examples of these cases include the following:

- A 37-year old woman voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1920s. Her mother was alive at the time of her entry. She remained there until her death in the 1950s.
- A 17-year old girl voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the mid-1920s. After a year and half, she was “taken out by her father”. What happened in the immediate period thereafter is not clear but 4 months later she “returned again ... came from the Union”. Two months later she was “dismissed again to the Union”.
- A woman (age not recorded) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1920s (“presented herself”). After 2 weeks she was “Dismissed for refusing to do the work given her”. She returned to the institution after 4 months. On this occasion, she remained there for almost three years until she was again “dismissed” (in the 1930s).
- A 47-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry as a “self-referral” in the late 1920s. She “left at her own request” 2 months later.
- A 23-year old woman voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s as a “self-referral”. After 5 months she “left for an operation”.
- A 33-year old woman voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s (“self-referral”). The Register records that her “family was not known”. She “left at own request” 2 months later, but “returned same day”.

- A woman (age not recorded) “presented herself” to a Magalene Laundry in the 1930s. Just over 3 months later, she was “dismissed. Not to be readmitted”.
- A 20-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry (“self-referral”) in the late 1940s. The Register notes that there was “no account of parents”. She remained there until the 1970s.
- A 24-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry as a “self-referral” in the 1930s. The Register remarks that her “family not known”. After less than a month, she “went to another [named] Magdalen Laundry”.
- A 23-year old woman voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. Her mother was dead at the time of her entry. She “left at own request” approximately 5 months later and returned voluntarily approximately 4 months thereafter. This time she spent a decade in the Laundry, until she was “taken by her sister”.
- A 42-year old woman “presented herself” at a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s. She remained there until her death.
- A woman (age not recorded) “presented herself” at a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. She left on an unspecified date – “gave her notice, wouldn’t settle down”.
- A 26-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry as a “self-referral” in the 1940s. After two weeks she was “taken out by her husband”.
- A woman (age not recorded) “presented herself” at a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. The circumstances of her departure are not specified but the Register notes that she was a “very highly strung girl, shouldn’t be re-admitted”.

- A 25-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s as a “self-referral”. Less than 2 months later, she “left at her own request”.
- A 26-year old woman voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry as a “self-referral” in the 1950s. She “went of her own accord to her sister” the same year.
- A woman (age not recorded) entered a Magedalen Laundry voluntarily in the 1940s (“presented herself”). 6 months later, she was “dismissed for refusing to make an apology”.
- A 15-year girl voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the late 1950s (“self-referral”). She entered and left twice after that point: approximately a month after arrival she was “taken out by her mother”, but returned less than 2 months later. A few days thereafter she was “taken out by her father”.
- An 18-year old woman “presented herself” at a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s. Shortly thereafter she “walked out, went to [another named Magdalen Laundry]”.
- A 15-year old girl (whose parents were alive) voluntarily entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s (“self-referral”). After approximately 5 months, she left for a job – “got job [named employer]”.
- A 17-year old girl (whose parents were alive) was accepted to a Magdalen Laundry as a “self-referral” in the 1970s. She had previously spent time in two other Magdalen Laundries. She left after less than a month.
- A woman (age not recorded) “presented herself” at a Magalen Laundry in the 1970s. After 2 months she “went to England”. The Register

records that she returned and left on a number of occasions thereafter for the next 12 years, that she “comes and goes”.

IV. Other non-State agencies and private individuals

62. Girls and women were also referred to the Magdalen Laundries by a variety of other non-State agencies, organisations and private individuals. This Section provides information on some of the referrals made jointly by families and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”). Other referrals made by the NSPCC in the context of its work with and for social services are referred to in Chapter 11.¹ Information some referrals by the Legion of Mary is also included.

63. The other non-state agencies or organisations which were found in the Registers to have referred girls and women to the Magdalen Laundries are also recorded here. These consisted of a very small number of cases, namely:

- Old I.R.A. (17 cases);
- Refugees, some of whom were placed by the Red Cross (7 cases);
- Simon Community (4 cases);
- Society of St. Vincent de Paul (2 cases); and
- Samaritans (1 case).

¹ Note: the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”) was renamed 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.

64. In addition, one woman appears to have been referred by the authorities of another State. Small numbers of girls and women were also referred to Magdalen Laundries by named lay people who cannot be identified as belonging to any particular organisation. In two cases, a number of girls and women were identified by the same person, at least one of whom appears to have been a hotel worker or manager.

