



Oifig an Stiúirthóra um
Idirghabháil Údaraithe, Tuaim
Office of the Director of
Authorised Intervention, Tuam

Annual Report 2024



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Introduction



*Existing south-eastern boundary wall of former
Tuam Workhouse onto Tober Jarlath Road*

This is the second Annual Report produced by the Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam (ODAIT), to be submitted to the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality (the Minister) pursuant to Section 23 of the Institutional Burials Act 2022 (the Act).

The report covers the period 1 January to 31 December 2024.

Mr Daniel MacSweeney was appointed in May 2023 as Director of the Office of Authorised Intervention, Tuam (DAIT). Since May 2023, the Office has been in a set-up and establishment phase, focussed primarily on having all of the staff, equipment, consents and processes ready to commence work at the Tuam site as soon as possible. Engagement with families and survivors and collection of DNA in accordance with the staged process foreseen by the Act was another priority. This report details the activities of the Director and of ODAIT during this period.

Message from the Director



“I want to give the 796 children buried at Tuam their dignity and, if we can, an identity.”

*Daniel MacSweeney, Irish Times Article;
14 March 2024*

I am pleased to introduce the second Annual Report of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam, for the reporting period 1 January to 31 December 2024.

The Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam (ODAIT) was established under the Institutional Burials Act, 2022 (the Act) in March 2023 and I was appointed as Tuam Director on 22 May 2023 to perform functions as assigned under the Government Order ([S.I. No. 518/2022](#)) for the Tuam site. See the map of the Tuam site at appendix 1.

In directing the establishment of ODAIT and appointing the Tuam Director, the Government has created the potential for Ireland to deliver a degree of solace to families, survivors and to the wider community for a dark chapter in the State’s past. The Government also created an opportunity for greater clarity about the fate and whereabouts of children believed to be inappropriately buried at the Tuam Mother and Baby Institution and whose remains will be recovered during the forensic excavation. However, there are many forensic challenges to be faced in this endeavour, as discussed below in this message. Nothing quite like this has been done in Ireland or indeed globally.

In my first annual report, I stated that my overarching objective in my first 18 months was to establish an independent, respected Office supported and understood by families, survivors and their advocates; an Office capable of delivering a process that meets international forensic standards and best practice, with good governance, and positioned to begin appropriate excavation and forensic analysis as soon as possible. I believe that this was achieved in 2024, and that the forensic excavation of the Tuam site and recovery of human remains will begin in mid-2025.

During 2024, I worked to develop sufficient capacity to start the excavation in 2025. The key steps were:

- The provision of a preliminary engineering report in March 2024.
- ODAIT partnering with the Office of Public Works (OPW) in the planning of the groundworks.
- The appointment of TOBIN as consultant engineers following a tendering process.
- ODAIT forensic experts working with OPW and TOBIN to develop a detailed design and forensic plan for the works at the Tuam site.
- Preliminary groundworks at the Tuam site in November 2024.
- In December, ODAIT launched a procurement process seeking a main contractor to work with ODAIT forensic staff on the forensic excavation and recovery of human remains from the Tuam site to international forensic standards and best practice.



Preliminary surveys at site - November 2024

Throughout 2024, ODAIT continued to progress the forensic approach, liaising with a number of forensic experts, researchers, the OPW and FSI to identify the requirements for the multi-disciplinary team, the laboratory, and the protocols and procedures necessary for undertaking the intervention at Tuam.

With a growing number of colleagues, we have been consolidating this new state agency with all of the required systems, policies and procedures with respect to the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies. In 2024, ODAIT was audited by the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) as well as by the internal audit function of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). DCDE continued to support me in the establishment and consolidation of the Office.

The Tuam intervention is a highly sensitive, publicised and closely monitored element of the State's response to the scandals that have reverberated in recent decades, continuing to attract interest at local, national and international levels. The history of the 'Tuam babies' scandal brings high expectations from families, survivors and their advocates, as well as significant and understandable anxiety, attention and support from the general public.

