
From: Mark Vincent Healy <markvincenthealy@gmail.com>

Date: Sunday 5 March 2023 at 13:04

To: Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD, "Newcombe, Derek"

Cc: An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD, Tánaiste, Micheal Martin TD, "Minister for Communications, Climate Action and Environment", Eamon Ryan TD, Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee TD, Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, Roderic O'Gorman TD, Minister for Finance, Pascal Donohoe TD, Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD, Simon Coveney TD, "President Michael D. Higgins", Michael McGrath TD, Members of the Oireachtas, Barry Andrews MEP, Ciarán Cuffe MEP, Clare Daly MEP, Frances Fitzgerald MEP, Luke 'Ming' Flanagan MEP, Chris MacManus MEP, Mairead McGuinness MEP, Maria Walsh MEP, Deirdre Clune MEP, Billy Kelleher MEP, Seán Kelly MEP, Grace O'Sullivan MEP, Mick Wallace MEP, Archbishop Jude Thaddeus Okolo - Papal Nuncio to Ireland, Archbishop Eamon Martin Office - President IEC, Archbishop Dermot Farrell - Vice-President IEC, Archbishop Kieran O'Reilly - Episcopal Secretary IEC, Bishop John Fleming - Finance Secretary IEC, "Fr Martin Kelly, Provincial CSSp - AMRI Chair", Archbishop Diarmuid Martin

Subject: 230305 - Commission to Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Primary and Post-Primary Schools in Ireland

[Taoiseach Micheál Martin TD](#), Reference: DOT-TM-14827-2022

[Minister for Education, Norma Foley TD](#), Reference: DES-CU-04237-2022

[Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee TD](#), Reference: DJE-MO-10586-2022

230305 - Commission to Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Primary and Post-Primary Schools in Ireland

Sunday, 5 March 2023

Dear Minister Foley,

Following my meeting with Minister for Education, Ms Norma Foley TD, Department of Education Secretary General, Ms Bernie McNally, Special Advisor to the Minister, Ms Áine Doyle, and Principal Officer of the Residential Institutions Redress Unit, Ms Emer Doyle on Wednesday 23 November 2022, there have been repeated calls for the commencement of a Taoiseach and Tánaiste promised survivor-led inquiry into the culture which gave rise to a level of child sexual abuse which has grown by over 175% alone in reported cases in Spiritan Colleges over the last decade.

The time taken over such a weighty consideration might well be credited to Minister Foley, her office and that of the Cabinet in wishing and hoping to 'get it right'. So many lives are on the line where urgency and due consideration require a balance.

However, there is an imperative where the time for due consideration must join with the stakeholders in government and the religious orders, the experts, and most importantly the survivors and their families to forge a safe pathway to 'get it right' and to 'get it done'.

The profile of the survivor population of child sexual abuse in primary and post-primary schools in Ireland is one of a rapidly ageing population. Perhaps Professor Mary Codd of UCD might be able to assist the government in assessing the impact of any further delay in not addressing this issue.

Survivors aged 84, 82 and 74 known to me from three separate schools, exemplify the urgency in addressing this issue. Survivors known to me who have left this life in their 50s and 60s, exemplify the urgency in addressing this issue. Sadly, delay to a dying population is an unacceptable additional burden on those calling for a just, compassionate and swift resolution to their plight spanning a lifetime from the tender ages of 8 or 9.

It is an indictment against Ireland, and all it represents and holds dear in its children, that victims have not received the personal acknowledgement and appropriate action, in a survivor population experience from 8 to 80 that has largely been forgotten, dismissed and discarded.

Of course, there were earlier opportunities to have rallied 'first responders' to attend the crashed, smashed and broken lives of children strewn across Ireland in successive plane crashes of abuse. Decades have passed and the state has not addressed the scale of child sexual abuse known to it over all that time. The decade of campaigning to 1999 by survivors of child sexual abuse in primary and post-primary schools was swept aside in 2002 with Michael Woods' exclusion of non-residential child sexual abuse in our public and private, primary and post-primary schools. Another two decades have passed and we find ourselves on the eve of an inquiry to lead to an acknowledgement that will largely be a posthumous one.

To have lived a life tormented from the start, and left this world never knowing any peace of it, is as much part of the culture which failed to protect those children as the culture which allowed such evil to prosper for all those decades. How can one even begin to say sorry to the lives who endured such torment, to the lives of those families who witnessed such torment in their loved ones.