65. In total, these residual non-State cases amounted to approximately 9.5% of known routes of entry to the Magdalen Laundries. Taking the above categories together, the youngest known referral in these categories was a 12-year old girl, while the oldest was a 77-year old woman.

NSPCC, jointly with families

66. A number of cases of referral by the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (“NSPCC”), either alone or in conjunction with family members, involved cases of girls too old for committal to Industrial School who were considered to be neglected or ill-treated in the home. Others related to temporary placements of girls in Magdalen Laundries pending the making of an application to the Courts by the NSPCC for their committal to Industrial School. The following sample cases are taken both from the archives of the NSPCC and the Registers of the Religious Congregations which operated the Magdalen Laundries.

- One such case arose in relation to a 14-year old girl in the 1950s.² The girl, who lived with her parents and 7 siblings was the subject of an NSPCC inquiry. The file described the position as follows:

“The girl [name] has stayed out for 4 nights in the company of another girl named [name] of the same age. The latter is from [address]. They both slept on boats docked in Cork and drank [illegible] liqueur. The [name] parents are careless and did not

² Ref 15255

report that their daughter was absent from the home. I suggest application for her committal be made. She was placed by me in the Good Shepherd's [place].

A letter from the NSPCC to The Cork Corporation (City Manager) sets out the facts in similar terms to the above and records that the girl was "receiving temporary shelter at the Good Shepherd Convent [place] pending committal to the School [place]".³ The responding letter of the Corporation said that the letter "does not state any grounds which would justify the Corporation in moving in the matter".⁴

The Register of the relevant Religious Congregation confirms admission of the girl, aged 14, to the Magdalen Laundry "brought by Inspector [name]" of the NSPCC. Her departure approximately two weeks later is also recorded – she was "taken to court by Insp. [name], committed to [named Industrial School]". The NSPCC file again in turn confirms this with its final note "the girl [name] was committed to [name] Industrial School from [place] District Court".

- A case of a girl too old for Industrial School was identified in the 1960s in relation to a 15-year old girl, one of 6 children living with her parents.⁵ The NSPCC received two complaints of neglect in relation to the family's treatment of the children in successive years. On the first occasion, the NSPCC Inspector visited the family home and recorded the "dirty appearance" of the children and their clothes as "dirty and torn". The children's mother was described as "not looking after her children properly" and "a very dim, inadequate person". The NSPCC on that occasion offered assistance with clothing or other items for the family.

³ Letter dated 24 March 1959 NSPCC to Cork Corporation. File Ref Id.

⁴ Letter dated 7 April 1959 Cork Corporation to NSPCC. File Ref Id

⁵ Ref 18242

Approximately a year later, when the girl was 16 years of age, the NSPCC received another allegation of neglect (this time seemingly from a member of An Garda Síochána) in relation to the children of this family. A different NSPCC Inspector visited the family and described the position as follows:

“The [name] home is in a shocking state of filth, both upstairs and down stairs. The father and the two older girls share one bed and the boys the other. All in the same room. The other room upstairs is empty of furniture. The beds are without sheets, pillow covers. The covering consists of filthy rags. The girl [name] is in grave moral danger. She is associating with bad company and is having immoral associations with youths in the area. She admitted this to Sergeant [name]. Mr [Name of father] was seen by me. He agrees that this girl should be placed in care of the Good Shepherd Convent and has given me permission to take her there. He also agrees that the other children should be placed in Industrial Schools. I shall see if I can get vacancies for them”.

A permission slip signed by the father confirms his consent to these placements. The NSPCC file confirms this placement and that, within a few days of her entry to the Magdalen Laundry, all her younger siblings were admitted to Industrial Schools.

The girl in question is confirmed by the Register of the Religious Congregations as having been admitted to the Magdalen Laundry on that date, brought by “Inspector [name]” of the NSPCC. The Register records that the mother of the family was at that point “in Mental Home”. The girl remained there approximately 4 years, after which she was “taken home by parents”.

- Another case which arose in the 1970s related to a girl then aged 15.⁶ She was one of a very large family living with her parents. She was the subject of a complaint to the NSPCC by a member of An Garda Síochána. The NSPCC file said as follows:

“The girl [name] has been going on the Boats in [place] Harbour and is missing at the moment. The mother was in touch with me and requested that the girl be placed in care in her own interests. As the girl is over 15 years of age, it is impossible to have her committed to an industrial school.”

An NSPCC report later the same month on the girl states:

“the girl [name] was on the Boats in [place], in the company of prostitutes. She admitted that to me and gave me their names. The Father and Mother of the [name] girl are very concerned about their daughter and have requested me to have her placed in care. I have phoned the [Magdalen Laundry, place]. They are willing to accept her. I shall take her there in the morning”.

