

**Survivors
(North West)
2020-2021**

Charity Number 102882
Date Registered 18/08/15

About us

Survivors (North West) is a Support and Advocacy organisation established to assist Victims and Survivors of Historical Institutional Abuse who suffered abuse as children while "in care" in residential homes and Institutions in Northern Ireland. The group, representing Victims and Survivors from the North West was originally part of a province wide organisation that was formed in 2009 seeking an Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse. The Northern Ireland Assembly agreed to hold an Inquiry into Historical Institutional Abuse commencing in 2013. Survivors (North West) became an autonomous organisation with its own constitution in December 2014 and applied for and was granted Charity Status by the Northern Ireland Charity Commission in August 2015. Until funding through the Small Grants Scheme under the then Office of the First and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) the group had a very small budget raised through voluntary donations from members and supporters. We now receive an annual funding from The Executive Office of €10,000 per year. We do no other fundraising. This funding is subject to renewal at the discretion of The Executive Office (TEO). Because of COVID and Lockdown in 2020 there were limited opportunities for the group to spend the full allocation so we received the first instalment of €5000 from the Executive Office. Survivors (North West) meets on a weekly basis at the WAVE Trauma Centre in Bishop Street on a Friday, between 10.00am and 1.00pm It is a casual drop-in service, where members can call in for information, updates, social time, catch up conversation and to draw on the services provided by WAVE, to seek Welfare Rights Advice from Advice NI, whose representative is available every two weeks. On any given week attendance can be between 10 and 20 members. Refreshments, Tea, Coffee, Sandwiches are available. It is well used as many of our members live alone so it is an opportunity to socialise as well as having experienced staff to deal with any issues or queries they may have.

COVID 19

Our last full meeting was in the WAVE Centre on March 20th 2020, the following week the COVID 19 Emergency struck and preventing all meetings and gatherings. This happened just over a week from the Historical Institutional Abuse Redress Process was due to start accepting applications. The First and Deputy First Ministers announced that the Redress Process would open for applications on the 31st March 2020. The Executive Office had prepared us for the announcement a few weeks earlier. But they had originally envisioned an online process which they believed would be straight forward. We had been working with civil servants at The Executive Office, David Sterling, Head of the Civil Service (HOCS), the newly appointed Interim Advocate, Brendan McAllister, Rosetta Trust and Survivors Together (two Victim/Survivor Groups from Belfast) for months simplifying the application form particularly for older and less literate Victims and Survivors. Those who had attended the Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry in Banbridge, that had concluded in July 2016, could rely on the evidence they had given to the Inquiry, with the option of adding additional information as their "Statement of Experience" on which a decision on a Redress Payment would be made. They had to contact a solicitor and furnish an original birth Certificate and photo ID and their Statement of Experience, all of which would be certified by the solicitor then uploaded online to the Redress Board Platform. Solicitor's offices were closed, many of the applicants never held a passport and some had great difficulty obtaining or retrieving an original copy of their Birth Certificate, particularly those who had been placed in Residential Institutions directly from Mother and Baby Homes or those who had been placed from homes in the Irish Republic. Those who had not been to the inquiry now had to find a way of recalling and recording events from decades ago and putting them into a Statement of Experience, obtaining their Birth Certificate and Photo ID and getting them to a solicitor to make the application. Initially we wrote to the Institutions where children were placed seeking information on their behalf, some were very co-operative others less so. Some of the records from the HIA Inquiry were at the Public Records Office Northern Ireland in Belfast but they were in the process of digitising those records and due to COVID were working with a skeleton staff, then we were making applications for Free Bus Passes for those that were over 60

years old as that was a form of Photo ID that the Redress Board would accept. Thankfully caseworkers at WAVE and the Victim Support Service were an invaluable asset when called on to assist in this mammoth and gruelling task.

Over the first couple of months of COVID, as well as checking in on our members, we were able to streamline an effective method of getting applications to solicitor's offices which were closed to the public but were still functioning. The first payments from the Redress Board were made in early May 2020. Phone calls, messages and emails, Local, National and International dealing with applications were the norm for the next few months as well as constant contact with the Executive Office, TEO Staff, the Redress Board Secretary, David Sterling (HOCS), the Interim Advocate, solicitors and Victims and Survivors. Due to COVID, all of our activities were put on hold. We got permission from TEO to reallocate funding from Activities to meeting the welfare needs of our members, with their agreement, part the allocation of funding was used to buy Coal, Oil, Gas and Electric for our members most of whom were permanently at home due to the enforced lock down.

The first break that came was in August when a hotel in Donegal had a staged opening and we were able to book 2 nights there as long as everyone tested negative and we adapted the COVID Protocols: Masks and Hand Sanitizer. While there were zoom meetings held it was imperative that we continued to meet in person with TEO, The Interim Advocate, and the Redress board to sort issues related to the Redress Process which was at one stage almost overwhelming. We also, through arrangement made by the Interim Advocates office, had separate meetings in Belfast the President of the Redress Board and with the representatives of 3 of the Religious Residential Institutions. Among the reasons for this was to ensure that they were reminded that Sir Anthony Hart had stated that they should make an appropriate contribution to the Redress Scheme. In line with the recommendation from the Ryan Report, Fiona Ryan was appointed as the Commissioner for Survivors of Institutional Childhood Abuse on the 14th December 2020. We met with her the following week. A decision was taken at the meeting with the agreement of available members on Friday 27th March 2021 that as a result of COVID restrictions, no Annual General Meeting would be held and that the Management Committee would stay in place for the following year. The Management Committee have agreed.

Treasurers Remarks

Covid impacted badly on this year's program. At the outset realising that many of our members would be housebound because of the lockdown, we sought and were granted permission from The Executive Office to reallocate money from the budget to meeting their welfare needs. So oil, gas, electric and coal were purchased at a cost of E2840.00. I worked with the Chairman and Secretary to reach out to as many members as possible to ensure they were safe, we also delivered hard copies of the Redress Application Forms across the city and in Donegal until there was a block on traffic leaving without good purpose. In August we were able to get a residential weekend at a hotel in Donegal. It proved to be a welcome break for our members who had felt really isolated during that phase of the lockdown.

Unfortunately, the money, E2680, we had been allocated from the Developing Healthy Cities Programme arrived too late and there wasn't time to develop the programme we had hoped would meet their funding criteria so it had to be returned. As of 21st April 2021 we have a balance in the bank of E404.59. we hope that next year will be a better year for us all. Sadly this year we had 2 funerals to attend of former residents of local Institutions.

Independent Examiner

In accordance with the decision of the Management Committee at the meeting held remotely on 27th March 2021 Lucinda Dougan has agreed to act as an independent Examiner for our accounts this year. Her Report and the Accounts are attached below.

Will Lynch (Treasurer)

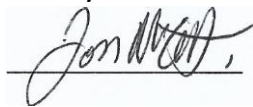
Statement of Assets and Liabilities

Cash Assets at Santander The Diamond Derry 6th April 2021 €404.59 Survivors (North West) have no other cash assets.

We have no other assets property or equipment of value

At this time there are no outstanding debts.

Approved and adopted by a meeting of the Management Committee on Friday 27th March 2021 and signed on their behalf.



Jon McCourt. Chairperson.