

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: [Historical institutional abuse](#), HC 2496

Wednesday 10 July 2019

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Members present: Simon Hoare (Chair); Mr Gregory Campbell; Maria Caulfield; John Grogan; Lady Hermon; Kate Hoey; Ian Paisley; Jim Shannon; Bob Stewart; Sir Desmond Swayne.

Questions 1 - 39

Witnesses

I: Patrick Corrigan, Amnesty International UK; Professor Patricia Lundy, Ulster University; Gerry McCann, Rosetta Trust; and Jon McCourt, Survivors North West.

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: Patrick Corrigan, Professor Patricia Lundy, Gerry McCann and Jon McCourt.

Q1 **Chair:** Good morning, colleagues and witnesses. Thank you for joining us this morning. We are very grateful to you for your time and attendance. There will not be anybody around the table or in the room who is unaware of the sad passing of Anthony Hart, who died yesterday from a heart attack, at the young age of 73. As we know, he chaired the biggest child abuse inquiry in the United Kingdom and we are all grateful to him for the diligence and seriousness with which he approached that all-too-important task. In the light of that, it would be appropriate, for those who wish to or are able to, to stand for a minute in silence in memory of Sir Anthony.

A one-minute silence was observed.

For the benefit of our witnesses, we are trialling a new refurbished Committee room. You do not need to do anything to the microphones for them to work, but I advise you that they are on at all times, even when you are not speaking, so anything you say may be picked up. That is as pertinent for colleagues on this side of the horseshoe as it is for you, as our witnesses. Again, you are welcome. We are grateful to you for your time. If you would like to say a few words in opening statement, that would be most appreciated. Thank you.

Jon McCourt: Thank you, Chairman and Committee members. First, we would like to pay tribute to Sir Anthony Hart. It is regrettable that he will not be here to see the roll-out of the result of the inquiry. When we met Sir Anthony Hart, I was worried who this guy was. We got to know him very quickly. He was a man of integrity, honesty and honour, and a very, very humble man, who efficiently and effectively ran an inquiry for 18 months and heard and encouraged people to speak who had never had a voice. For that, we are deeply indebted. He will be sadly missed. On behalf of us, we would like to extend our sympathy to his family and colleagues.

Chair: Mr McCourt, thank you very much indeed for that very moving tribute. We are grateful to you. As a Committee, we will write to Lady Hart and family, and we will reference those remarks, with your permission, in that letter. Would anybody else on the panel like to say something in opening with regard to the issues in front of us?

Gerry McCann: First, Chairman, thank you so much for the invitation to the four of us to be here today. It has been a long and difficult journey in more ways than one. We are two and a half years post the inquiry. I am obviously saddened by Sir Anthony Hart's sudden passing, which has made this meeting poignant in many ways, to move the process forward and, through his legacy, ensure the implementation takes place sooner rather than later. I know your predecessor Andrew had been speaking to



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me in emails and through Margaret to get this opportunity to meet the Committee. We had to go across the water to raise the profile of this sensitive issue, faced with, unfortunately, a non-functioning Executive and the Secretary of State's unwillingness to move this forward. We feel the opportunity we have here today will be a catalyst to move it forward.

Patrick Corrigan: Again, I will extend our thanks to you and the Committee for, at this early stage in the Westminster process, taking on the baton of this work that started over a decade ago, in terms of the campaign for a public inquiry and the work that Sir Anthony then took forward. This work has been at its most successful when the victims' and survivors' voices have been most central. Therefore, it is crucial and welcome that, at this early stage, those voices are heard. We hope they will result in a redress and reparation scheme that meets the needs of victims and survivors, and the international standards the Government are obliged to deliver, in terms of the violation of these individuals' and their communities' rights. We look forward to an effective conclusion to this process, as speedily as possible, as it has already taken so many years and has unfortunately been delayed by the lack of devolution over the last two and a half years.

Q2 **Mr Campbell:** I will join you all in your tributes to Sir Anthony. This is a topical issue given events of the last 24 hours in Parliament. For many people, these matters would normally be dealt with in the Assembly at Stormont, but, for the reasons Gerry outlined—we do not have a fully functioning Executive at the moment—Parliament took a decision on separate matters last night. A number of parliamentarians are now saying that, given the result last night—and there are other issues, such as that which you are here to make representations to us about—Parliament should equally decide that yours and other issues, which are important to a massive number of people, should be taken up, resolved, implemented and moved on. What is your view on that option?

Jon McCourt: With the collapse of the Executive and no functioning Assembly in the north, we have nowhere else to turn. We spent the last two years and two Secretaries of State trying to encourage them to move this forward. First, we were told that they had no authority to do so and, secondly, we were told that maybe the time was not right. As a result of yesterday—I know they are completely separate matters—maybe the mould has been broken. It is our hope and wish that that has happened, and that this House and this Parliament see it as appropriate to carry forward the redress legislation for victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse.

We are talking about waiting two years. One of our friends behind has waited over 70 years. Just think about that: over 70 years for somebody to hear a voice that says, "What can we do to put this right?" The opportunity is here before this Parliament, this House and this Committee to put this right and address this issue, once and for all, to the



satisfaction of victims and survivors, and as a tribute to the work Sir Anthony Hart did while he carried out the inquiry.

I want to digress for one second, because this has been on my mind for the last three weeks. I honestly do not believe that anybody can understand the pain and hurt that victims and survivors of historical institutional abuse felt when the right honourable Member for Uxbridge and South Ruislip said that the type of engagement that we have been involved in for the last 11 years, and that the independent inquiry into child abuse is engaged in now, here in this Parliament, is nothing but spaffing our piffling money up against a wall. At this earliest opportunity, I address this Committee in reminding the right honourable Member—and for me he is neither right nor honourable in that particular remark—that an apology is owed to all victims of historical institutional abuse.

Chair: Just for your information, I am very alert to the upset and concern that that comment raised. I am aware, because I was privy to it, that the relevant Minister at the Home Office spoke to Mr Johnson about that and made abundantly clear—the Home Office effectively being the sponsoring Department—just how offensive and inappropriate those comments were. There was no excuse for them to have been made. I am not alert to any apology, either official or otherwise, that has been issued, but I want you and colleagues to be aware that the relevant Minister was as concerned as you and raised it directly with him. Hopefully, it is a little help and comfort to you that a blind eye was not turned.

Professor Lundy: It is imperative that the legislation is quickly put through Westminster. All the political parties in Northern Ireland have discussed the draft legislation. They have agreed to most of the changes that survivors have asked for. We understand the Secretary of State will receive the final draft of the legislation on 15 July. The survivors believe that it should be put through Westminster in the remaining days before the recess. There is no reason that cannot happen. If it cannot happen, it is important to explain to survivors why it cannot happen. It is crucial that it does.

Q3 **Mr Campbell:** If I could probe that further, what do you understand the factual position would be if Parliament were to proceed in the way you suggested, before the recess, albeit on a tight timescale? If that is the case, what is the earliest point at which payments would be received?