Communicating ODAIT's approach, process and work is of the utmost importance. I have kept local newspapers and radio updated on progress, as well as continuing to speak regularly to national and indeed international media. This is also part of the remit of the Director.

Keeping families, survivors and their advocates at the centre of ODAIT's work remained a priority for me throughout 2024.

I regularly met various family members and survivors, groups and individuals to hear their perspective on the Tuam intervention, what they wanted and how they wanted to interact with me and my Office. They remain at the centre of our work. They are informed, consulted and valued. I regularly met Catherine Corless, whose tireless work led directly to the creation of this Office, keeping her informed of developments.

In 2024, we also launched our website at www.odait.ie where for the benefit of families, survivors and the general public we included an explanation of what ODAIT does. This included an explanation of the various elements and processes that ODAIT will engage in, including:

- taking DNA samples from eligible family members;
- conducting the forensic excavation of the site;
- conducting multidisciplinary scientific analysis of human remains recovered from the site;
- identification using DNA testing and matching.

In the interests of communication and accountability, the website also included a timeline for the ODAIT's work which we endeavour to adhere to, and if we don't we explain why.

The Administrative Scheme continued. It allows officials of the Department to take samples from elderly and/or vulnerable 'eligible family members' under certain conditions where there are serious concerns about their age or health status and their ability to wait until the Identification Programme commences. By end 2024, eight samples had been taken. This scheme is a precursor to the statutory Identification Programme that will begin at a later date, in accordance with the staged approach of the Institutional Burials Act 2022.

The Tuam community is also of great importance to our work and I have regularly met with their representatives, TDs and county councillors, as well as with officials of Galway County Council and other community leaders. Again, they are informed, consulted and valued.

I appointed a community liaison officer, Denise Houlihan who has developed relationships with those living close to the site in order to understand their concerns and to consult them on our plans for the works at the site and the excavation. As mentioned above, preliminary groundworks took place at the Tuam site in November 2024.

I understand the importance of dignity and respect especially when it comes to families, survivors and their advocates; of communication, and of the dignity of the dead.

It is welcome that the Director and the Office are independent and must respect international forensic standards and best practice. I also understand the importance of good corporate governance. This experience is reflected in the Core Values of ODAIT, as set out in the Overview part of this report.

I acknowledge the supportive attitude of the various state agencies from whom I have sought assistance, advice and support in 2024. In 2025, we will begin the long-awaited excavation of the Tuam site and all the steps that flow from it.



Daniel MacSweeney
Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam

Overview

Our Statutory Responsibilities

Following the making of the Institutional Burials Act 2022 (Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam) Order 2022 ([S.I. No. 518/2022](#)), the Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth established the Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention Tuam (‘the Office of the Director’) by Institutional Burials Act 2022 (Establishment of Office of Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam) Order 2023 ([S.I. No. 87/223](#)) in accordance with Section 9(1) of the Institutional Burials Act 2022 (“the 2022 Act”).

The Government Order ([S.I. No. 518/2022](#)) directed the Minister to establish an independent Office of the Director by order to perform the functions set out in section 10(a)-(k) and additional functions set out in 10(l)ii of the 2022 Act.

Accordingly, the key functions of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam are as follows:

- manage and control generally the staff, administration and business of the Office;
- identify and engage the expertise required to assist him or her in performing his or her functions;
- obtain any necessary consents for the carrying out of works;
- arrange for the forensic excavation and recovery of human remains buried in a manifestly inappropriate manner on principal burial land;
- arrange for the post-recovery analysis of human remains after forensic excavation and recovery of those remains;
- arrange for the carrying out of remedial works to the land on completion of the recovery of human remains from the land;

- undertake an Identification Programme;
- make final arrangements for human remains recovered from principal burial land;
- provide regular updates to relatives of the deceased, other stakeholders and the public;
- consult with an Advisory Board at regular intervals.



