

**An Roinn Sláinte**  
Department of Health  
Secretary General



Ms Éilis Fallon  
Committee Secretariat  
Committee of Public Accounts  
Leinster House  
Dublin 2

7 January 2020

**Our Ref:** QC2019/22610  
**Your Ref:** PAC32-I-1740

Dear Ms Fallon,

I refer to your correspondence of 17 December regarding issues raised at a meeting of the Public Accounts Committee held on 5 December 2019, where the Committee requested an update on investigations into the 'Grace' case.

For your convenience, I am attaching a briefing note at Appendix 1.

I trust that this satisfies the Secretariat's requirements.

Yours sincerely,

*Jim Breslin*  
Secretary General

### Appendix I

#### Farrelly Commission of Investigation – information for the Public Accounts Committee (PAC Ref: PAC32-I-1740)

The Commission of Investigation (Certain matters relative to a disability service in the South East and related matters), the Farrelly Commission, was established to investigate the care and protection of “Grace” (pseudonym) and others in a former foster home in the South East, which has been the subject of abuse allegations. The Farrelly Commission is a statutory Commission of Investigation and is independent in undertaking its functions under the legislation and its Terms of Reference.

The first phase of the Commission’s work is to investigate the role of public authorities in the care and protection of Grace, who resided with a former foster family in the South East of Ireland between 1989 and 2009. The second phase of the Commission’s work will relate to the care of other individuals who resided with the former foster family along with matters related to protected disclosures and those who made them. This work will take into account the facts established through phase one of its work and the scope of any further investigations. Phase two will commence following consideration of the phase one final report and the Commission’s written statement on the scope of its further investigations.

The Minister for Health granted the Farrelly Commission a further twelve-month time extension on 13 May 2019 to allow it to complete its phase 1 investigations and produce a final report on this work. The Commission’s request for a further twelve-month extension was on the basis of the scope of the phase 1 investigations, the volume of documentation for consideration in respect of periods of 20 to 40 years and witness considerations (including legislative requirements in relation to fair procedures). The Commission stated that considerable progress had been made in the mandated investigations to date and that it anticipated that “the results of these investigations will provide a true and sufficiently detailed account of the actual facts behind the concerns raised in the terms of reference”.

The Commission has been advised that the Minister for Health considers the extension as final and expects its phase 1 report to be provided by **15 May 2020**.

The Commission provided its sixth interim report to the Department on 15 November 2019. It sets out the Commission's progress since the submission of its fifth Interim Report on 5 April 2019 and a summary of the further hearings it intends to hold and its plan for the dissemination of draft material to relevant parties. The Commission’s interim reports are available on the Department of Health’s website <https://www.gov.ie/en/collection/8bbdc7-the-farrelly-commission-of-investigation-certain-matters-relative-to/>