The Register of the relevant Magdalen Laundry confirms her admission there, brought by “ISPCC, [place]”. She remained there approximately 7 months, at which point she “left”.

67. In other cases, the NSPCC files record cases where girls who were considered by their parents to have behavioural difficulties, to be ‘out of control’ or to be in danger. In a number of these cases, the parents either requested or consented to the placement of their daughters in Magdalen Laundries by the NSPCC. Examples of such cases follow:

⁶ Ref 18605 and 18787

- One such case arose in the 1960s in relation to a 15-year old girl.⁷ The girl was living with her parents and siblings. The file records that she was

“found by the Garda in [city] on the morning of [date] about the streets. She said she had been sacked by her employer at 10.30. The Garda took her in [place] Garda Station and contacted [NSPCC] Inspector. The latter got in touch with the girl’s uncle. We made enquiries and discovered that the girl was telling us a pack of lies. I took the girl to the Good Shepherd Convent [place] and placed her in care.

I called on the child’s mother on [date- next day]. I told her about the girl’s behaviour. She agreed that she could not control her. She admitted that she was a fit person for training in the Good Shepherd Convent as she was likely to get into trouble”.

The Register of the relevant Religious Congregation confirms her admission on that date, with her entry referred by “Inspector [name, NSPCC] and her uncle [name]”. The Register records that she was “taken home by her mother” four months later. This in turn is confirmed by the NSPCC file on the matter, which includes a note “girl back home with her mother” and detail of a number of subsequent follow-up visits on the girl and her family by the NSPCC Inspector on dates after her departure from the Magdalen Laundry.

- A case also falling within this pattern from the 1960s involved a girl of only 13 years of age.⁸ A member of An Garda Síochána appears to have made the original complaint to the NSPCC regarding her. The NSPCC Report recorded as follows:

⁷ Ref 18346

⁸ Ref 18400

“The girl [name] is out of control and in moral danger. The parents are not able to make a hand of her. She has already gone down on the boats. I advised [name of mother] to have the girl placed in the care of the Good Shepherd Nuns. She said she would consider it.”

The file contains brief notes of two additional meetings of the NSPCC Inspector and a named member of An Garda Síochána- one recording that “we gave her a good talking to and advised generally” and that she was “left with mother”. Approximately a month later a note was added to the file that “Girl placed in the care of the Good Shepherd Convent [place] this date at the request of her parents”. A letter is on file, signed by both the girl’s parents, confirming their consent in the following terms: “I am agreeable to place my daughter [name] in the care of the Good Shepherd nuns”.

The Register of the relevant Magdalen Laundry records that she was admitted, aged 13, on the date in question, although her source of referral is captured as “School Inspector” in the Register rather than NSPCC Inspector. The Register confirms that she remained there for approximately one and a half years, after which time she “went home”.

- A similar case arose in the early 1970s in relation to a 15 year old girl, one of a large family, who had been the subject of a complaint to the NSPCC by a member of the Gardaí.⁹ The NSPCC Inspector’s report indicated as follows:

“The girl [name] was out of hand. She had gone away for periods, with other girls and gone on the Boats in [place]. She travelled to Belfast and Limerick. She and the other girls were

⁹ 18599

picked up by the Garda. Mr Murphy said that he could not control his daughter and requested that she be placed in the care of the Good Shepherd Convent [place]. She was taken there by me this date”.

The Register of the relevant Religious Congregation confirms that she entered the Magdalen Laundry on the noted date, recommended by a named NSPCC Inspector. However within a week, the Register records that she was “sent home by bus at [NSPCC Inspector]’s request”.

The NSPCC file confirms that at the time of the next supervision visit by the NSPCC (approximately 2 months later) that the girl was “home”.

- Another case dating to the early 1970s concerned a 16-year old girl who was also placed in a Magdalen Laundry by an NSPCC Inspector with the agreement of her family.¹⁰ However the NSPCC file also recorded

“girl could not be kept in [Magdalen Laundry] owing to her bad behaviour. She was sent home again. She was taken to the [Garda Station] this date for stealing clothes”.

This record matches that in the Register of the Magdalen Laundry, which confirms that she was sent home 2 days after admission to that institution.

Legion of Mary

68. The role of the Legion of Mary in certain State referrals in the context of probation (Chapter 9) and young women during the period of supervision following their discharge from Industrial and Reformatory School (Chapter 10)

¹⁰ Ref 18593

has already been detailed. However the Legion of Mary was also responsible for other referrals, not connected to the State, but in the context of its general work.