Professor Lundy: That is a hard one. It is then up to civil servants in Northern Ireland to set up the redress board. Staff have to be appointed. The Lord Chief Justice and the chief executive have a role in appointing the president to the redress board. It would take at least a few months. I remember, in the past, having conversations with individuals in the Republic of Ireland about how long it took the Ryan commission to set up its redress board. I was told that it would take no more than three or four months, so that is my answer to that question; it should be done pretty quickly.



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Of course, a standard payment of £10,000 has been agreed with all the political parties. One assumes that could be processed swiftly, because 22 of the institutions that have been investigated by the inquiry have been found to have systemic failings. It would be fairly straightforward for individuals in those institutions at least to get the standard payment of £10,000, which would be something of a movement towards redress for survivors.

Q4 Mr Campbell: The suggestion was made to me not too long ago that, in fact, payments could be made before the end of the year. That appears to tie in with what you have said.

Professor Lundy: Yes, I would hope so.

Jon McCourt: I want to come back on the timeframe, and it is historical, as most things I talk about are. In August 1971, arrests were made as part of a crowd that refused to disperse when ordered to by the Army. One of those arrested was convicted and fined £20. On 23 February 1972, a Bill was brought before this House. It started at 7 pm and by 10 pm business was closed, and it was decided to extend until any hour to have a piece of legislation passed. That is because a man who was to become prominent, John Hume, was arrested, had the proper legal advice and could have someone in this House raise a question. As a result of that, a piece of legislation, albeit one clause, was passed within five hours. I am not saying we expect the House to sit all night, particularly as we are coming to the close of the Session, but, if there is the will to do this, it could be done.

Patrick Corrigan: When Sir Anthony Hart published his report and invited the victims and survivors to an event, when the report was made available to them, he answered that exact question then, about how long it should take to move from this report sitting on a desk to legislation and compensation payments finally reaching victims and survivors. At that stage, he hoped that the Executive and Assembly could do it, but, he said, from that point onwards, it should take no more than 12 months. That was January 2017 and a lot of time has elapsed since. He envisaged that the legislative timetable at Stormont would be expedited because of the urgency of this and then, a matter of months following that, the delivery mechanisms would be established and the money would start to flow.

I would reiterate this point and pay tribute to David Sterling for his work in leading the civil service in Northern Ireland on this issue. Their will is there and there is no reason that we cannot seek delivery and a degree of restitution offered to victims by the end of this year. But there is a big "if" there and it is around political will. That was one of the areas of disagreement we had with the Secretary of State, when she indicated a much more elongated timetable for legislation, never mind the establishment of the subsequent delivery mechanisms. We do not accept that it needs to take that long. Referring to events in this place as recently as yesterday evening, when people come together, it is possible



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to move things along quickly and to uphold people's human rights. That should be the case for victims and survivors of abuse, particularly in this case, where the Government have now committed to doing it, and it has not simply been left to individual Members of Parliament to take forward.

Q5 Kate Hoey: You are all very welcome. Many members of this Committee have met members of different victims' groups in Northern Ireland. How closely are you all working together? Is there general agreement on the basic principles that you want legislation as quickly as possible, and the immediate payment of £10,000 to everyone who has been seen and agreed as a victim?

Jon McCourt: There is a common goal, whether we move along the same path or road to get to it. Like most common interests, there are different methods of approach. Certainly, Survivors North West and Rosetta Trust are consistent in the approach we have adopted. We are moving together to see delivery of this legislation. It is a common interest, and it is unfortunate that there are different ways of approaching this. I would rather everybody was in the same room, but the ultimate goal is to see this legislation brought forward.

Q6 Kate Hoey: There is co-operation. Is it part of your role, Mr Corrigan, to get people to work together?

Patrick Corrigan: Yes. Naturally, you see this everywhere, whether with victims of conflict or victims of abuse. In any jurisdiction, there are different groups with different backgrounds and interests, but there is a strong coalition of joint interest around our key objectives. We do not expect what we say to you today to be anything different from any of the other groups.

Among the papers you received from us in advance, work was done as part of what was called, at the time, a panel of experts on redress. That constituted the main victims' groups, including those not present today, and many individual victims and survivors who are not affiliated to any representative group, who all participated in a deep and wide consultation process to consider how they thought the recommendations from the inquiry worked for them and what improvements they could see being made to them. There was a very strong unanimity of voice then.

If you drill down into the responses to the Government's public consultation on the draft legislation and recommendations, and look at the heavy representation of victims and survivors in making those responses and the very clear answers they gave to the questions about the improvements they wanted to see, they are from across the board, from all the groups.

Q7 Kate Hoey: There is general agreement among the victims and survivors. As I understand it—say yes or no to this—the civil service has the legislation ready. It has been agreed by all the political parties and all the victims' groups, in principle. The only thing stopping it is finding time



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here, in this Parliament, to bring in that legislation.

Professor Lundy: We are waiting for the Secretary of State to push that forward. The answer to all those questions is yes.

Q8 **Kate Hoey:** Have you any idea why the Secretary of State has maintained that really quite strong feeling of not wanting to get it through as quickly as possible, especially as she may not be in her job very long?

Jon McCourt: That is part of the issue. To me, that should give her greater urgency, rather than less. It appeared to be resistance on behalf of the Secretary of State. That is unfortunate. We attempted to address this with her. The difficulty was that, as far as the Secretary of State was concerned, this was and will continue to be a matter for the devolved Assembly.

Q9 **Kate Hoey:** Do you think yesterday, whatever your views on the issue, changed things radically?

Jon McCourt: I think so. On the legislation, I would point out that the information I have been given is that there was a new amendment or alteration to the redrafted draft of this legislation. As far as I know, that is currently being approved by the Office of the Legislative Council, and it should be ready for delivery to the Secretary of State by 15 July. At this point, there may be a couple of i's to be dotted and t's to be crossed, but the Secretary of State should have this legislation on 15 July.

Q10 **Kate Hoey:** This Parliament will be back for two weeks at the beginning of September. It could very easily be put through then, if not before the House lifts. Is that your view?

Jon McCourt: Before the summer recess would suit us very well. This has been a very long road.

Q11 **Kate Hoey:** Some of us have been drafting a 10-minute rule Bill, which vaguely relates to this. If we can get it through before, it might help push things forward. Finally, can I be clear on the £10,000? To me, that seemed sensible. It is not that we should not perhaps look into more for some people, but would initially giving £10,000 help to make all the victims and survivors feel that, at last, there had been real, genuine recognition?

