

# Michael Shine victims' support group joins battle against Medical Missionaries of Mary's

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Outraged victims of sexual abuser surgeon Michael Shine are supporting the State in a fight against the Medical Missionaries of Mary's bid to use funds set aside for them.

Weekend reports outlined how the religious order, with headquarters in Drogheda, Co Louth, have requested a return of monies from the Indemnity Fund of €1.6m it agreed with the State in 1997. This fund was set up to pay for sexual abuse cases.

Local advocacy group Dignity4Patients says they and the victims they support are 'outraged at reports'. "We have evidence that this fund internally in the Department of Health was called 'the Shine Fund', and we understand that an independent expert has been appointed, and we strongly support the State in their resistance to any monies being released," CEO of Dignity 4 Patients Adrienne Reilly. "While some adult survivors have received civil redress in the form of compensation via the insurer of the Medical Missionaries of Mary, many are still in protracted criminal justice processes for decades. In fact, for most of their adult lives. Alleged victims are still coming forward".

Former surgeon Michael Shine was convicted and jailed for four years for abusing boys in his care in Our Lady of Lourdes hospital and his private rooms in Fair Street, with the High Court hearing more than 110 civil actions had been settled.

"Dignity4Patients was set up originally with the sole purpose of providing support, advocacy and information to victims and survivors on their justice pathways. We and the victims and survivors should have been informed by the Medical Missionaries of Mary, the Minister, or the Department of Health that an Independent Expert has been appointed," added Ms Reilly. "We now look forward to cooperating with this Independent Expert so they can get a full and meaningful up to date picture of victims ongoing costs in pursuing justice avenues before funds set aside for them are released".

She said they also understand that an Independent Expert is only appointed where there is disagreement on how much the Religious Order can draw down.

"We are deeply concerned that an Independent Expert may decide on this without any input from us or the victims and survivors who engage with our services. For whom do they act, if not them," she asked. "The money that has accrued through interest in this account should be given over immediately to meet the rights, requests and medical needs of the victims and survivors".

They said one potential State response to the issue of justice is a Commission of Investigation into Michael Shine, or a broader inquiry into sexual abuse in Ireland, on the back of the calls from Dignity4Patients, One in Four and others that any inquiry should be a broad-based inquiry into systemic organisational sexual abuse.

"Victims and survivors are still suffering over 50 years later and still waiting for some formal public acknowledgement to the harms they have suffered. Considering this, monies from the indemnity fund should absolutely not go back to the Medical Missionaries of Mary," said the CEO. "We will be contacting all relevant parties in the coming days. We strongly support the State in protecting this money and will absolutely fight tooth and nail on behalf of victims and survivors that the Medical Missionaries of Mary do not receive any payment from this fund".

**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.**