



**Magdalene Institutions:
Recording an Archival and Oral History
A project funded by the**



Topic Guide for Survivors

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Please give your name

Consent to participate: Before starting the interview, I would like to ask you to confirm that you agree to participate in this interview voluntarily and that you are familiar with the information and consent forms that I provided to you.

Background

1. Could you tell me something about yourself? *When and where were you born?*
2. Can you tell me about your family life prior to being sent to the Magdalene Laundry?
Did you have contact with extended family? What was your relationship like with them?
Were you and your family religious?
3. Were you sent to a day school or institutionalised in an Industrial School or Mother and Baby Home prior to entry into the laundry? If so can you tell me about your experience?
4. Do you feel you had a good or bad upbringing? Why?
5. While you were growing up, what had you heard about the Magdalene Laundries?

Entry into the laundry

1. What laundry were you sent to? What year and how old were you?
2. Can you tell me how you came to be sent to the laundry?
3. Did you have any other siblings/children or relatives in laundries or other institutions such as Industrial Schools etc.?
4. Can you remember how you felt being sent to the laundry?

The Laundry Regime I: The Living and Working Conditions

1. Can you remember your first day?
2. Can you describe your living and working conditions?
Were the doors and windows to the laundry locked?
3. Were you given information such as the length of time you would spend, your rights etc.? *Were you given a house name or number and a uniform?*
4. Can you recount your daily routine?
What work did you do?
Were you paid/ given pocket money?
How many days and hours did you work per week?
5. Was every day the same, or were there any special events or holidays?

6. Can you tell me about the food you were given?
7. Do you remember any opportunities for recreation or exercise?
Were you encouraged to do any other activities such as sports?
8. Were you given any opportunities to receive an education during your time there?
9. How did religion play a part during your time in the laundry?

The Laundry Regime II: Discipline and Control

1. Were there any accidents in the laundry? What happened?
2. What happened if you did not want or could not work?
3. Were you ever ill and did you receive treatment? Can you recall what happened to others who were ill?
4. Can you tell me how the women who worked in the laundry were disciplined and punished?
5. Were you beaten or abused in any way during your time there? If so can you give me an account of what happened to you?
6. How did this make you feel?
7. Were there any acts of humiliation? Can you tell me about this?
8. Can you tell me a positive thing about the institution?
9. And can you tell me the worst thing about the institution?

Interacting with others

1. Can you tell me about the staff in the laundry?
2. Did you make any friends?
3. Can you tell me about some of the other women who were in the laundry at the same time as you?
4. Can you tell me what would happen to women who died in the laundry? Were they given a proper funeral and burial?
5. Were friends or relatives allowed to visit you?
6. Were there any other visitors to the Magdalene?
Can you remember whether any government officials or employees ever visited, factory inspectors, Gardaí or doctors? If so what parts of the laundry did they visit and did they talk to anyone?
7. What (if any) contact with the outside world did you have?
8. Was it possible to tell where the items of clothing which were being laundered or repaired came from?
Were you aware of regular contracts-did the laundry have regular clients?
Did you ever have any contact with or talk to the people delivering the clothes to the laundry?

9. How were you treated by the Sisters? How did this make you feel?
10. Did you feel the staff showed any affection towards you?
11. What made a sister good or bad?

The Individual Experience

1. What fears and anxieties did you have?
2. Can you tell me about any survival techniques you developed during your time in the laundry?
3. Did you rebel against the system? If so how?
4. Did you try to escape? If not why not and if you did what happened to you?
5. Did many escape while you were in the laundry and if so, what was the protocol when this was discovered?
6. Can you tell me one word or phrase that best describes your time there?

Leaving

1. Can you tell me one word or phrase that best describes the way you felt on the day you were leaving?
2. When were you told that you were leaving?
3. What happened on the day you were leaving?
Were you released to a position of employment?
4. How did you cope with adapting to the outside world?

The Afterlife I: Life in the Outside World

1. Did you find the laundry had given you an education in life?
2. How did your time in the institution affect your self-confidence and ambition to succeed in life?
3. Do you mind me asking if the time at the institution had any long lasting health effects?
4. Did your time at the laundry affect your eagerness or ability to learn? How?
5. Did your time in the institution affect your religious beliefs? How?
Did you ever feel that you had a vocation?
What impact did the experience have on your own religious beliefs?
6. What other effects did you suffer related to your time at the laundry?
7. Do you have anything else you would like to add?

The Afterlife II: Survival and Resilience in the Outside World

1. How have you coped with the effects of being in the laundry?
2. What do you attribute your survival to? (e.g. God, some innate 'survival' quality in yourself, circumstance/luck).

3. How do you think your experiences in the laundry have affected who you are?
4. Do you think that who you are today is different to the person you were when you were in the Magdalene Laundry? How?
5. If you had not been institutionalised, what do you think you would be doing now?
6. What were the most memorable events in your life?
7. Of all of your accomplishments, what are you the most proud of?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add?

The Afterlife III: Interacting with Others

1. Are you married and do you have any children?
2. What effect did your time in the institution have when it came to relating to the opposite sex?
3. What about when it came to forming intimate relationships with someone?
4. How did your time in the institution affect your ability to express your emotions and show affection with others?
5. Were you reunited with any children you may have had who were adopted prior to being sent to the laundry?
If so, can you tell me about the experience?
Are you still in contact?
6. Are you in touch with anyone from the laundry?
7. How did it affect your ability to form friendships?
8. Are you able to trust people? If not why not?
9. How did it affect your relationship with your children? (If you had any)
10. Did the time in the institution affect your relationship with your family and contacts outside?
11. How did your time in the institution affect your feelings towards Ireland and Irish society in general?
12. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Redress

1. Did you ever get to tell the truth about what happened to you?
2. Have you campaigned on any issues relating to the Magdalene Laundries? If so can you tell me about it?
3. Have you ever complained to anyone (nuns, Gardaí etc.) about your treatment while you were in the laundry?
4. Did you apply to the nuns or the State for your records? If so how were you treated?
5. Are you able to talk with family and other people about your experiences in the laundry?
6. Who is responsible for what happened to you?

7. Did you make an application to the Residential Institutions Redress Board? If so can you tell me what happened?

If you received a payment do you feel your time in the laundry has been fully acknowledged?

8. What would you like the Church/State to do in terms of redress?

9. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Going Abroad (for those who emigrated)

1. How soon did you leave Ireland?

2. Where did you go?

3. Can you tell me why you left?

4. Has that been a good decision?

5. Did you ever want to come back to Ireland? Why or why not?

6. Is there anything else you would like to add?