Gerry McCann: It would be recognition, first, that all these people were institutionalised. That is their background and it will never go away. After two and a half years of no progress at all, survivors feel devalued, depleted and demoralised. In our engagement with Ministers, the civil service and MPs, but also with Secretaries of State both present and previous, those were probably the two most disappointing meetings we have ever been at, because we got no encouragement whatever. We have taken the survivors along this journey, which is still a difficult journey. No money will ever solve this or bring restitution until we go to



our graves. Nevertheless, we are now in a process where we feel that the £10,000 that has been mooted as a stepping stone is a positive aspect.

Having said that, there is still a journey for the survivors to go through when the redress board is up and running, because they have suffered not only various types of abuse but a miscarriage of justice. How could anybody not consider the length of time people have spent at these institutions of the state or other organisations? We feel that the redress board should be sympathetic to this avenue that we have pursued over the last number of years. Through the public consultation, it is clear that while we welcome the HIA report and its recommendations, we were not totally satisfied with its outcome. This is why, through the public consultation, we have highlighted areas that were not settled for the survivors and victims. I think £10,000 is a part of that stepping stone.

Professor Lundy: Initially the recommendation was £7,500, and survivors made a strong case that it should be £10,000. Scotland was given an interim payment of £10,000, so it is equivalent to what happened there. The point Gerry made is that the political parties did not agree to one of the requests of survivors that there should be consideration of the length of time that an individual spent in an institution. They could have spent five months in an institution and been horribly abused—we know that—but they also could have spent 15 years in an institution. The £10,000 does not take into consideration the length of time that an individual has spent in an institution.

The consultation responses indicate that survivors feel strongly that that should be taken into consideration. The standard payment is £10,000 and, for each year after that you spent in the institution, there should be £3,000. That is the same as the compensation in Canada. For some survivors, that would be it: they would not take their case any further; they would have £10,000 and £3,000 for each year after. They would not have to go through the possible trauma of a more in-depth look at their abuse. We hope that perhaps an amendment could be put in the legislation to consider the length of time that an individual spent in an institution.

Q12 **Kate Hoey:** I appreciate money is not the issue, but I presume that, if this is sorted satisfactorily in the future, no one would object to the Government trying to get some of this money from the institutions involved.

Jon McCourt: I am glad that you brought that up. At this point, because our concentration has been on the legislation, the institutions that were ultimately responsible for the abuse and the care of some of the most vulnerable people in our society have fallen off the radar. They have not had the public flogging that politicians have had, when it comes to moving this forward. We have to draw on experiences from outside of here. In the Irish Republic, the Government persuaded institutions to establish a welfare fund by law. That was outside of their contribution to the compensation package.



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Irrespective of the total cost of this, and I know the numbers will be pretty high, and irrespective of where that money is drawn down from—I will hopefully get to that—a part of the funding has to come from the institutions that ran these homes. One of the difficulties with the findings of the report was that there was no proportionality. Some of the homes were actually quite good. In some, there were failings. In lots, there were many failings. We are talking about proportionality and responsibility, which goes anywhere from 20% to 80%. That should be reflected in each institution by the contribution that Government seek to recoup on the back of this redress process. There is no way that the taxpayer should carry the full burden of this.

I heard the debate the other day and heard Emma Little-Pengelly talk about the collapse of the Executive. They had forewarned that the historical abuse inquiry would be one of the consequences of this. One of the failings when that happened was that the religious orders and all the institutions responsible were not made to freeze their assets. A massive farm in north Belfast was sold as a housing development by one of the institutions directly responsible. Members of that institution have been convicted of the sexual abuse of children. That order has managed to get rid of some of its assets. In my home town of Derry, the religious order responsible for one of the two homes has sold a massive building to a housing association. We have no idea for how much money or where that money goes. Put it this way: recouping finance from these institutions, if they continue to salt away their assets, will become more and more difficult.

It is something we were told in 2010, sitting in Parliament Buildings. The religious institutions and other institutions responsible, which were being drawn forward by this inquiry, were told to make preparations for what was coming down the road. They were put on notice—that is the way it was put—that they would be expected to contribute to this. I think the institutions have been let off far too lightly. I know that the Executive, the Northern Ireland Assembly and even this place have been criticised for the lack of movement, conscious and public movement, on behalf of the institutions to reach out to victims and survivors. There have been amazing people within those institutions who have contacted us individually, but, as institutions, they have made no real effort to seek from survivors, “What can we do for you?”

Patrick Corrigan: To follow up on what Jon said, the first important point is that the state carries the obligation to deliver redress to its citizens, the victims of abuse, and ultimately the state let people down. If the care was subcontracted to private institutions, churches and religious organisations, ultimately the buck stops with the state and the state has the obligation now to follow through with redress.

The second point is that those who ran the homes must absolutely be pursued to make a fair and equitable contribution, as Jon said, so that the taxpayer does not carry the whole burden. The third point is that, in



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the south, there was an agreement between the Government and the Catholic Church and religious orders more generally. When the religious organisations have not followed through in delivering the promised amounts, the people left to suffer from any failings in delivery should not be the victims and survivors.

We met some time back with the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland and a representative of CORI, the Conference of Religious of Ireland, which represents many of the bodies that ran those homes directly. We asked them to show leadership and start putting together money in anticipation. They declined and essentially said they would do so only once Government came to knock on their door. They said they had received no such knock on their door. There may have to be a catch-up. The point Jon made was key: have some assets dissipated in the interim? It would be terrible if that injustice was allowed to persist. Something we have said from the start is that those who ran the homes and were more responsible for the failings must now pay, but the victims and survivors should not be left to carry the loss if they do not.

Q13 Chair: Have you raised the liquidation of assets directly with Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office?

Jon McCourt: The difficulty is that there have been no Ministers.

Chair: I mean in the Northern Ireland Office under the Secretary of State.

Jon McCourt: It was mentioned to one of the parliamentary advisers to the Secretary of State that we were aware that assets were going. Without legislating, what authority does anybody have to tell institutions to stop doing it? I am looking here at criminal assets. That is what they are, because what happened in these children's homes were crimes.

Q14 Lady Hermon: Thank you very much indeed for coming to give us evidence this morning. It has been very moving. Thank you very much, Jon, for your tribute to Sir Anthony Hart at the beginning of the evidence session. His loss is a huge loss to all of us and a tragedy for his family. Thank you so much for your very generous words of tribute to him. I have a list of questions arising from the evidence you have given so far. We have not yet had any mention of the role of the victims' advocate. I know he has only recently been appointed. It was a brilliant appointment, if I may say so, of a man of great experience of other difficult matters in Northern Ireland. What has your engagement been with him to date?

Jon McCourt: He has informally met representatives of each of the groups, within the last week, since his appointment. He does not formally take up his position until 12 August. At that point, he will be making formal arrangements to meet the groups and others he feels are of influence.

Lady Hermon: He does not formally take up his job until 12 August?



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Jon McCourt: He is not officially in post until 12 August, from what I have. Part of me is hoping it is 12 July. Maybe I got the date wrong.

Q15 **Lady Hermon:** That would be better, because we think the legislation will be ready on 15 July and the advocate cannot really engage and put pressure on the Northern Ireland Office until August.