*Overlay of OSi Last Edition map and boundary of excavation
Map courtesy of Tailte Éireann © CYAL50423428*

As per the Legislation, the Director's powers include:

- hiring staff and entering into contracts to deliver the objectives;
- accessing land to recover human remains buried in a manifestly inappropriate manner;
- conducting an Identification Programme that will (after the satisfaction of certain legislative preconditions) as part of a multidisciplinary approach, involve taking DNA samples from 'eligible family members';
- carry out works on land;
- cooperate with the Director of Forensic Science Ireland (FSI) to enable the Director of FSI to perform his functions under the Act.

Core Values



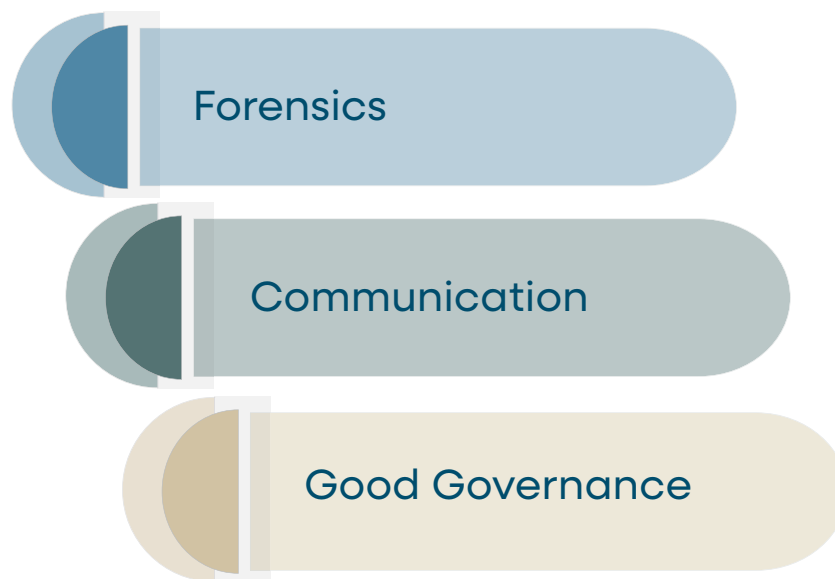
Mission Statement

To restore dignity in death and, where possible, an identity to those inappropriately buried between 1925 and 1961 at the site of the former Mother and Baby Institution in Tuam.

Statement of Strategy

Having developed the capacity, ODAIT will forensically excavate the Tuam site, recover and analyse human remains in accordance with international forensic standards and best practice. Acknowledging the high complexity and difficulty, ODAIT will endeavour to individualise and identify those human remains and establish the cause and circumstances of death. Identified human remains will be returned to their families, and unidentified human remains will be buried appropriately and with dignity. All will be memorialised after a consultative process informed by ODAIT's core values. We will communicate with families and other stakeholders and respect good governance.

There are three pillars that are fundamental to ODAIT's strategy:



Our Strategic Approach

As explained in the 2023 annual report, the Director has developed a strategic approach to address the complexity faced in this context, and to build an independent Office with the capacity to deliver the Tuam intervention. There are three pillars: Forensics is the core business of ODAIT, Communication is the key external enabler and Good Governance, the key internal enabler.

In 2024, ODAIT made progress in the Forensic approach as follows:

- ODAIT forensic experts identified the functions and profiles needed for the multi-disciplinary site and laboratory team and preparing to hire them as needed in 2025.
- ODAIT continued to cooperate with OPW concerning the identification of a location for a functioning laboratory and developing plans to upgrade that location to meet ODAIT's requirements.
- ODAIT forensic staff worked to develop a general system of work (protocols and procedures) and a data management system in order to be ready to begin the excavation in mid-2025.
- Clear systems of cooperation have been developed with FSI which is responsible for the DNA aspects of the Tuam intervention.
- ODAIT's research work, accessing records to understand the history of the Tuam site and those believed to be buried at the Tuam site continued.

The forensic analysis of the human remains recovered will begin in the ODAIT laboratory, and subsequently as part of this multidisciplinary process, selected samples from the recovered human remains will be analysed in the laboratory of FSI. When the excavation ends, the forensic analysis will continue until all human remains recovered from the era of the Mother and Baby Institution in Tuam (1925-1961) have been forensically analysed.

