

The state is still €755 million short in its effort to make religious orders pay their share of the full cost of compensating people who were abused in schools and institutions, The Sunday Times can reveal.

Despite years of talks with the church, taxpayers rather than congregations are having to shoulder a sizeable part of the €2.3 billion redress schemes for historical abuse. The situation underlines the impasse between church and state.

Last week former government officials spoke of their frustration over trying to secure money from the church. Richard Bruton, a former education minister, said many contributions turned out to only be meaningful “on paper”.

Newly released government documents show that church leaders were asked to press religious orders to pay more for the mother and baby home redress scheme.

But they record how Eamon Martin, the Primate of all Ireland, and Dermot Farrell, the Archbishop of Dublin, confirmed that they did not have any jurisdiction over religious orders.

The residential institutions redress scheme was created to provide payments to victims at institutions such as reformatories and industrial schools. The cost totalled €1.5 billion.

The Mother and Baby Institutions Payment Scheme provides redress to those affected by abuse at homes run by nuns for unmarried pregnant women. The cost was estimated at €800 million.

A fund for survivors of abuse at Magdalene laundries was set up but the relevant religious orders refused to assist. The state did not pursue contributions.

The policy of successive governments has been for church and state to split the responsibility for the cost of redress

Total Bill Mother and Baby Institutions Payments Scheme (€254 million owed)	
◆ Contributions (€)	
◆ Expected Contributions (€)	
1. Sisters of the Good Shepherd	€0
	€10,460,032
2. Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary	€0
	€96,521,216
3. Daughters of Charity of St. Vincent de Paul	€0 a property (offered)
	€81,085,312
4. Sisters of Bon Secours	€13,000,000
	€13,000,000
5. Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy	€0
	€81,085,312
6. Sisters of St. John of God	€75,000
	€5,243,392
7. Legion of Mary	€0
	€26,216,960
8. Church of Ireland	€0
	€13,964544

Inside the mother and baby home at Sean Ross Abbey; baby booties placed on the upturned earth at the mother and baby home n Tuam, Co Galway

Excavations begin at the home in Tuam, Co Galway, below; Anna Corrigan is lifted by her mother — Corrigan's older brothers are both recorded as having died in Tuam; Annette McKay and Anna Corrigan — McKay believes the remains of her sister Mary Margaret could be in the mass grave in Tuam, where an excavation is still in progress

maintaining engagement and have stressed that orders must meet their obligations.

Balancing the public's demands for justice with a politically acceptable deal has been a point of tension for numerous governments. Bruton said: “The church tended to be operating on their own system, whereas the state was trying to set up something statutory and that was proving difficult to meet people's needs through that. Then you have orders who dispute the extent to which they were culpable. There are a lot of difficult cross-currents to try to navigate.”

He suggested that the state would face opposition from the orders if it pushed to seize their assets. Martin, the archbishop, has warned that the state should not “unjustly” target orders.

Bruton added: “I would say it's a legally tangled area because you presumably have reasonable defence. Our constitution is strong on protection of property. I imagine reasonable defences could be thrown up and it would be very hard to overturn them. For your legislation to be constitutionally valid you would have to have very intricate mechanisms.”

Well-placed sources said government officials feared that the mother and baby orders may pull out of the process entirely.

Another former senior government source said the “overriding issue” during talks was that the religious orders were in a strong position.

They said: “If the survivors had sued, most might not have got much as the proof of abuse was limited or absent. It was more of a moral thing. I do think we should have sought and got more land — school buildings, hospitals for example.

“[But] the departments wanted cash as they needed the cash for the survivors.”

Some religious orders said in meetings they felt aggrieved at being blamed for abuse. They argued their institutions had been run in a humane manner by the standards of the time.

Tensions between church and the state continued after the publication of the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation report in 2021. Roderic O’Gorman, children's minister at the time, wrote to Martin to say he believed that the religious orders that ran the institutions should contribute to the cost of redress.

According to a government report on the talks, Martin replied to say he was “unable to speak on behalf of the various church bodies” but “would be prepared to help”.

In 2024 Sheila Nunan, the government negotiator, called on Martin and Farrell for a “statement of encouragement” to urge religious orders to engage.

The meeting's minutes, released under the Freedom of Information Act, show that Nunan told Martin and Farrell that she felt religious orders had “removed” themselves from the process. She expressed disappointment with the church leaders.

The archbishops told Nunan that not all religious orders had removed themselves and some would contribute in a “just manner” where they accepted responsibility.

In statements both church leaders confirmed that they did not undertake to put any pressure to engage on religious orders.

“We gave no undertaking to make a public statement on the matter of negotiations between the government and religious congregations. We made clear to Sheila Nunan that the congregations have their own governance, authority and decision-making processes and that bishops have no jurisdiction over them in these matters,” a spokesman for Martin said.