Professor Lundy: He is already representing survivors and he has had discussions and made suggestions for some changes.

Lady Hermon: That is what I thought.

Q16 **Chair:** If it is helpful, Margaret has just advised me that Mr McCourt is right: it is 12 August.

Jon McCourt: I thought that. I was just going to check again.

Professor Lundy: He is already working behind the scenes and raising issues. We have had correspondence with him.

Lady Hermon: Perhaps he will be putting pressure on the Secretary of State behind the scenes.

Jon McCourt: First, he does not have an office. Secondly, he does not have an email address. Thirdly, he does not have a phone number. Well, he has a personal phone number and email address, but he does not have an office. He will be seeking a legal support team, which is not in place either. I know it is five weeks down the line, but I have known Brendan McAllister for a very long time. Brendan will not waste one moment of the time between now and then. He has assured us that, in between, he will be working and contacting people. He will be the link between victims and survivors, and whatever else is out there. His role is going to be challenging for him. For us, to have a voice with the wealth of experience that the interim advocate has will be most welcome.

People talk about victims' needs and a care package, but care for what? How do you know what needs to be cared for unless you ask people? We spoke with the interim advocate about a needs analysis to find out what else, outside of the financial redress package we are talking about, victims and survivors need. This man will have access, albeit without statutory authority, but with the agreement of the head of the civil service. He has asked the various Departments of Government to co-operate with the interim advocate. He can find out those needs and delivery points for them.

Right now, our people are still daunted by going and talking to a lawyer, people on a Committee like this or their local representative. With an interim advocate now in the mix, somebody new, their fear is that we will have to start telling the story again. Look, the story never has to be told again. It exists in 10 volumes of this report. One thing we need to be looking at, as we move forward with the interim advocate, is that this is not about people baring their soul, overexposing and traumatising



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themselves again. As we move forward, anybody involved in the solution of this redress process needs to get their head around what is in this report, the whole 10 volumes, because people cannot continually strip themselves bare in the hope that it brings this closer to the end.

Professor Lundy: A needs analysis is important for survivors to explain exactly what they feel would work for them. At the start of the redress panel that we set up, we held five workshops, where we asked survivors what they wanted from redress. There was some good discussion. We had very little resource; the University of Ulster funded it. I can only imagine that Brendan could do something much broader than that. It is a positive thing, because you are looking to the future to see what we can do to make amends and make things better, but he should also consider doing a mapping exercise to see what gaps exist in the services. If, when the commissioner is appointed, that groundwork had been done, that would be useful.

Q17 **Lady Hermon:** It would be very helpful if you gave the Committee some idea of the numbers we are talking about of those who have been victims of the most appalling historical abuse in Northern Ireland. We are not talking about huge numbers; we are talking about a significant number of people who have been deeply traumatised and affected, and, as Jon has indicated, some for a very long period.

Professor Lundy: There were 76 institutions. These are the figures of the civil service. The inquiry investigated 22 of those and the estimate is that 28,000 children went through those 22 institutions alone. That is just for those 22 institutions. The figure the civil servants have come up with is that it could be up to 50,000, but we do not know. It is impossible to tell. That is an estimate. As I say, of 76 institutions, 22 were investigated by the inquiry. From those 22 institutions alone, we know the figures are 28,000.

Jon McCourt: Let us first take the workable figure of the people who came forward to both the acknowledgement forum and the inquiry at Banbridge. We are talking about around 500 people, who came forward at that point. I know, because I am in touch with them, they are in touch with me and they are in touch with others including the Rosetta Trust, that there are people who have never come forward for whatever reason. There are myriad reasons why. There is embarrassment, shame and all of this. I have had discussions, and I know my colleague Gerry has had discussions, with people who have not even told their own children that they were in an institution. That is what we are talking about.

This is the way it has to work out. If we take the people who came forward to the inquiry and acknowledgement forum and give consideration for the recognition payment—I do not care what term anybody puts on that £10,000—there are four vital points that have to be made to qualify people for that initial payment. Were you in an institution in the qualifying period, in other words between 1922 and 1995? Were you in one of the institutions that were investigated by the historical



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institutional abuse inquiry? That is the second point. Third, were you in an institution where it is recorded in the report that abuse took place? Fourth, did you witness or were you the victim of abuse? Of those 500 people, almost everybody would automatically qualify.

The thing is that this is almost a rolling wave. As people see things starting to change, improve and become more accessible, they will have the courage. I read this title about chasing the money. This is not about chasing the money; it is about seeking justice. It is about people being given the space and opportunity to take the courage to speak out about what happened to them. That is what we are talking about. If the door opens for that first group of 400 or 500 people, and there seems to be some mechanism in place that will resolve the redress issue for them, it will encourage others to come forward. Just here in the north, we could be talking about maybe 2,500 people.

This is interesting, and I know Professor Lundy mentioned the Scottish inquiry. Remember what this House has just done for the child migrants who were taken to Australia. We are in a ridiculous position back home. I was in an institution, and I have a photograph taken in August 1947 of 32 children aged between four and 15 years, outside the front door of St Joseph's children's home, Termonbacca. There was a big headline, "Emigrating to Australia". Every one of these children was an orphan or was told they were. As a result of us having included the child migrants in the historical institutional abuse inquiry and the resolution that Sir Anthony Hart came to that they should have an award for being stolen from their homeland, people who were in the institution I ended up in, who are still alive and in Australia, have already received the payment of £20,000, because they were taken from the children's homes. Yet it appears that those who stayed behind are being punished for not being taken. That is a ridiculous situation to be in.

Lady Hermon: It must be extremely hurtful.

Jon McCourt: It is. I have had phone calls at 3 am or 4 am from people in Australia, who are so grateful that they have been recognised and so angry that it appears we are not.

Q18 **Lady Hermon:** I can empathise with that and agree with you entirely. I must ask you this. I do not want to personalise it by saying the Secretary of State, but maybe I should. You are giving us the evidence, so you can reflect on who you think is responsible. But is it your impression that those within the Northern Ireland Office are dragging their feet until we see who the new leader of the Conservative party and the new Prime Minister is?

Jon McCourt: I am adamant in saying no; I do not believe that. The people we work with in the Executive Office, and those from the Northern Ireland Office who we have worked and consulted with, want to see this done expressly and effectively.



Q19 **Lady Hermon:** Is that David Sterling?

Jon McCourt: Again, I would personally like to pay tribute to David Sterling, because he took the initiative after a very large meeting in Derry, when over 90 victims and survivors turned up. David Sterling gave a commitment in that meeting, in March 2018, that, if the Secretary of State was not prepared to do it, he would start to draft the legislation. He gave us that commitment and did it. To be honest, if it had not been for David Sterling taking that initiative, we would not be here today, and the legislation would not have been written, because we would still be waiting for the Secretary of State to decide where this gets done.