69. Referrals attributed to the Legion of Mary amount to 4.9% of known entries to the Magdalen Laundries. It is not possible to identify the exact proportion of these cases which might be considered State (probation or Industrial School cases) or non-State (regular referrals by the Legion of Mary in the course of its work). For this reason the statistics on the Legion of Mary are presented separately in the assessments of State and non-State referrals in Chapter 8.

70. Some of the referrals made by the Legion of Mary in the course of its ordinary work came from hostels or shelters it operated, particularly in Dublin. On the basis of available information, the full background to these cases is difficult to discern. However in light of the role of these hostels, some cases possibly related to difficulties including homelessness and in some early cases crime or prostitution.

71. Some of these entries were repeat entries, with the woman in question moving between a Legion of Mary Hostel and a Magalen Laundry on more than one occasions. Some examples of referrals by the Legion of Mary include:

- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s from a named Legion of Mary hostel. On the first occasion, she was “dismissed. Sent back to [name of hostel], very discontent”. However, she returned again to the same Magalen Laundry the following year. The duration of her stay on the second occasion is not recorded.
- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s from a named Legion of Mary hostel. The Register notes that she “left of her own request. Was glad to have the opportunity of letting her go. Influence not good”.

- A woman, age not recorded, was brought to a Magdalen Laundry by a named member of the Legion of Mary in the late 1920s. She remained there for approximately 5 years, after which she was “dismissed for striking”.
- A woman was brought to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s by “[name], Legion of Mary Hostel, [place]”. It was her second admission. She remained there approximately 5 months.
- A 23-year old woman entered a different Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s brought by a named member of the Legion. The day after her arrival she was “sent to hospital”. She returned from there to the Magdalen Laundry approximately 2 weeks later and remained there 2 months before being “sent to County Home”.
- A 21-year old woman was admitted to another Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s, referred by a named member of the Legion of Mary. She was “taken out by her sister” 18 years later.
- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s from a named Legion of Mary hostel. Four months later she was “sent to Kingstown Refuge. A bad influence”. As the Register of the Magdalen Laundry in Dun Laoghaire has not survived, it is not possible to confirm the details of her admission to or departure from there.
- A 19-year old woman was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s, “sent by” a named member of the Legion of Mary. After 5 months, she “ran away”.
- A woman was admitted to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s, referred by “Legion of Mary, Dublin”. She had “no relatives”. She “left at her own request” one day later.

- A woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s from “Legion of Mary [place]”. On an unrecorded date thereafter, she “escaped from lawn in her uniform. Not to be taken back”.
- Another woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s from a named Legion of Mary hostel. She “gave her notice, wouldn’t stay”.
- A woman was “brought by [name], Legionary, Wexford” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. The Register indicates that “her mother took her home” approximately one and a half years later.
- A woman “came from [named Legion Hostel]” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. The Register records that she was a widow. No further information is included.
- A woman entered a different Magalen Laundry in the 1950s, referred by “Legion of Mary”. She “stayed only 3 days”.
- A 45-year old woman entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s from a named Legion of Mary Hostel. She had “no relatives”. She “left at her own request after a few weeks”.
- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1960s, “brought by [name], [named Legion hostel]”. The Register records “looking for work, no place of residence, been in England”. The details of her departure are not recorded.
- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry twice in the 1970s from a named Legion of Mary hostel. On both occasions she left and returned to that hostel after approximately a month.

- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s with her referral source marked simply as “Legion of Mary”. Her departure was recorded as “went to her mother”.
- A woman, age not recorded, entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s from a named Legion of Mary hostel. After approximately 6 months she “went to work”.

The Old IRA

72. A small number of girls and women (17 in total) were during the early 1920s brought to Magdalen Laundries by “the IRA” or “the Volunteers”. All but four of these were teenagers at the time of their placement in the Laundry. The remaining four women were aged 20, 22, 23 and 50 years of age at the time of their entry. The period of time they stayed varied from one day to over 60 years. Samples of these cases are as follows:

- A 17-year old girl whose parents were dead was “brought by the IRA” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. She is recorded as having left 2 days later.
- A 15-year old girl was “brought by the IRA” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. Her mother was recorded as being “in a workhouse” at the time. Neither the duration of her stay nor the details of her departure are recorded.
- A 17-year old girl whose parents were dead was “brought by the IRA” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. After less than a week, she “left for hospital”.
- A 14-year old girl whose parents were alive was “brought by the Volunteers” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. She remained there for almost 2 years until she is recorded as having “left for home”.

