

Statement by An Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council  
Councillor David Gilroy  
on the  
Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes

As Cathaoirleach of Meath County Council and on behalf of the elected members, I wish to apologise unreservedly to the girls, young women and their babies, the survivors and those now deceased and their relatives for the pain and suffering caused while resident at the Dunboyne Mother and Baby Home.

An Taoiseach Michéal Martin T.D. issued a formal apology on behalf of the State to former residents of the Mother and Baby Home and County Homes institutions, following the publication of the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes, (on January 12<sup>th</sup>).

The Government now intends to give detailed consideration to the Report over the coming months with a view to developing a comprehensive Government Action Plan to address eight specific themes to include:

- A survivor-centred approach;
- Apology;
- Access to Personal Information;
- Archiving and Databases;
- Education and Research;
- Memorialisation;
- Restorative Recognition;
- Dignified Burial.

In 1954, Meath County Council partnered with five neighbouring local authorities (Louth, Longford, Monaghan, Cavan and Westmeath) to establish the Mother and Baby Home in Dunboyne, which operated from 1955 until it closed in 1991. Due to the location of the home, Meath County Council was the lead authority in the setting up of this institution and this is set out in some detail in the published report.

The establishment of the home, known as Ard Mhuire, was the only new institution established in the State for unmarried mothers in response to a Department of Health circular issued to each city and county manager and each public assistance authority in 1952. The circular was quite specific about the role of such institutions.

Meath County Council played a central role in the acquisition of the house and the negotiation with the Good Shepherd Sisters for the establishment and running of a mother and baby home in Dunboyne. This is outlined in the Report, which also sets out how the Council was involved in the maintenance of the home, its financial arrangements and many of the decision-making functions at Ard Mhuire, in the early years before the establishment of the Health Boards in 1970, when the North-Eastern Health Board took over from Meath County Council as the relevant health authority.

The Report outlines that a total of 3,156 mothers were resident in Dunboyne over the period. It was not intended that there would be any births there, but eight babies are recorded as being born there and 1,148 of the children born to Dunboyne resident mothers spent time there.

Many of the inspections carried out by the Department of Health while the facility was operational and a number of the testimonies from former residents point to a home that was well kept, it was clean and the residents were well looked after physically. However, there were also concerns, and complaints outlined in the Report, about the adoption process.

Meath County Council acknowledges its role in the establishment and operation of the Dunboyne Mother and Baby Home. The Council apologises to the residents, their children, their families and the relatives of those who resided in the Dunboyne Home and who suffered or were mis-treated while resident there, when the home was under the control of the Council from 1955 to 1970.

The Council also recognises that it had an association with the Castlepollard Mother and Baby Home in Westmeath, which operated from 1935 to 1971. Meath County Council met the cost of accommodating girls and women from Meath at the Castlepollard Home. The Council notes that one of its Councillors wrote to the Department of Local Government in 1945 asking that it set up a Commission of Inquiry into conditions in Castlepollard but that this ultimately did not result in any significant change. Again, the Council wishes to apologise to the survivors and the families of those who were resident in Castlepollard.

In September 2016, the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes contacted Meath County Council in relation to records concerning the Mother and Baby Home in Dunboyne. Given the period under consideration by the Commission, historical

records in relation to the administration of Meath County Council are archived in the County Library and the Commission was given access to all available material.

Meath County Council will actively participate with Government in furthering the development of the Government Action Plan as it relates to local government and as it relates to county Meath.

Meath County Council commits to supporting local measures that form part of the suite of follow-up actions, for example, in relation to memorialisation and access to archives and records.

As Cathaoirleach, and with the agreement of the elected Council, I will write to the Government requesting that it brings forward, without delay, the legislation required to enable survivors to access their records and personal information, which will be an important step in addressing the concerns expressed by the residents in Dunboyne about the adoption process.

While the Council's apology cannot undo the past, it is acknowledgement of our deep regret that the girls and young women were failed by the State and a recognition that the Council was part of that failure.

**Ends.**