

# Dignity4Patients renews call for inquiry into Shine case

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An organisation caring for victims of sexual assault in a medical setting has renewed its call for a public inquiry into the scandal surrounding the conviction of former Lourdes Hospital surgeon Michael Shine and says it is appalled at delays in civil settlements for over 100 victims and survivors.

Dignity4Patients has worked for decades supporting those who were sexually assaulted by Shine when they were patients at the hospital and at his clinic between 1965 and 1996. He was a surgeon at the Drogheda hospital for 30 years. Shine is believed to have been released from the Midlands Prison today (Wednesday 23rd) after serving a sentence for some of these assaults. Dignity4Patients CEO Adrienne Reilly says that: "Our thoughts on his release are very much with the victims and survivors and their families. Michael Shine has served sentences for convictions relating to several awful sexual assaults involving a number of victims. While the sentence served has given limited solace to some, others are still waiting for some form of justice through further criminal or civil proceedings". "Victims and survivors we support are suffering over 50 years later. Still waiting for an apology, still waiting for some kind of acknowledgement to the despicable harms they have suffered, many as children."

In light of this, she said that 101 Dignity4Patients victims and survivors are calling on the Government to intervene and explain why the HSE and Medical Missionary of Mary's (MMM) ongoing row over costs is delaying payment of damages to them. An indemnity fund was set up in 1997 through the sale of the hospital by the MMM to the North Eastern Health Board and monies were set aside specifically for claims regarding sexual abuse. It is known that this was internally referred to as the "Shine Fund", which the organisation says is worth 4.9 million as of 2017 and presumably significantly more today. Victims and Survivors were led to believe that the Medical Missionaries of Mary had agreed to a settlement deal with their legal teams prior to Christmas 2021, the CEO said.

Essentially the HSE and MMM in their row over costs has had the direct result of "derailing" the settlement process for victims and survivors and forcing the progression of civil litigation cases before a jury. If this is allowed to happen this could take some time for the first case to come on, and years more for the rest. "The HSE and the MMM row has nothing to do with victims and survivors", Ms Reilly said.

She said that some survivors had already died. Time marches on and many survivors are facing serious health challenges as they age. "Mr Shine has been tried, convicted, served his sentence, and is now being released, with no sign yet of restitution for the present group of survivors of his abuse over 30 years, when they were children. This contrasts sharply with other redress schemes established by the State and religious bodies in similar circumstances". Ms Reilly says that "this is appalling, alarming, egregious and causing further unnecessary trauma upset and harm. This case has been running for over 10 years for abuse that happened to many of them as children decades ago. While any settlement will not make them whole again, it will serve to acknowledge what has happened to them, give them the respect they deserve and allow them to move on in some respects."

Adrienne Reilly continues: "We are also renewing our call on Government, on behalf of all victims and survivors, to establish a public inquiry into the sexual abuse of patients in the Irish health service. Recent events such as the Barron Report and last week's incidents in the North West are clear indicators that there is an immediate and critical need to explore the massive and ongoing failures in the child protection and criminal justice systems that allow serial abusers to operate with impunity in our health service for decades!" And that "any Public Inquiry must include the practices in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital Drogheda and local clinic, where Shine worked for over 30 years." Dignity4Patients are also calling on the Government to identify and adequately support and care for patient/victims of sexual offences suffered within the Irish health service. Dignity4Patients continues to work in a client centred, confidential and highly professional manner supporting victims of sexual abuse in health care settings.

**If you have been affected by any of the issues raised in this article, you can contact Dignity4Patients, whose helpline is open Monday to Thursday 10am to 4pm.**