This was echoed by Farrell's spokesperson, who said: “Religious congregations are independent in their governance and in the management of their affairs under law and they do not come within the control or direction of the bishops.”

Patricia Carey, the special advocate for survivors of institutional abuse, said the refusal of the church's leadership to make a statement of encouragement was disappointing. She said that while the religious orders were autonomous, ignoring the state's plea damaged the process.

Carey said: “If they had made a public statement, it would have shown great moral courage and also appealed to the religious sensibilities of the orders. Technically they are independent and autonomous but that would have upped the ante. It's a pity they didn't.”

Most religious orders did not respond to requests for comment. Of those that did, some disputed the state's position on the level of responsibility they share for the running of the institutions.

The Church of Ireland said it did not own or operate any of the mother and baby homes included in the redress scheme; the Sisters of St John of God said there was no evidence it did anything but its best; the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate said its total contribution to redress was more than €32 million; the Sisters of Charity said it fully engaged with the redress processes and met its financial commitments; the Hospitaller order of St John of God said it always tried to co-operate with the state on redress schemes.



schemes equally. Despite this, the state has picked up most of the bill.

In the absence of a legal mechanism to enforce 50-50 payments, the shortfall in contributions is substantial.

Eighteen religious orders have given a total of €249 million. These payments were made in 2002 and then in 2009, when Justice Sean Ryan published his report on abuse in institutions run by the church.

In 2002 Michael Woods, a former education minister, capped the amount that religious orders were required to pay at €128 million. However, the state has since pushed for more, restating its position that the orders should pay half.

The state has received some €125 million in cash, property and other means under the 2002 agreement. These payments were made on a collective basis, meaning that a breakdown of contributions by order is unavailable.

Based on government policy, congregations were expected to contribute half the €1.5 billion redress bill, meaning that the orders still owe €501 million.

Only €124 million has been received by the state after a fresh push for contributions. This falls far short of the €352 million that the orders offered in talks with government.

The €1.5 billion bill includes the cost of the investigations into historical abuse as well as the creation of a statutory body to make financial awards to individuals who were abused as children. It also includes money for Caranua, a now-closed fund that was established using €110 million from the religious orders to provide housing, health and education services for victims who had already received legal settlements or a payment from the state.

Only one religious order, the Bon Secours Sisters, has covered its share of the cost of redress for abuse at mother and baby homes. Seven orders still owe €254 million.

The state calculated the amount that each order should contribute based on the number of mothers and babies resident in their institutions.

€755 MILLION OWED TO REDRESS SCHEMES

Taxpayer picks up the slack as the state struggles to make religious orders pay up, *Patrick O'Donoghue* writes

The Congregation of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary faces the biggest bill, some €96.5 million. Sources in the Department of Children said it was awaiting legal advice from the attorney-general on how to create fresh momentum for new payments.

The department commissioned a report from EY, an accountancy firm, which found that the religious orders responsible for the abuse had assets of €1.3 billion.

The department said 5,300 people had applied for compensation and 5,100 payments had been made.

Bruton and his former colleagues in government who worked on redress schemes believed the state was in a weak position. He said that in his time as a minister there was disappointment as religious orders' contributions consistently fell short of what had been pledged.

“The commitments people made were difficult to realise in practice. Then there was the issue of the form in which compensation would be offered and [whether it could be turned] it into immediate cash or service benefits for the people impacted,” Bruton said.

Those in government realised that the state was hampered by the lack of a legal basis to compel religious orders to pay more. Instead civil servants said the only method available was to exert moral pressure.

Officials have focused on



ILLUSTRATION: TONY BELL

“Only the Bon Secours Sisters has covered its share. Seven other orders still owe €254m



THE SUNDAY TIMES

Style



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Russian submarines tracked on spying missions in the Irish Sea

John Mooney
Investigations Editor

Russian submarines are secretly being deployed alongside Moscow's best-known spy ship to map critical undersea infrastructure around Ireland and Britain, raising fears of sabotage.

Defence sources in the UK have revealed that in November last year a submarine shadowed the Yantar, a Russian vessel officially described as a research ship, as it surveyed a gas pipeline linking Ireland and the UK. It is not known

whether the escort was one of Russia's purpose-built sabotage submarines. In response Britain's Royal Navy tracked the Yantar with one of its submarines.

A newly declassified image of the encounter has been released to The Sunday Times, showing the navy's submarine and an anti-submarine Merlin Mk 2 helicopter during the incident in the Irish Sea.

It is believed to be one of several operations in which Russian submarines have secretly accompanied the Yantar into waters close to Ireland and Britain.