In many ways, the response is already late, far too late, for those no longer with us, but we can make amends and 'do right' by those who remain. In many ways, it is the only conscionable and compassionate act available to a tardy response by a church and state to those victims still with us, who deserved far better, if we are not a nation that ought to collectively hang our heads in shame for such failures to our own, to our own children.

There is redemption doing what is right, doing the 'right thing'. There is an opportunity for forgiveness, reconciliation and peace in doing the 'right thing'. Doing the 'right thing' is long overdue but it is the only thing which can quell the rage, the hurt, the pain of violations of a child intensified by not doing so. Countless children's lives could have been changed had the considerations of reputational preservation, false arguments of saving the many for the sacrifice of a few, fears of financial ruin stymie and stall stepping forward, in doing the 'right thing'.

I had reason to recall a story from my own research and enquiries which led me to conversing with 12 boys, contemporaries of mine in Africa when I was a boy. Their example ought to be factored into any response on what 'doing the right thing' means.

[Twelve Jurors to Justice, Twelve Apostles to Truth](#)

My convicted abuser was transferred to Africa following a complaint raised against him in 1973, issued by a GP acting for five families whose boys had been sexually abused by him. The Principal of the school conferred with the Provincial of the congregation back then and arrangements were made to have him transferred to Africa where he was assigned to another boy's school. Unfortunately, sadly and not unexpectedly, my abuser was to continue his predation of young boys at that school in Africa.

I had reason to recall this story to a subsequent holder of the office of Principal of my old school. The day after our meeting that story remained on my mind possibly because the Principal remarked on it or just because I might have need to tell it to you. In any event, the image that stayed in my mind was that of 12 boys. I so want to meet them one day. The 12 boys were sixth form boys in their parlance, sixth year students in ours. Although they themselves were not the victims of the sexual abuse outbreak in the school, they were enraged by it and thought to protest such vile and evil abuse of their fellow first form boys whom they addressed as their 'brothers'.

The 12 boys, borders at the school, mostly from well to do families, some were bright and had received scholarships to attend the prestigious school and perhaps risked far more where they thought to carry out a protest which they decided to execute under cover of darkness. They devised a plan to highlight the gross criminal behaviour in drawing images of what wickedness was being perpetrated on their 'brothers' in the first form.

The moment of their courage, their moment to speak out against the vile treatment of their younger 'brothers' in the first form was not in scheming to protest, or the drawing of lewd images on the school walls at night of what the first form boys were subjected to, but when asked in an assembly, convened in a fit of outrage the following morning, to step forward if they had been the culprits.

They each stepped forward with conviction, some risking more than public humiliation but their future, in twelve decisions that compelled them to do the right thing.

Indeed, if others had done the 'right thing' in Ireland, these boys would never have known of this trouble.

Like twelve jurors to justice, or twelve apostles to truth, the twelve borders from the sixth form stepped forward. They risked their lives, their futures. They were in their graduating year with

hopes of university, a life to make their families proud, and serve those less fortunate as were their most famous past pupils went to do from Christ the King College in Bo, Sierra Leone.

They cast their lot with the shame of their younger 'brothers', risking reputations and bright futures for which they had worked and studied hard to grasp in the opportunity of an education.

They were punished by being expelled from the school for gross behaviour contrary to the ethos and values espoused by the college. The brouhaha which followed commuted the punishment to having to find accommodation off campus but they were permitted to complete their final year studies in preparation for university. It was grossly unfair. The perpetrator was not brought to task.

Those 12 boys didn't risk their reputations, they established them. It was the right time as they were emerging to assume their adult life, equipped with 'values' that the best of educators could only dream of for their students.

When the Irish government decides what it is actually going to do to address the much delayed and long overdue response to child sexual abuse in primary and post-primary schools in Ireland, I would ask them to take a leaf out of the example of 12 boys from Africa who risked everything for their 'brothers'. Can the government do anything less? Can we do anything less?

A Way Forward

There is a way forward in a three-strand approach.