Q20 **Lady Hermon:** Who is the stumbling block? Why are we not seeing the legislation being taken through here?

Jon McCourt: Previous Secretaries of State were the stumbling block. Maybe they felt their hands were tied behind their backs. Maybe they felt there was leverage in it. Initially, I was cynical: surely they would not attempt to use victims and survivors to drag what I call a coalition of the unwilling around the table to resolve all the big issues that caused the collapse of the Executive.

Then I saw the work that went on around a separate table, the discussion and co-operation, on the historical institutional abuse inquiry. Uniquely, from its very start, the historical institutional abuse Bill has had support across the board. It has had cross-community support across the board. There was a feeling that, if we get them round to resolve the issue of historical institutional abuse, surely, if we put another question down, they might have a go at that as well. That was my feeling. I think it was maybe part of the plan. However, I am conscious that committed politicians, who should be in place at Stormont, were and are prepared to step outside of whatever wrangling was going on and deal with the issue of historical institutional abuse. We commend them.

Patrick Corrigan: We need to tease out the different bodies that Jon referred to. We had some great leadership from David Sterling, so the civil service is doing its job and should be commended. The Northern Ireland Assembly parties, while they have not managed to put together an Executive to take this forward, did the work and came together. Whatever their disagreements are on just about every other issue, they came together and spoke with one voice on this issue and fed that back to the NIO.

It remains to be seen whether the NIO is dragging its feet. There was a political power play, when it was seen to be putting this issue into the talks, maybe as an incentive for the talks to have the moral pressure to agree a bigger deal, so they could deliver this. The public outrage at the idea that victims were being used as a political football has chastened the Secretary of State and the NIO. They have now committed publicly, and in advance privately to us and the victims' groups, that they will deliver this. However, they are indicating an elongated timetable and there



needs to be a clear message from this Committee that that is not acceptable. A delay of rights is also a further denial of rights. It is unnecessary, unacceptable and does not have to be like that. They need to be further pushed to prioritise this and to work with their colleagues in Government to prioritise it within the legislative timetable, so it can be done, in an expedited way.

Q21 Lady Hermon: You have indicated that the legislation should be ready by 15 July. As you know, the House is expected to rise for the summer recess on 25 July. Is it your expectation that, with pressure from this Committee and like-minded Members of this House who are very keen to get this resolved—it is totally unacceptable and morally offensive that you have had to wait for such a long time—this legislation will be taken through before the House rises on 25 July?

Jon McCourt: The thing is to get it on the Floor in the first place, which happened with the Scottish Assembly. They got it tabled. Their inquiry is still ongoing and they are already making interim payments to those over 70 who are infirm, old and will probably not make it to the end of the process. If this is tabled and accepted as a piece of legislation that can go forward, I believe it will open the door to the opportunity of interim payments for the elderly, old and infirm. That is needed and it will be the test of good faith. As it is seen to be rolled out and the points we are pushing are recognised by the broader parliamentary body, our people will get more confidence. We are going to say, "Okay, now that it has started, we can ease back a bit. We can take the pressure off, because we know this is rolling." We are not talking about an indefinite roll-out either. We need the start of this process, which is a Bill being discussed on the Floor of the House.

Professor Lundy: It would be hugely disappointing again for survivors. The legislation is ready. I cannot see a reason that it cannot go through. If it cannot go through Westminster before recess, people will need to explain to survivors why.

Lady Hermon: I agree entirely. There is no justification for it to be delayed any further. We should be taking it through. It is a hugely significant issue. There is party political agreement. The community in Northern Ireland is behind you and we should do it.

Q22 Jim Shannon: Thank you, Patricia and gentlemen, in particular Gerry—nice to see you again—for all you do collectively and individually. Gerry, I would not like to prolong the meeting any longer, but, on the figure of £10,000, I understand it has always been the opinion that those who have had different levels of abuse should be getting more. By the way, Jon, thank you for all your personal comments as well, and what you just said. The idea of compensation is not necessarily for the money; it is the penalty for abusing people over the years. It is like going to court, when you get a jail sentence or are fined. The idea of money is to try in some way to reimburse those who have been abused over the years. Some of the things that you and I talked about in our meetings, Gerry, were very



much along those lines. When it comes to the award of £10,000, it is clearly your purpose that those awards would vary. Is that correct?

Gerry McCann: Initially, the recommendation in the report of £7,500 was very contentious, because it did not reflect the journey these people had gone through. Through the panel of experts, at that time, the vast majority of groups were in unison and had agreed on £10,000 as a recognition, not a resolution to move the redress forward, but a process in which £10,000 would at least reflect, to the people who had put their trust in us to move this forward, the length of time and the various abuses that had happened to them, so that could be made through the redress panel.

I look at the target that Sir Anthony and the HIA report had of £80,000 max. If you happened to be a child migrant, it could go up to £100,000. There are contentious areas in that, because how can you measure the various types and forms of abuse? I do not want to get emotional here, but I find it very difficult to quantify what these people went through and measure it in pounds, shillings and pence. You cannot do it, but it is incumbent on our politicians and this House to ensure that we have a process that is centred on survivors healing.

Professor Lundy talked about £3,000. If we took that £3,000 and £10,000 on their merit, the process would be less intrusive. A lot of people out there may have to write to the redress board or do an oral presentation, who are unable to or will not do it. It will be difficult for the interim advocate to get a process in which they can come forward and engage, one to one, with professional people listening to their story, so they can unload their story and it can be put in monetary terms. We have to recognise this in terms of what survivors have gone through. It cannot be based on a budget that we cannot go above. I understand and appreciate there has to be a budget, but remember that organisations have to make a major contribution to that central fund, so park the budget. Set it aside and let us see what we can do in the interests of survivors as individuals.

Q23 **Jim Shannon:** Based on the discussions we have had in the past, Gerry, some voluntary homes—I am using those words without mentioning any homes—made payments. Is that correct?

Gerry McCann: Yes.

Q24 **Jim Shannon:** I understood from the discussions we had—I am keen to give you the opportunity to say the same things you described clearly to me in our discussions—that those who have received payments in the past were offered moneys at a time when they would have taken anything just to get some conclusion to their case. If you do not mind me saying this, Chairman, I feel that those who have received compensation at a lower level deserve to have a higher level, even though they may have signed their name to an agreement. Could you explain to the Committee why it is important to have that in this process now?



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Gerry McCann: You have alluded to the reason that it is important, Jim. You and I spoke about it. A lot of survivors out there received settlements because of their circumstances and living conditions, and just to survive in life. Many of them were unemployed and there may have been alcohol or drug problems. They might have been in jail. The bottom line is that we feel they were in a corner and an apple was hung over them by the respectful lawyers for the organisations: "We will give you that".