Communication must be approached strategically and with care and sensitivity. The support of families, survivors and their advocates as well as the Tuam community and the general public is important. We will explain the process, listen to concerns and to the extent possible (while still pursuing the objectives under the legislation), adjust ODAIT's approach to take these legitimate concerns into account. Providing insight and supporting understanding of the complex forensic operation is key.

Concerning Good Governance, ODAIT is an independent public body, under the management and control of the Director and under the auspices of DCDE. The Department has supported its establishment in line with good governance, and an Oversight Agreement is in place between ODAIT and the Department.

The functioning of ODAIT is governed by the Institutional Burials Act 2022 and the general law. Under the Act, the Director is accountable to the Public Accounts Committee and other Oireachtas committees. This Good Governance pillar is intended to contain all of the necessary elements to run the Office in accordance with the relevant administrative, legal and governance standards in line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016.



Southern boundary wall of Memorial Garden

Organisational Development

Developing Capacity in our Team



ODAIT team - January 2025

Throughout 2024 we focussed on finalising our administrative organisational structure to enable us to fully deliver on the mission of the Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam (ODAIT).

We recruited through a variety of means, including secondment calls, recruitment agencies and direct hiring to further build on our dedicated team who are committed to restoring dignity in death to those believed to be buried at Tuam.

In line with the requirements under s.12 of the Institutional Burial Act 2022, the Office received sanction from the Department of Public Expenditure, NDP Delivery & Reform for the recruitment of posts to support the building of our team. Support was received in this regard from HR DCEDIY and the Public Appointments Service.

In January 2024 our Deputy Director joined the team to lead our governance and administrative functions, followed by the recruitment of eight highly motivated administrative staff who applied for roles with ODAIT and were onboarded in the summer of 2024 across a variety of units, including Communications, Procurement, Finance and Human Resources. We also appointed a Community Liaison Officer to work with the residents of the Tuam community.

In September 2024, our Head of Communications joined the team. We have developed clear and high standards in engaging with families, survivors and their advocates, and in seeking to explain what we do, why and when. We finalised the recruitment process for a Family and Survivors Liaison in Q4 of 2024, who we expect to have appointed in Q1 of 2025 to accompany the families and survivors of those affected by the former Mother and Baby Institution in Tuam. We secured training for all our staff in the area of trauma-informed practice to ensure our staff are equipped to deliver on the mission of the Office in a trauma-informed manner.

The commitment of all our staff to work in pursuit of the restoration of dignity of those believed to be buried at the Tuam site and their families is strong.

Communications

ODAIT is committed to its mission, to restore dignity in death and, where possible, an identity to those inappropriately buried between 1925 and 1961 at the site of the former Mother and Baby Institution in Tuam.

The core business of the Office is Forensics, which is supported by Communications, our key external enabler, fundamental to our strategy, and upheld by Good Governance, our key internal enabler. In pursuit of our mission, which is underpinned by our core values, we keep those affected by the Mother and Baby Institution at Tuam at the centre of our approach to the work of ODAIT.

2024 was an important year for the establishment of our communications team, dedicated to independently and respectfully delivering our communications approach with the care and sensitivity required to all of our stakeholders. Our Head of Communications joined the team in September.

In November 2024 we launched our website and engaged cross departmentally in communications with those working on the National Centre for Research and Remembrance.

Our Community Liaison worked closely with the Tuam community, and a Family and Survivors Liaison was successfully recruited for at the end of 2024. The key priority for these roles is accompaniment, to be the main points of contact for the groups they are representing, to explain processes, listen to concerns and to the extent where possible (while still pursuing the objectives under the legislation) adjust ODAIT's approach to take legitimate concerns into account.

ODAIT is committed to maintaining the standards of communication we have demonstrated to date with all key stakeholders, including families, survivors, advocates, residents, the general public and the media.