- A 50-year old woman was “brought by the IRA” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. She is recorded as having left 10 days later.
- A 17-year old girl was “brought by the IRA” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. She left once for hospital, from which she returned a month afterwards. She spent another 6 months in the Magdalen Laundry before being “taken out by her parents”.
- A 17-year old girl was “brought by the IRA” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. She left the following day.
- A teenage girl was “brought by the IRA” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. Very shortly after her arrival, she is recorded as having “left for hospital”. Some months later, she returned to the Magdalen Laundry and is recorded as having remained there until her death in the 1980s.

Refugees

73. Seven refugee girls and women were placed in three different Magdalen Laundries during the 1950s. In three cases, the Registers indicate that the Red Cross made the placement, while the remaining four entries do not specify how the girls or women came to enter the institution. Samples of these cases are as follows:

- A woman identified as a refugee from a named country was “sent by the Red Cross” to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. She remained there just over two weeks before transferring to a named psychiatric hospital.
- A woman identified as a refugee from a named country entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. She left the institution over a year later, to take up employment at a named hospital.

- A woman identified in the Register as a refugee from a named country entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s and is simply recorded as having “left” less than a week later.
- A teenage girl identified as a refugee from a named country entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. It was recorded that her father was dead and that her mother was in her country of origin. After 2 years in the Magdalen Laundry she was “taken out” by a named lay person.
- A woman was brought by the Red Cross to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1950s. She is recorded as having left 4 months later, that she was “dismissed, very discontent, taken by Red Cross”.

Simon Community

74. Four girls and women were referred to two different Magdalen Laundries by the Simon Community in the 1970s. Two were teenage girls, the ages of the other two are not known. These cases were as follows:

- A girl was referred to a Magdalen Laundry by the Simon Community in the 1970s. She is recorded as having been “taken home by mother” on an unknown date thereafter.
- A girl was referred to a Magdalen Laundry by the Simon Community in the 1970s. She is recorded as having been “out every night”. The details of her departure from the institution are not recorded.
- Two teenage girls were referred to a Magdalen Laundry on the same date in the 1970s by a named officer of the Simon Community. Both are initially recorded as having “stayed 2 nights” and then “left”. One of the girls “returned” a day later, the other is recorded as having returned

three days after leaving. Both subsequently left, with the Registers recording a number of details of their subsequent lives.

Society of St. Vincent de Paul

75. Two instances of women being referred by the Society of St Vincent de Paul were also recorded in the Registers:

- A woman was brought to a Magdalen Laundry “by Vincent de Paul ladies” in the 1930s. Her age upon entry was not recorded. She remained there until her death less than four months later.
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s by “S.V. de Paul”. The date of her departure was not recorded, but her destination was – she left “to work” in a specified hospital.

Samaritans

76. One woman was recorded as having been referred to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s by the Samaritans. She left the institution of her own accord on an unrecorded date thereafter.

Other

77. A variety of referral routes were identified in the Registers which do not fit within any of the broad categories identified above. Detail on these miscellaneous routes of referrals follows.

78. A woman was recorded in one Register in the State as having been “sent” to a Magdalen Laundry during the 1960s by an official in another State. The nature of the referral is not clear from the Register, although background information is included on her separation from her husband and the country in which their children were living (the same country from which she had returned).

79. Nine girls and women appear to have been referred to three different Magdalen Laundries by a named woman at two identified Dublin hotels over a 15-year period. At least one of the women concerned had been in an industrial school at an earlier point in her life; and both she and another one of the women had been in a Legion of Mary hostel. On the basis of the information contained in the Registers, it is not possible to determine the precise circumstances in which these women were placed in Magdalen Laundries. It may be that they were employed in the hotels in which the named woman was employed; or they may have come into contact with her in some other way. Samples of some of these cases are as follows:

- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s by a named woman at an identified Dublin hotel. She remained there for 5 months.
- A woman, whose parents were dead, was referred to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s by a woman of the same name at a street address in Dublin. Her departure from the institution is recorded as having been 3 days later.
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s “sent by” the same named woman at a different Dublin hotel. She was there for less than a week before being “sent back again”.
- A woman was “sent by” the same named woman at the Dublin hotel to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s. The Register noted that she was “formerly a school child” at an identified industrial school and had also been in an identified Legion of Mary hostel. Less than a month later she was “sent back to Dublin”. A year later, now aged 18, she was “sent by” the same named woman (at that Dublin hotel) to a different Magdalen Laundry. Slightly more than 2 weeks later, she was “sent back to Dublin at own request”.