I will give you an example. One guy accepted £7,500, based on the report. The economics of these survivors is based on their individual circumstance, which dictates what they will do next. We have encouraged a lot of people to take the legal route and try to get some form of restitution. It certainly will not go to court. Many cases that have been settled out of court have far exceeded £7,500, but some smart solicitors, representing organisations, will say, "We can sort Gerry out here. He will take this card," and that will be it. If this Bill goes through with £10,000, that £10,000 should be available to those people, because they were short-changed.

Q25 **Jim Shannon:** I have one last question. Are there aspects of the compensation application process that you want to see in any legislation? I will ask this question along with that. This goes back to the point Jon made earlier about some voluntary groups selling land and making substantial amounts of money, and where that money has gone. We need to have legislation that can pursue those organisations for that money. The door is open now within the legislation. What would you like to see in place to make sure that that happens?

Jon McCourt: You are going to run into the difficulty that we ran into. We have been told that each one of these institutions is an autonomous body. Each is a separate order with its own charter and status. There is no body corporate that you can approach to say, "We need you to do this." The way it is happening at the minute, quite a few of the orders no longer exist. When these orders were running children's homes, were they covered by insurance? Was that something for anyone, particularly statutory bodies, who placed a child in any of these voluntary homes?

A point we talked about earlier was the difference between the statutory and voluntary institutions. We got an interpretation at one time that the Department of Education, which ran the borstal, and the Department of Justice, which ran some of the institutions, would be treated as institutions for the sake of the inquiry. They are formal bodies, but, by the same token, children were placed by local councils, which were statutory bodies. Their welfare officers placed children into voluntary homes. Once they are in a voluntary home, they are nothing to do with us. In fact, the Forrest report shows that was more or less the case. They became a law unto themselves after 1953. For anybody who disappeared into that system, how do you make them accountable? I am saying there should be legislation to persuade these institutions to step up to the



mark, but, even stronger than that, there needs to be legislation to seize their assets if they do not.

Q26 Jim Shannon: I will finish with this point. I am sorry; I just want to make sure that, when we do something positive from here, it is actually achievable. The NCA, for example, has powers to go above and beyond, to retrieve assets and find out where they are. Is that the sort of stuff you are looking for?

Jon McCourt: I mentioned that right at the start. In fact, we had a conference in 2010, when I talked about the national Criminal Assets Bureau and its involvement. What happened in these children's homes was crime. The outcome of that report shows that criminality took place. If they were seen to be profiting from children being in those institutions, as far as I or anybody else is concerned, what you have here are the assets of criminal activity. It is as simple as that. If it means using CAB powers to seize or freeze the assets until this is resolved—I am not saying permanently, but until this is resolved—let it happen.

Q27 Sir Desmond Swayne: This is absurd. We do not do Acts of attainder anymore. Ministers and politicians cannot order institutions to hand over their assets. There would have to be a judicial process if we are to seek the money from the institutions responsible themselves, rather than the taxpayer. You said that the taxpayer should not alone be liable, but the state and elected councils handed children into the care of these woefully inadequate institutions. The moment you try to pursue those institutions themselves, there has to be a judicial process, whether in a criminal court or a tort, a civil action, both of which would require precisely what you say you do not want: people having to relive the trauma in giving evidence. Is there another way out?

Jon McCourt: Again, I am coming at this as a layman. I am saying, if it is wrong, it is wrong, and it has to be addressed. We have to find a mechanism to address it. That is the reason parliamentarians and legislators make law: so that they can resolve the issues that we cannot.

Professor Lundy: These are very difficult questions. It is a tall order to expect survivors to have answers to them. Civil servants and people in power within Government first need to have discussions with those religious orders and institutions. There needs to be a legally binding or legal agreement, whatever that is, that they make a contribution to the compensation scheme. That is straightforward enough, but it is not up to survivors to have the answers to these pretty difficult questions.

Q28 Sir Desmond Swayne: It would be a voluntary agreement between whatever power and the religious institutions to hand over the cash?

Professor Lundy: You would hope to be able to put enough pressure on those religious orders and shame them, perhaps, into making a contribution to compensation, which they should be making. In the discussions we have had with them, they say they are ready and waiting for Government to approach them.



Patrick Corrigan: I absolutely agree. I made the point earlier that it is a state responsibility. If those private institutions feel it is their moral duty to contribute, the victims should not be left suffering the loss. You are right on that point. In the Republic of Ireland, it was a voluntary agreement, but moral pressure was brought to bear. However, not all the bodies that signed up to that agreement lived up to their responsibilities; they have failed again. That is ultimately about the state using its power. It may be moral pressure or some other form of carrot-and-stick pressure, because the Church and some of these other institutions are entwined with the state in symbiotic relationships. They may see a value in coming to an agreement with the state in which they deliver for victims.

- Q29 **Chair:** Picking up on Sir Desmond's question, this is principally to Professor Lundy, though maybe not exclusively. Do you envisage this scenario? The point that Sir Desmond raises is apposite. In essence, the compensation package—I use the word “compensation” for ease of reference—would be paid out by the state and then the state would make a counter-claim to institutions, orders and bodies for a percentage contribution to that. There would be no delay to the payments being made, but it would be up to the powers of the state to seek redress. If those explorations were not successful for whatever reason, it would in no way undermine or inhibit either the quantum or the scope of the compensation package, in its totality.

Professor Lundy: That is written into the inquiry report, so we have made that clear.

Chair: It may not be necessary for those who do not wish to reopen the wounds to do so in oral testimony in court. It is up to the state to make its case. Thank you.

- Q30 **Maria Caulfield:** I want to clarify one quick point. If the legislation passes, who could apply? You said 76 institutions were looked at, but only 22 were investigated. Could only the victims of the 22 apply or would it cover the whole 76?

Professor Lundy: It would cover the whole 76.

- Q31 **Maria Caulfield:** Okay, so potentially up to 50,000 children?

Professor Lundy: We do not know. As I said, the estimate was 28,000 for the 22 institutions, but we do not even know how many of those victims are still alive. Those are the numbers on the books, so we do not know.

- Q32 **Maria Caulfield:** Is there a mechanism in the legislation for people to apply confidentially? Jon made the point that some people have not even told their families that they were in these institutions or, if they have, that they were affected. Is there a mechanism in the legislation or does that need to be looked at, so there is a confidential route to applying?



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Jon McCourt: That was part of the original process. The acknowledgement forum was certainly confidential. People came along, talked to a couple of people who were part of forum and shared their experience. That fed into the inquiry report. That is one of the things that people will need; they will need that privacy and confidentiality. Legislatively, if it comes to hearings, people's anonymity will need to be guaranteed. We hope that it does not entail hundreds or thousands of people coming forward individually to give evidence.

As I said, there are four points: there is the fact that you were in an institution; you were in one of the institutions that was investigated; you were in an institution where, according to the report, abuse took place; and you were either abused or witnessed abuse. That should be enough to qualify people to automatically reach the £10,000 recognition payment, whatever term people want to put on it. Beyond that, if we are talking about the length of time that somebody spent in one of those institutions, and we have the figure of £3,000 a year, that is the difference for somebody who was in an institution 40 or 50 years ago in having somebody say today, "I recognise that and understand what happened. I acknowledge what happened and we are going to try to put it right. One of the ways we are going to try to put it right is financially, by making an attempt to compensate you for some of the damage."

