

**Right of Place Second Chance Tuesday 17th October 2023, Committee Room 2, LH 2000,
Leinster House.**

Introduction

Right of Place Second Chance welcomes the General Scheme of Supports for Survivors of Residential Institutional Abuse Bill 2023 which aims to provide for the provision of supports to survivors of residential institutional abuse,

We are Ireland's largest, organisation which support and advocate for Survivors and their families of Institutional Childhood Abuse. We provide support across Ireland, the UK and further afield. Our aim is to help improve the lives of those who suffered in institutions as children, and many who continue to suffer in adult life. Our research gives us an insight into survivors' challenges, their lived experience, and the inequalities they experience.

In 2014 Right of Place Second Chance commissioned research entitled "The Voice of Survivors" which recorded the views of 106 individual survivors pertaining to their long-term needs. Right of Place Second Chance also convened two focus groups with a total of 29 survivors to ascertain their specific needs, alongside one consultation meeting with the Irish Women's Survivors Support Network, who support 550 survivors, and the Coventry Irish Centre, who offer support to 350 survivors.

A general recognition, acceptance and understanding of the adverse effects that institutional childhood abuse has on the lives of survivors, the amount of existing academic literature exploring the survivor specific community remains wholly inadequate. One of our key findings, established over the years of offering support services, is the urgent requirement of a robust and fully comprehensive review of the long-term care afforded to survivors of institutional abuse.

Right of Place Second Chance have called on the government to implement policy change and to make a genuine commitment to improving the lives of survivors of institutional abuse and their families through meaningful long term-oriented supports.

We have requested on the Irish Government to:

1. Healthcare: The granting of the HAA Medical card to some extent will assist ongoing medical challenges facing survivors today allowing them less apprehension to live their remaining years with health supports particularly considering their age profile.
2. State Pension: Offer survivors automatic entitlement to the State Pension (Contributory) upon reaching pensionable age.
3. Social Housing: Giving precedence to survivors regarding allocation of social housing would recognise the adverse effects of their institutionalisation and abuse as children, which has, led to low levels of home ownership and homelessness. The housing inequality experienced by survivors must be recognised and amended.
4. Education: Provide access to funding for education and training for survivors and family dependents, many survivors want to go back to education regardless of age as they lacked education while incarcerated in Industrial Schools. Many are typically from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, education is required to break the cycle of poverty, which was in part caused by institutionalisation and physical and emotional abuse.

What survivors seek, and deserve, is justice, ongoing recognition of their long-standing pain and suffering, not merely the implementation of wholly ineffective short-term measures. It is also of critical importance to survivors that the lifelong negative impact institutionalisation has had on their lives and the lives of their families is fully respected. Their healthcare, housing and pensionable needs have not currently been guaranteed for the remainder of their lives.

The governments adopted process of recognising the varying ways in which survivors are disadvantaged and attempting to address this disadvantage through the implantation of short-sighted, monetary measures has been clearly wholly ineffective. Survivors continue to struggle to adapt with daily living in society while carrying the weight of childhood abuse which has irreparably affected their mental and physical health.

Conclusion

We acknowledge that no Government can change what happened to the survivors, but they can help to change survivors' futures and that of their families or survivors will continue to feel that their needs are unmet and their suffering set aside.

And now we at Right of Place Second Chance welcome and look forward to this new Bill and we will ensure that survivors are assisted in accessing these new phases of supports and entitlements.

Thank you,

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Right of Place Second Chance