80. A married woman from a small (identified) town also appears to have referred 4 different girls or women to two different Magdalen Laundries over a 4-year period in the 1930s and 1940s. The Registers do not give information on the background circumstances in any of these cases. Again, it may be that the girls or women in question were employed by the woman or that she came into contact with them in some other way. Samples of these cases are:

- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1930s by a named woman in an identified town. She remained there for almost 3 years.
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1940s by the same named woman living at the same address ("sent by [name][address]"). She remained there for almost 8 months.

81. A number of referrals were also made by named individuals who, due to lack of information, cannot be categorised either as family members or as representatives of any particular organisation. Samples of such cases include:

- An 18 year old girl was "brought by a lady" to a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s. No further information on the girl, the duration of her stay or departure are recorded.
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1870s, having been "sent by" a named lay person (male). She was identified as "deaf and dumb" and remained in the institution until her death in the 1920s.
- A woman was brought to a Magdalen Laundry by a named lay person (female) in the 1950s. She was "dismissed" 5 months later.
- A 32-year old woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1920s, with the referral being attributed only as "sent from Dublin". Approximately a year and a half later, she "left for Dublin for treatment".

- A woman with no fixed abode entered a Magdalen Laundry in the 1970s. The Register records the name of the lay woman who referred her and the remark “wanted her kept safe till employment arranged”. She left the Magdalen Laundry two days later for a named hospital (that hospital not being in the locality of the Magdalen Laundry).
- A woman was placed in a Magdalen Laundry in the 1980s, with the referral column containing only another lay woman’s name and the phrase “(short term)”. She is recorded as having left for a named hospital (again, a hospital which was not in the locality of the Magdalen Laundry, suggesting this was for employment).

B. Summary of some views advanced by historians to explain high levels of institutionalisation in 20th century Ireland

82. Part A of this Chapter sets out the emerging patterns of referral to the Magdalen Laundries, based on the Committee’s direct analysis of the Entry Registers of the Magdalen Laundries.

83. This Part summarises some of the views of historians on possible factors and prevailing attitudes which may have contributed to the very high levels of institutionalisation which existed in Ireland throughout much of the 20th century. Some of these factors may have resulted in people admitting family members to any of a variety of institutions including Magdalen Laundries, psychiatric hospitals, Mother and Baby Homes, County or City Homes, and so on.

84. The following summary of views proposed by historians relate to institutionalisation in its broadest form, including historic institutions such as Industrial and Reformatory Schools, psychiatric hospitals, County and City Homes, Mother and Baby Homes as well as Magdalen Laundries.

85. It should be noted that the Committee neither supports nor endorses any particular views or theories contained in prior historical research. The following summary of such theories is provided solely by way of context. In relation to the Magdalen Laundries, in particular, these views and theories have been proposed without the advantage, which the Committee had, of access to the records of the Magdalen Laundries from 1900 onwards.

86. At the simplest level, three key factors which have been suggested by historians as contributing to institutionalisation in 20th century Ireland are:

- Financial considerations;
- Inheritance of land; and
- Questions of reputation, respectability and morality.

87. The literature to date suggests that financial considerations arose in the context or from the possibility that families may have used institutions (including Magdalen Laundries) as a place to house and provide for family members in times of poverty or destitution, or to provide for disabled members of the family who could not contribute financially to the household.

88. In this regard and referring to psychiatric hospitals, it has been suggested that such institutions:

“reduced the financial burden that problematic members placed on certain farming families (the ward easing the pressure on the meagre homestead), while simultaneously supporting the rural economy by providing opportunities for steady employment”.¹¹

¹¹ O’Sullivan and O’Donnell, *Coercive Confinement in Post-Independence Ireland* at 259-160

89. Maguire has also identified poverty (including urban poverty) as affecting a “significant proportion of the Irish population” until at least the 1950s¹² and as “the predominant factor in the committal of children to industrial schools”.¹³

She indicates that:

“they were committed, by and large, because their parents could not afford to care for them or because their parents neglected them according to the standards of the middle-class system and middle-class ISPCC inspectors (typically the neglect could be traced directly to poverty rather than to malice)”.¹⁴

90. The argument typically made to explain land as a factor in institutionalisation is that an alternative outlet was required to deal with additional family members and thereby allow for less complex inheritance of small landholdings. McCullagh notes that:

“It is certainly part of Irish ‘folklore’ that the use of mental hospitals to dispose of ‘surplus’ children was an important resource in the preservation of the inheritance system in rural Ireland. A son, inheriting from the father and bringing a wife into a farm which could only offer a subsistence income, may not have been pleased with the presence of his unmarried and ageing brothers and sisters in the household. Commitment to mental hospital may have seemed an attractive solution in these circumstances”.¹⁵