1. The first strand is the establishment of an immediate independent inclusive inquiry into the 'scale' and 'culture' of child sexual abuse in schools in Ireland over decades, where the welfare of children was ignored by the State over those decades prior to 1991 and 1992 for primary and post-primary schools respectively.
2. The second strand is the review of the eight year old Ex Gratia Payment Scheme criteria which clearly needs to be reviewed as any prohibition to any applicant cannot be enforced under the absurd notion that an applicant had taken legal action against the State prior to 1 July 2021. 'Prior litigation' is simply not valid.
3. The third strand in dealing with the scandal of child sexual abuse in schools, is the need to establish end of live support and provision, consistent and commensurate with their burdens, caused by their abuse in childhood. These consideration involve gold medical cards and additional top-ups to their state pension payments as provided to the Magdalene Laundries survivors and to be provided to the survivors of the Mother and Baby Homes, and those in Redress.

The strands are concurrent, so for example, strand two, which establishes acknowledgement of individual cases, can be processed by the State Claims Agency under appropriate criteria to be reviewed and re-evaluated. This must be addressed as a matter of urgency, meeting the needs of acknowledgment, apology and action in appropriate reparations to be made promptly and long before the completion of action one in issuing a report on the culture which gave rise to such criminal abuse of children. The intention or goal of strand one is to ensure one remains vigilant against any resurgence of such a criminal culture in future, and bolster child protection standards to be more robust. Strand three must also commence immediately as the age profile of the survivor population clearly dictates.

I was 46 when I suffered a mental health breakdown caused by my childhood experiences. I am now 63 and don't realistically expect that an inquiry will deliver its finding and report before I am 66, which will mark 20 years on my endeavours to seek justice, compassion and resolution for me and my fellow survivors and their families.

State compensation has been denied me, despite holding a conviction of one of my abusers, despite being abused by first time abusers and so denied fulfilling the 'prior complaint' criteria,

despite seeking to apply for compensation twice. The first in 2017 where applications were closed pending a judicial review by Justice Iarlaith O'Neill in my wishing to join with the Creagh Lane applicants who also could not produce a 'prior complaint' but were compensated eventually. The second time I applied was following the 2021 announcement, predicated on a 'prior litigation' condition. If I have suffered these obstacles I know I am not the only one. These are clearly issues which must be addressed and removed as clear examples of injustice and lack of compassion towards those who were failed as students in the public and private, primary and post-primary schools in Ireland.

Whatever comes of any announcement regarding a much-needed public inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse in Primary and Post-Primary Schools in Ireland, may it proceed with swift action that incorporates the dignity, justice and compassion due those children failed for decades in coming to their rescue.

I will finish with words from an interview I had with former Taoiseach, Mr Bertie Ahern, who issued the State Apology on 11 May 1999 to children abused and failed by the state he said 20 years later:

"what we dealt with was a part of the issue, what needs to be dealt with is the totality of it" - Mr Bertie Ahern, former Taoiseach, <https://bit.ly/3Anns2e> | 26 April 2019.

I look forward to moving forward with the efforts of all of good will in addressing this horror inflicted on the children of Ireland in our schools.

Yours sincerely,

Mark-Vincent Healy

Some References:

[Former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern:](#)

Photo Mr Bertie Ahern, Former Taoiseach of Ireland (1997-2008) and Mark Vincent Healy (Council of Survivors): <https://bit.ly/2OnOp6L>
Audio recording made by me of Mr Bertie Ahern on 26 April 2019: <https://bit.ly/2sjVpAE>
Audio Transcript: <https://bit.ly/35BAK9B>
Video recording made by me of Bertie Ahern on 26 April 2019: <https://bit.ly/3Anns2e>

[Past Emails:](#)

17 Nov 2022 missive calling for IMMEDIATE INDEPENDENT INQUIRY: <https://bit.ly/3gjV1v1>



Mark-Vincent Healy - Marc Uinseann ÓhÉalaighthe
Survivor Campaigner seeking 'Rescue Services' and 'Safe Space Provisioning' for survivors of clerical child sexual abuse
Founder of Council of Survivors | Member of RISN | Member of ECA
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Articles: <http://www.thejournal.ie/author/mark-vincent-healy/>
<http://ncronline.org/person/mark-vincent-healy>

CCSA Report on C.S.Sp. by Mark Vincent Healy - <https://bit.ly/2Oobdhj> - published 4th September 2012

Here are some of my media involvements during the Pope's Visit in August 2018 – [CNN](#) | [Al Jazeera](#) | [Washington Post](#) | [BBC](#) | [ABC Australia](#) | [CTA Canada](#) | [NCR](#) | [Deutsche Welle](#) | [Irish Independent](#) | [Irish Times](#) | [Irish Examiner](#) | [BishopsAccountability.org](#) | [Rete L'Abuso Italy](#) | etc