Last week the head of the Royal Navy, General Sir Gwyn Jenkins, warned that Russia was renewing investment in its elite deep-sea submarine division, known as GUGI, giving Moscow the option to use "physical action" against Britain and its western allies.

Before the incident in 2024, the Yantar had left Russia's Kola peninsula and sailed towards Norway, down the Channel and into the Irish Sea towards the Isle of Man. Under close surveillance, it briefly activated its transponder while loitering near an area where the gas

connector is exposed, in effect taunting its pursuers. Naval vessels and patrol aircraft tasked with tracking the Yantar had to adopt countermeasures, defence sources said. Crews were banned from using mobile phones and told to transmit only to secure channels to cut the risk of interception.

A Royal Navy hunter-killer submarine was ordered to surface near the spy ship in a show of force. Sources said that it sent the following transmission: "Thank you for allowing us to monitor your every move for the last few days."

The gas pipeline was later inspected by specialist divers to ensure it had not been mined. There are fears that Russia could plant explosives on underwater cables or pipelines, which could be detonated during a time of war.

Military officials also believe spy ships are being deployed in the Irish Sea to intercept communications of naval ships and aircraft to see how Nato and its allies respond to provocations. The Yantar's capabilities make it difficult to monitor without a risk of compromising sensitive communications.

"We were aware of its planned arrival long before it entered our area of responsibility," an Irish Military Intelligence Service officer said. "Once it crossed into Irish waters, however, we observed a change in crew behaviour and the mounting of weapons. The Irish navy and air corps maintained constant surveillance with our partners."

Although the Yantar is capable of underwater sabotage, defence sources were confident it did not deploy submersibles while over the pipeline. Dublin was later warned sabotage of the gas inter-

connector in winter could cause rolling blackouts and severe economic damage. "There is deep co-operation with EU member states and with the United Kingdom in respect of all of these issues, and that has been ongoing," Micheál Martin, the taoiseach, told The Sunday Times. "One has to be very vigilant and one has to strengthen resilience in respect of critical undersea infrastructure because our society and modern economy depend on that."

He pointed to sabotage believed

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Church assets 'should not be unjustly seized'

Archbishop fears 'political opportunism' against religious orders, noting state also bears responsibility for abuse

Patrick O'Donoghue

The leader of the Catholic church in Ireland has warned against "political opportunism" amid suggestions that assets could be seized from religious orders to fund redress schemes for survivors of historical abuse.

In an exclusive interview with The Sunday Times, Eamon Martin, the primate of all Ireland, cautioned the state against pursuing a policy of targeting the resources of congregations who failed to pay towards compensation for people abused while under the care of religious-run institutions.

Norma Foley, the minister for children, has said department officials had contacted the attorney-general's office to explore options to compel religious orders to pay towards redress schemes where they had not done so. Survivors and opposition TDs have called for religious assets to be seized.

A government report found that five out of eight religious orders had not contributed to the mother and baby homes redress scheme. Foley wrote to these orders to express her "disappointment" at their lack of co-operation.

A commission of investigation into how historical child abuse at religious-run schools was handled was set up in July, and is ongoing. Separately, a new scoping inquiry into sexual abuse at religious-run boarding and day schools identified 2,395 allegations against members of 42 religious orders in more than 300 schools.

Pressure has been rising for

religious orders to adopt a more proactive approach on issues of accountability.

Simon Harris, the tanaiste, said the government had a number of levers at its disposal to ensure religious orders stepped up contributions to redress schemes. Separately, Ivana Bacik, the Labour Party leader, has proposed a bill that would mandate orders to pay into redress schemes.

"I would hope that we're not back into penal times where the churches will be unjustly targeted with regard to assets," Martin said.

The Archbishop of Armagh said religious orders' assets were for charitable purposes and argued that the state also bore a share of responsibility for abuse in religious institutions.

"We need to be careful that the responsibility for whatever happened is justly apportioned. That includes the state, state actors and state agencies who maybe were in mother and baby homes overseeing those homes," Martin said.

Asked whether he thought the government seizing assets was an inevitable course of action, Martin instead appealed for restraint and consultation. "We need to be careful about political opportunism. The discussions around this need to be transparent from the point of view of the churches and also from the point of view of the state with regard to what are these assets and what are they being used for. The churches are essentially charitable, their assets are used for particular purposes," Martin said.

He added that while religious

orders should contribute to redress schemes for victims, this should be done "insofar as it is just".

"It needs to be transparent. Why are these assets being seized and for what reason was this particular congregation targeted? I would be disappointed if the state just simply scapegoated religious orders or the church. I do feel that we need to help victims and survivors with whatever assets we can find."

Asked whether he believed there would be more revelations of abuse, Martin said he and the church's leadership "continue to be shocked" by fresh claims of historical abuse. "I do not think we can ever say we have heard it all," he said.