91. Clear also refers to psychiatric hospitals and Magdalen Laundries as giving “families a chance to dump unwanted members”.¹⁶

¹² Moira Maguire, *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland* at 19 et seq

¹³ Moira Maguire, *supra* at 42

¹⁴ Moira Maguire, *Precarious Childhood in Post-Independence Ireland* at 19 et seq

¹⁵ McCullagh, cited by O’Sullivan and O’Donnell, *supra*, at 268

¹⁶ Caitriona Clear, *Social Change and everyday life in Ireland 1850-1922* at 122

92. Reputational considerations and questions of respectability raise a broader range of issues, including a sense of shame and desire to hide family members who displayed a difference - whether that be through physical disability, intellectual disability, or due to behaviour considered unacceptable at the time.
93. The essential argument made on this score by historians is “that Irish families utilised certain institutions to manage their deviant or troublesome members”.¹⁷
94. The phrase ‘the child in the back room’, quite alien today, would have been immediately understandable to those of previous generations and conveyed a multitude of meanings – anything from the unacknowledged child born outside marriage; to the child with a physical disability hidden away from sight of the community; to the so-called ‘duine le Dia’ – a person with intellectual disabilities.
95. Unacceptable behaviour, most memorably described as those “deemed troubled or troublesome”¹⁸, could cover a multitude, but would for long periods have included those considered to have offended against the morality or social teaching of the Catholic Church, including those engaging in sexual activity or becoming pregnant outside marriage.
96. In that regard, Rhattigan argues that “single motherhood was clearly a feature of Irish life during the first half of the twentieth century, but Irish society was deeply intolerant of unmarried mothers and their illegitimate children”.¹⁹

¹⁷ Id at 267

¹⁸ Elizabeth Malcolm, Ireland’s Crowded Madhouses: the Institutional confinement of the insane in Nineteenth and Twentieth-Century Ireland in Porter and Wright (eds) *The Confinement of the Insane* at 332

¹⁹ Cliona Rattigan, “What else could I do? Single mothers and infanticide, Ireland 1900-1950 at 9

97. It is probably fair to say that for many of the decades covered by this Report, Church, State and family views on morality in Ireland were mutually self-reinforcing. A person deviating from the prevailing norms ran the risk of ending up in a religious-run institution. While such institutions could legitimately claim to be a charitable outreach to the marginalised, they were at the very same time a powerful reinforcer of those self-same moral norms. It has been suggested that the very existence of such institutions was a visible reminder of the possible fate that awaited those who did not or could not conform. Underpinning this, perhaps, was a web of embedded negative attitudes which evinced a strong antipathy to mental or physical disability, as well as to motherhood outside of marriage.

98. Some of the provisions of the 1917 Code of Canon Law of the Catholic Church (repealed in 1983) reveal the extent of rather primitive attitudes to illegitimacy, epilepsy and disability during some of this period.²⁰ However, these views became increasingly untenable as the century progressed. The State abolished the status of illegitimacy in 1987²¹ and attitudes to disability and mental health changed dramatically, particularly towards the latter end of the twentieth century.

99. In relation to the specific question of unmarried mothers, it should also be acknowledged that not all people or families turned their back on family members who engaged in sexual activity outside marriage, and that not all unmarried mothers gave their children up for adoption because of lack of support or otherwise. Maguire notes that:

²⁰ The 1917 Pio-Benedictine Code of Canon Law in English, translation curated by Dr. Edward N. Peters Ignatius Press, San Francisco 2001 @pp341-342. Canon 984 dealing with what are termed "Irregularities" for admission to Holy Orders says

"The following are irregular by defect:

1° Illegitimate ones.....

2° Those impaired in body who cannot safely because of the deformity or decently because of the deformity, conduct ministry of the altar.....

3° Those who are or were epileptics, insane, or possessed by the devil....."

²¹ Status of Children Act 1987

“while there was a general social censure of unwed motherhood and illegitimacy, nonetheless thousands of unmarried mothers kept their children, loved them, and raised them as best they could”²²;

and further that

“[t]he received wisdom in twentieth-century Irish history is that all unmarried mothers were shunted into institutions – either magdalen asylums or mother and baby homes – and their babies taken from them and sent to institutions themselves, boarded out in foster homes in Ireland, or sent to the United States for adoption. This perception is far from accurate, however”.²³

100. Rather, she suggests that in many cases:

“individual families [made] decisions, based on their personal aspirations to respectability or a normal life for themselves, about whether the children would be rejected or accepted”.²⁴

