



EXPLAINER - WHAT IS A SCOPING EXERCISE? (LEADING TO A PUBLIC INQUIRY)

Scoping Exercise Overview

A scoping exercise for a public inquiry is a **preliminary, time-bound assessment** that maps out existing evidence, identifies key victims and survivors' issues, and helps define a public inquiry's/commission of investigations terms of reference.

It serves as a **starting point** to more in-depth investigations by clarifying the scope and overall landscape of a problem, rather than conducting a definitive trial-like investigation.

In the context of non-recent sexual abuse, the Scoping Exercise can gather information from survivors and others through questionnaires, direct discussions and information held (e.g. Guards, DPP, Hospital, etc.). A Scoping Exercise identifies key experiences, concerns, and recommendations to shape any public inquiry recommended.

Key Steps in the Scoping Exercise

1. Engagement with Victims and Survivors

- Victims and Survivors are invited to share their experiences through questionnaires or direct discussions.
- This engagement is often facilitated by trained professionals who use trauma-informed practices.

2. Data Collection

- Information is collected on the nature and extent of abuse, as well as the needs and expectations of victims and survivors.
- This may include both interviews, surveys, and information from other sources to provide a comprehensive view.
- This would also require gathering information from various institutions and processes:
 1. An Garda Síochána
 2. Northeastern Health Board
 3. Medical Missionaries of Mary
 4. Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital
 5. Hederman O'Brien Report (1995 North Eastern Health Board Inquiry into the process and procedures in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital)
 6. Dept of Health
 7. The Drogheda Review - Judge Smyth (2010 to advise on public inquiry)
 8. Director of Public Prosecutions
 9. Court Cases, Legal Proceedings and Court Judgements

3. Analysis of Findings

- The collected data is analysed to identify common themes, issues, and gaps in existing responses to sexual abuse.
- This analysis helps in understanding the context and specific areas that require further investigation.

4. Recommendations for Inquiry Structure



- Based on the findings, recommendations are made regarding the scope, focus, and methodology of the public inquiry.
- This includes identifying key areas of concern, potential witnesses, and necessary resources.

5. Flexibility

- As a "living document," the scope of the exercise can be modified as new information emerges.

Purpose of the Scoping Exercise

- To ensure that the public inquiry is relevant and addresses the needs of those affected.
- To create a framework that is informed by the lived experiences of victims and survivors, ensuring their voices are central to the inquiry process.

This structured approach helps to lay the groundwork for a thorough and effective public inquiry.

What does a Scoping Exercise not do?

Provide a definitive or final review

A Scoping Exercise cannot produce a final, conclusive assessment. It is a FIRST step to determine whether a full, formal review or inquiry is required.

Address a highly specific or narrow question

It does not focus on a tightly defined agenda. Instead, it explores a broad range of issues to understand the overall landscape.

Assess or weigh the strength of evidence

A scoping exercise does not evaluate the quality of evidence, judge the effectiveness of interventions, or reach conclusions about what evidence it finds.

Make binding decisions or policy recommendations

It does not provide a final answer or set out concrete, actionable changes. Its purpose is to inform the structure and direction of further public inquiry/commission of investigation, not to determine outcomes.