Martin also suggested religious orders might face financial struggles in cases where they had not been proactive enough in engaging with redress schemes.

"A very difficult situation may emerge whenever a religious congregation or a diocese no longer has the resources to be able to meet the just compensation for victims and survivors," Martin said.

He added that the church had responded to such scandals by putting in place "best practice" in the safeguarding of children and the vulnerable, which was open to independent review.

"Survivors will also come forward looking for compensation. The church has attempted, or is attempting to do that, using whatever resources are at its disposal."

Ireland must regain its soul, page 6

CHEF'S KISS



Gordon Ramsay with his daughter Holly, who married the British Olympic swimming star Adam Peaty at Bath Abbey yesterday. A family rift meant the groom's parents did not attend. Full story, page 7

New grants to break up costs of retrofitting properties

Jennifer Bray
Political Editor

Homeowners will be given access to new grants to allow them to split up their retrofitting plans as part of a new series of measures to bring down electricity bills and meet energy targets.

Darragh O'Brien, the minister for energy, environment and transport, is finalising a new "retrofit passport" scheme that would allow homeowners to apply for financial help from the state to upgrade windows, doors and heat pumps separately rather than the current scheme under which all works must be done together.

O'Brien is working as well on a new grants scheme for the estimated 300,000 homes in energy bill arrears.

In an interview with The Sunday Times, the minister also spoke about missed climate targets.

Under the existing national home energy upgrade scheme, homeowners can apply for an overall assessment and grant to retrofit their properties, with the median amount of grant offered ranging from €12,000 for an apartment to €22,000 for a detached home. Grants for windows, doors and heat pumps are available as part of this overall scheme, whereas they are not available if a homeowner seeks a grant for an individual upgrade.

Under the changes, instead of having to front the entire retrofitting bill in one year, homeowners could split the project up into windows and doors in one phase, heat pumps in another, and insulation, for example, in a different year.

"I want to deploy those grants in a more phased basis, and we're well advanced on work to bring forward these further grant options for people," O'Brien said.

"I want to have a type of retrofit passport. If you go for a deep retrofit right now, while the grants are really good, it's a big chunk of change. It means that I could get windows and doors, or windows and doors plus insulation, but I don't have to do the whole lot [at once]. It won't be increasing the grant demands necessarily; it would be breaking them down and bringing in new grants. I am trying to make them more accessible. If I replace the windows and doors in my house, that does make my house warmer, it means I will reduce my energy use and reduce

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McGinley: McIlroy regrets Olympic pullout in 2016

Lynne Kelleher

Ireland's former Olympic golf captain believes that Rory McIlroy and Shane Lowry regret their decision to pull out of the Rio Games.

Paul McGinley expresses his lingering disappointment at the lost opportunity for a gold medal for Ireland in a new RTE documentary, *Rory McIlroy: A Battle Won*, which chronicles an incredible year for McIlroy in which he finally completed a career grand slam of golf's four major tournaments.

The hour-long programme also

revisits the rollercoaster season when McIlroy won the Irish Open and led Europe to a Ryder Cup victory, despite a torrent of verbal abuse from a hostile American crowd.

Reflecting on the run-up to the Rio Olympics in 2016, McGinley was convinced that Ireland was uniquely well placed with McIlroy and Lowry available.

"I thought, wow, for a little country like ours, what a prime opportunity to win a gold medal for Ireland."

The documentary also explores

McIlroy's internal struggle over whether to represent Britain or Ireland at the Olympics. McGinley was very happy when McIlroy – riding high on the success of winning two majors in 2014 – declared for Ireland.

But in the months before the games McIlroy and Lowry both withdrew, citing concerns about the Zika virus.

"For both of them to pull out on the back of the 'Zika crisis'," says McGinley making air quotes, "was very disappointing, and I'd say both of them kind of regret that

decision, and how great an opportunity it was to win a gold medal for your country."

McIlroy's former school principal, John Stevenson of Sullivan Upper School, had sympathy with his former pupil over which nation to declare for.

"When Rory was placed in this position to make a decision, it was a dilemma, because he was going to alienate some people."

Darren Clarke, the Co Tyrone golfer, felt that McIlroy had been "forced into a corner".

McIlroy declared for Ireland at

the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, where he narrowly missed out on a bronze medal. "It's one of those things that his view changed and evolved," McGinley said.

The documentary traces McIlroy's rise from child prodigy in Hollywood, Co Down, to global sporting superstar. For McGinley, the story is one of resilience and redemption.

"No matter how devastating a defeat you can get, no matter how many views people may have on what you did, there's still a way back," he said.

Rory McIlroy – A Battle Won will be broadcast tonight on RTE1 at 9.30pm