101. O’Sullivan and O’Donnell have recently studied what they term the “stubbornly high” rate of institutionalisation in Ireland until the 1970s and examined the various explanations (including those noted above) suggested by other historians for the patterns of institutionalisation in industrial schools, Mother and Baby Homes, Magdalen Laundries and psychiatric hospitals respectively as well as prisons.²⁵ They have put forward a theory that seeks to build on and unite earlier theories and suggest that:

“to comprehend the rate and pattern of institutional usage we must think in terms of how Church, state and family influenced, and

²² Maguire, *supra*, at 49

²³ Maguire, *supra* at 50

²⁴ Maguire, *supra* at 105

²⁵ O’Sullivan and O’Donnell, *Coercive Confinement in Post-Independence Ireland* at 250

responded to, the social changes associated with a reconfiguration of the rural economy”.²⁶

102. Their theory is based on the “dominance of the stem family”, which was:

“a family that exists generation after generation on the same holding through a mechanism that in each generation sheds from the farm all children except the heir and the principle of patrilineal and impartible inheritance”.²⁷

103. Contrasting this with the earlier system of sub-division of land among multiple heirs, they argue that:

“the emerging stem family ... was in turn receptive to the changes taking place in the Catholic Church in Ireland, which stressed sexual prudery and familial obedience. ... In other words the Catholic Church reflected and reinforced the underlying values and beliefs of rural Ireland rather than imposing a new normative system”.²⁸

104. Inheritance along these lines would result in one child inheriting the family farm. Citing Hannon and Commins, they argue that economic survival of the farm required:

“a mechanism to manage those members of the family who were surplus to economic requirements in addition to mechanisms to deal with anyone who threatened the model of impartible inheritance”.²⁹

105. Accordingly, they suggest that so-called surplus siblings “in a rough descending order” either:

²⁶ Id at 269

²⁷ Id at 269-270, citing Rosemary Harris “Theory and Evidence: The Irish Stem Family and Field Data”

²⁸ Id at 270, citing Eugene Hynes “The Great Hunger and Irish Catholicism” and Joe Lee “The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918”.

²⁹ Id at 272, citing DF Hannan and P Commins “The significance of small-scale landholders in Ireland’s socio-economic transformation” in Goldthorpe and Whelan (eds), *The Development of Industrial Society in Ireland*

- emigrated;
- “the more fortunate females” received a dowry to marry or enter religious life;
- “the less fortunate” females entered domestic service;
- were educated for employment in the public service or Church structures;
- “remained on the farm in a celibate subordinate role to the heir”; or
- “were institutionalised in the extensive network of psychiatric hospitals and other sites of coercive confinement that dotted rural Ireland”.³⁰

106. Psychiatric hospitals were in this regard termed “a favoured repository”. O’Sullivan and O’Donnell rhetorically ask “What better place for the supernumerary spinster or bachelor (or indeed in time for the ageing and unproductive former matriarch or patriarch)?”³¹

107. But the challenge posted by women giving birth outside marriage is suggested to be somewhat different - this “threatened the viability of the family farm by disrupting the system of inheritance and by lessening the likelihood of marriage”. Accordingly they suggest that “raw economics rather than a concern with sexual morality” required both mother and child to be “managed”.³²

108. O’Sullivan and O’Donnell link this economic concern with institutionalisation of women giving birth outside marriage as well as fostering, adoption or institutionalisation of the children born outside marriage. But they argue that children born *within* marriage were also subject to a similar economic analysis:

³⁰ Id at 270-271

³¹ Id at 273

³² Id

“Children born within wedlock, but whose mental or physical disability rendered them unproductive on the family farm were regularly deposited in specialist institutions”.³³

109. Built in to the theory is its demise, as economic development provided opportunities for employment and thereby undercut the “economic necessity to remove surplus members”³⁴ of rural families, including “the pressure to find institutional outlets ... for children who were seen as economically disadvantageous”.³⁵ Accordingly – and in addition to factors such as social welfare provision, advances in medical treatment for psychiatric illness and so on – the suggestion made by O’Sullivan and O’Donnell is that broad changes to the rural economy from the 1970s onwards had a key influence on reduction of the levels of institutionalisation in Ireland.

110. It was not the task of the Committee or of this Report to come to a view on these broad historical debates, or to endorse any overall theory on the factors which could have led to the placement of girls and women in Magdalen Laundries by their families, priests, other non-State organisations or indeed self-referrals. As explained in more detail at paragraph 85, the above views and theories of historians are provided solely as context and are neither supported nor endorsed by the Committee.

³³ Id at 273

³⁴ Id at 275

³⁵ Id at 275-276