As Gerry said, it will never compensate people for all that hurt, pain or trauma, but I can say that, if someone was in an institution for 10 years, they would automatically qualify for £10,000. If we are then talking about £3,000 for each subsequent year, that is another £27,000. I am not saying that that buys it off, but, instead of the £2,500 that I know someone was offered on the steps of a courthouse, the redress body could say it feels this is a fair and just settlement, beyond any additional harms caused. That is the thing. The tariff table is very important when it comes to additional harms. Just for being in that environment for that length of time, the redress board will award you £37,000. For somebody who was in an institution 40 or 50 years ago, that is enough reason for them to say, "You have acknowledged my pain. I am prepared to walk away." That mechanism cuts out a lot of paperwork and hearings, and embarrassment, hurt and trauma for victims and survivors coming forward.

Professor Lundy: Could I add a clarification to that? The process, as set out now in the legislation, is confidential, and is essentially a paper-only process. You can give oral evidence if you wish, and that is something that survivors asked to be added to the legislation. For those 22 institutions that were investigated by the inquiry, individuals coming forward will have an easier time in making their case. For the 54 institutions that were not investigated, those individuals will have some difficulties, because they will have to start from scratch. This is where the role of the commissioner is crucial to support those individuals, get their files and make their case, because they have not gone through that



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process. There are some difficulties or could be some problems there, but that is a central role for the commissioner.

Gerry McCann: To clarify, there were clearly systemic failings in those 22 institutions, as Sir Anthony found. In the other 54, he felt that there were not sufficient systemic failings, but individuals from those institutions could come forward. If you are talking about numbers, we are talking about maybe 4,000 or 5,000 people in the 22 institutions; I do not know. If you go back to 1922, it is highly unlikely that anybody is still alive, although we have one member who is in his 90s. The process for the 22 institutions should be expedited, because they were systemic failings and the redress board can take those 22 institutions into the system. Individuals from the 54 outside that can come forward, but, as Patricia said, it is going to be difficult for them, not so much to give evidence, but to prove beyond doubt that this was a harsh environment and so forth. From a selfish point of view, I feel that those from the 22 institutions are on a better footing because of the report.

Q33 **Ian Paisley:** Can I thank the panel for their evidence? I do not think they have said anything that anyone could disagree with. You are pushing at an open door and my advice is to keep pushing. Hopefully you will get there sooner rather than later. You have kindly sent us the accounts of your two organisations to show us the shoestring on which you are running what effectively is a national campaign. It is impressive that you have been able to do that on such a small budget. Apart from the one donation I have seen from the OFMDFM, have you any assurances that you will be able to keep resourcing this until you get over the line or is it just a one-off to sustain an organisation for a short period?

Jon McCourt: The OFMDFM donation is annual, and it will decide this year whether there is justification for it next year. There is no five-year or 10-year strategic plan that stretches this out. Part of what we are talking about is a budget that allows people space and opportunity to have conversations in an environment outside that which they would normally have.

Q34 **Ian Paisley:** I can see that you are providing a vital service. The inquiry could not have proceeded without the way in which you have organised, brought people together, been a voice for them and helped them along. It is blatantly obvious that this is critical work. I am just surprised at how well you have been able to do it on such a shoestring. You have been given the assurance that that is not being held back for next year?

Jon McCourt: We know there will be an award from the Executive Office for the year 2019-20, under the small grants scheme. We do not know what will happen beyond that. I would like to think that we may be able to get this rolled out, so there is no need for it. I will say that, if we go the way we are going now, new people will be coming forward. There will be continuing contact from people in England, Scotland, Wales, Australia, Canada and America. We are resourced to be there to answer those calls. Right now, the budget gets stretched in the way it does because Gerry



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and I both pay our own phone bills. I use a bus pass. I do not claim very much mileage, except if there is a big meeting in Belfast and I need someone to drive me there. We use a borrowed premise that the Executive Office resources for us. We have a counsellor, who comes in on a Friday morning and does an amazing job.

- Q35 Ian Paisley:** It would be wishful to think that this will close quite soon. You are probably looking at something that needs to be resourced properly and to have a strategic business plan going forward. You are right that you are going to open up to a lot of future inquiries, especially when—hopefully very soon—you get this first thing over the line, get these payments made and show that this abuse has been recognised now. It will definitely open up further cases. I wonder if there is an opportunity, Professor, for someone to bring this together, to put that sort of plan in place and, importantly, to get all the other groups in one place as well. They are in different directions, but they are all pushing towards the same thing. Something strategic needs to be put in place.

Professor Lundy: You have made a really important point. We continually raise the issue that the survivor groups are not funded to do the work that they do. They are preparing individuals to go to the inquiry, picking up the pieces after it, seeing to their needs on a daily basis, but also running, as you rightly point out, a campaign to raise those issues.

Ian Paisley: A national campaign.

Professor Lundy: Absolutely. My role and Patrick's role in that is the support we give to the survivor groups. We set up the panel of experts on redress, which brought all the groups together. Every single group was part of the panel of experts, and that gave it a collective voice. Remember, we will now have the commissioner, whose role is to be that figurehead. It is the commissioner's role to have an advisory panel and ensure that it is well resourced.

- Q36 Ian Paisley:** Do you think that commissioner will ultimately replace these groups?

Professor Lundy: There is a role for the groups. I am a big supporter of non-governmental organisations, which have a great role in society in general. They have a crucial role, but they are not funded to do that work. It has taken its toll. It has taken its toll on Jon, Gerry, Margaret and everyone else who has been involved in the campaign—there is no doubt about it—because they do not have the resources. As Jon says, he pays his own phone bill and travel, and that is unacceptable, but it is not really talked about much. Survivors are keener to put the issues to the top of the pile of things that should be discussed, not that they are not resourced. Going forward, there has to be support for groups, because the redress board will be up and running, and it will be a miracle if it runs smoothly. All those individuals need support as well.

Ian Paisley: My impression is that we will be seeing a lot of you over the



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next 10 years.

Gerry McCann: There are a couple of issues. We provide an advocacy service, which deals with people's needs daily, with a very limited budget. More often than not, we are taking money out of our own pockets to help people. There is one aspect I am very passionate about. In recent years, post-inquiry, survivors have died with no resources, and could not get a dignified funeral and burial. I went to the Northern Ireland Office to seek funding and could not get it. I could not even take it as a small grant. We feel that those survivors who have died would have been entitled to compensation, and a proportion of that compensation should be set aside so they can have a dignified funeral. It is scandalous that we, Rosetta, buried two people who had no resources. We funded it ourselves.

