

Magdalene women deserve a fair, non-adversarial and transparent compensation package

As the Cabinet prepares to make an apology to Magdalene survivors on Tuesday, the question on everyone's mind is how redress can be provided to these women, who every day still suffer the effects of their incarceration and forced, unpaid labour.

Justice for Magdalenes (JFM) is in agreement with the London Irish Women Survivors Support Group and Magdalene Survivors Together that a package needs to be prepared for these women, that includes pensions, healthcare and counselling, housing services and advice.

In addition, we are also in agreement that lump sum compensation must be paid to the women, to compensate for the effects of the abuse that they suffered in the laundries. JFM devised its reparations scheme at the behest of the Minister for Justice, and in consultation with surviving women in Ireland, the UK and the US, and also with Councillor Sally Mulready and Phyllis Morgan of the Irish Women's Survivors' Support Group in London. JFM submitted its scheme on 14 October 2011 and have consistently sought meetings to discuss it further with the Minister.

JFM proposes a benchmark figure of €100,000 lump sum compensation for Magdalene survivors, in addition to a package of services including pensions and lost wages. The benchmark figure reflects that women are foregoing important legal rights to go before the courts. JFM is most concerned that any government package should not continue to take advantage of the acute financial and other needs of surviving women.

The women deserve a fair, non-adversarial and transparent compensation package.

According to the recommendation of the UN Committee Against Torture (UNCAT), survivors must "obtain" redress and "have an enforceable right to compensation."

JFM's proposals are in line with UNCAT and the Irish Human Rights Commission, that Magdalene survivors must "obtain redress" for the human rights abuses that they suffered.

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