Ian Paisley: I have heard you talking publicly about that. It is absolutely heart-breaking.

Gerry McCann: It is disgraceful. Through the public representatives this could be highlighted and flagged up. While we are waiting for implementation, survivors are dying who are not able to fund their own funerals. This is incumbent on us all. I am sorry.

Lady Hermon: It is perfectly understandable. We agree with you.

Jon McCourt: As we are talking about acknowledgement, it is not just the acknowledgement of those of us who can fight and move stuff forward, but that we acknowledge those who have gone before us. There is a human and dignified way we can do that. One member of our group was in a home with his brother, who died here in England. He is still in debt to the undertaker for the funeral for his brother. There are no resources at all and, because he died here, the Department of Health and Social Services as it was then—so that gives you an idea of how long ago this funeral took place—said it could not help him because his brother had died here. Somebody has been in debt for the last 20 years, as a result of his brother, who was in an institution with him, dying. That is not an individual story; those stories have happened frequently over the years.

Mr Paisley, while you are talking about resourcing, I want to draw one thing back. In a discussion, we were told that there is every probability that the financing for the redress package will come from the block grant. I know that we will be glad to get it whatever way we get it, but the block grant is a fixed sum and it covers all the needs of all the people in Northern Ireland.

Q37 **Ian Paisley:** As a quick rule of thumb from the numbers you have given us, basically, we are talking £5 million up to £25 million, depending on the costs and awards, and up to £250 million if we go to 28,000-plus. I do not believe that is even potentially realistic within the block grant. The initial payments perhaps are, which is where the Secretary of State could be fletcher of foot. On any rule-of-thumb calculation, there has to be a



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special measure. That is why you are in the right place making the right case because, at some point, there will have to be a discussion with Treasury.

Jon McCourt: I bring that up because I do not want to be walking down the streets of my city, six months after this is resolved for me and some of our people, for a woman to come to me and say, "My son could not get cancer treatment because there is no money in the budget, because you got it." I draw back on examples of where it became possible to finance various things. Bear with me a second; again, I am in no way trying to be sectarian about this at all. When the Presbyterian Mutual Society collapsed, £200 million was got from the Treasury. For the former police officers' pay, there was £20 million from the Treasury. In December 2014, when David Cameron left Northern Ireland, he said he would—

Q38 **Ian Paisley:** Jon, the only point you have to make on all this is that the vast majority of these abuses took place during a period of direct rule. The actual case is made as to who was running the country and had responsibility. The compelling argument is made. You are not pushing against a closed door; let me put it like that.

Jon McCourt: It is great that I am pushing against an open door. Pushing against it is a lot easier than trying to kick it in. I will say that, between 1972 and December 1995, this place was responsible for the running of Northern Ireland. It was suggested at a previous meeting of this Committee that the Hart inquiry be included in the independent inquiry into child abuse, in other words the Westminster inquiry. Do you know what? The reason it was not was that it might delay the process. Maybe somebody got something wrong back then. The ownership of that period between 1972 and 1995, which is the period covered by this inquiry, should be given equal parity with the resolution of the independent inquiry into child abuse that this House is running. Child migrants have already been paid from the independent inquiry here at Westminster. As that is the case, let us see how we can do some kind of roll-out for the 400 or 500 people who initially came forward to the inquiry.

Patrick Corrigan: To finish that point, where the money comes from is crucial, because we do not want an artificial limit or cap in the budget set aside for this that ultimately fails victims. When we met the Secretary of State recently, she said it was to come from the block grant. We agree with Ian Paisley on this point, not the Secretary of State.

Q39 **Chair:** I assure you, as the Chairman of the Committee, I will be writing on behalf of the Committee to the Secretary of State and to the Chancellor to pick up this point about funding. Mr Paisley has made the incredibly powerful point that the period of time we are dealing with was direct rule. Therefore, it would be an illegitimate expectation for a compensatory fund to be met from the block grant. This has to be new money. Who writes the cheques is immaterial, but the money should not come from the block grant.



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I have two quick questions. Can you assure me that on some agenda somewhere is a programme of outreach—for want of a better phrase—for those who are potentially victims, but have moved away from Northern Ireland? They may be elsewhere within the United Kingdom or the world as a whole, but are they alive and alert to the work that you are doing and to their potential for compensation?

Jon McCourt: That outreach is a role for the interim advocate, and he has committed to reaching out beyond the local area to do this. Until now, the difficulty has been that people outside have been reaching in. When the inquiry was initially launched, they said that they had publicised in national papers, but not that many people read national papers. I am being flippant, but *Racing Post* might have been a better place to put the ad than *The Daily Telegraph*. I am just saying it is about how that outreach works. There has been distribution to local councils from Members of this House of information saying, "This is how it is done. This is what is there. This is how you contact people." That is how you do it. That is how we have been doing it, by putting posters in health centres, not on bus stops. I am not saying that did not work, but we got a greater response from the A4 fliers in health centres.

Professor Lundy: I travelled to Australia and met with the former child migrants to tell them about the work of the panel of experts. We have regular communication with those groups in Australia.

Chair: It will not just be Australia.

Professor Lundy: It has to go further, of course.

Chair: On behalf of the Committee, can I thank you very much indeed? I am sure I am not the only one who wishes you did not have to be here. I was struck, during some moments in our proceedings, that these are the sorts of scene that you see in those dramatic court films from America, when terrible things come to light. I do not use this word lightly, but it has been a privilege for us to have met you today and to hear what you have had to say. There will not be a heart that has not been moved by the sincerity and passion of your testimony. Our profound admiration goes to you, Mr McCourt, and to you, Mr McCann, for the huge amounts of voluntary work that you are doing. If that does not get you a reward in heaven, I do not know what will, so thank you for that.

I want you to be assured of this. Politicians are often accused of clichés and paying lip service. We are absolutely seized of the need for speedy, swift and urgent action. I happen to chair the all-party group on thalidomide. We get the impression there that officialdom sometimes moves slowly, just in the hope of natural wastage, that death will reduce the number of potential claimants. I am not persuaded that that is the case here. I want you to leave this meeting with our grateful thanks, but also with the unquestionable certainty of the seriousness with which all of us take these issues and the clear drive that we will give to Ministers, the Chancellor and others. Frankly, changes of personnel and Prime Minister



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are immaterial. When something is right it is right, and it makes no difference which captain is at the helm. Your case is clearly on the side of right, so rest assured that we will do all we can.

Please keep in touch with the Committee and, if you feel there is anything else we can do, do not hesitate for a second to contact us. Thank you again. Have a safe journey home. I am conscious that there are Members in the Public Gallery who indicated that they wanted to contribute to the discussions. Our Standing Orders do not allow that. I will be here for five or 10 minutes if anybody wants to have a quick conversation. If members of the Committee wish to remain as well, that is fine, but I appreciate that people have other things to get on to. Thank you so much again for your testimony and for all that you are doing.