Services Procurement

ODAIT engaged in quality procurement solutions that align with national procurement guidelines ensuring transparency, fairness, competition, and value-for-money while meeting the needs and delivering the objectives of the Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam within its budget constraints.

Section 23 (5)(b) of the Institutional Burials Act 2022 requires the Director to name in the annual report each person that the Director has entered into contracts or arrangements with, and any person appointed as a consultant or adviser. The Director has appointed the following consultants in 2024:

During 2024, we successfully secured the services of:

- a. Coleman Quinn & Associates produced an engineer report to assist with the preparation of the tender for the multi-disciplinary consultancy services for the forensic excavation and recovery at the former Mother and Baby Institution, Tuam.
- b. EY provided the initial consultation on data protection services for setting up ODAIT.
- c. Timeline will provide the research expertise to assist the undertaking of the intervention at the Tuam site.
- d. Forensic Action International will provide the services of a forensic programme management expert to assist the Director during the project.
- e. Beauchamps, who will provide legal services to ODAIT in relation to matters arising under the Institutional Burials Act 2022 and other corporate functions, including employment, data protection, procurement etc.

- f. Forensic Human Identification Global Services Pty Ltd, a specialist professional service consulting on relevant DNA identification technologies and forensic genetics, and their applicability to the project in Tuam.
- g. Owen McDonough & Associates Ltd provided accountancy services for the financial statements.
- h. TOBIN Engineering, a multi-disciplinary consultancy services and project supervisor design process consultancy service for the forensic excavation and recovery at the former Mother and Baby Institution, Tuam, Co. Galway.
- i. M-memory Cuimhne Ltd, who will oversee the management and analysis of data associated with the project.
- j. BID and Tender Management Services, who provide consultancy services to ODAIT on general public procurement and best practice.
- k. Dorland Training, who provide ODAIT with a range of training from induction to leadership skills workshops.
- l. Radii, who assisted ODAIT on the development and launch of our website and provide support in its maintenance and continued improvement.
- m. Dr. N. A. McCullagh is the senior forensic consultant who will plan and prepare for the excavation and recovery of human remains from the Tuam site

Governance

ODAIT is committed to maintaining the standards of good corporate governance, as reflected in our key strategic pillars, which contains all the necessary elements to run the Office in accordance with the relevant administrative, legal and governance standards in line with the Code of Practice for the Governance of State Bodies 2016.

In 2024, to underpin the delivery of the statutory functions the Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam (ODAIT), an integrated approach to the values, standards and behaviour was adopted through an independent Code of Standards and Behaviour. This Code builds on and further strengthens the level of expectation the Office places on persons working for the Office in the conduct of their duties. The Code sets out a clear framework within which the Office must work. The Code has been designed to promote the principles and core values; to provide a framework so that all employees can be seen to act solely in the public interest and within the law, and thus uphold public confidence in ODAIT. These standards of behaviour and values will support a high-quality public service, based on high levels of personal performance and responsibility.

A suite of policy and procedural documents was developed and adopted by the Office covering a wide range of work activities, human resources-related functions, financial processes and audit procedures to strengthen the Office's governance position.



Financial Information

The budget for ODAIT is allocated through Vote 40, Subhead CO8 of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). The Minister secured an allocation of almost €7m for ODAIT in 2024. Due to the complexity of the forensic excavation, significant time and effort went into planning, and combined with time required for the tendering processes for associated services, the expected start date for the work moved to 2025 and the allocation was revised downwards to €3,344,570 later in the year.

ODAIT is funded up to the approved level of allocation or expenditure, whichever is the lesser. The expenditure in 2024 was just over €2m. Higher expenditure is expected in 2025 in line with the start of the forensic excavation, and a detailed budget proposal has been submitted by the Office.

As set out under s.22 of the Institutional Burials Act 2022, there is a requirement for ODAIT to prepare and submit annual accounts. The Financial Statements for year ended 31 December 2024 have been prepared in accordance with the financial reporting standard FRS102, the financial reporting standard applicable in the UK and Ireland issued by the Financial Reporting Council. The Financial Statements were submitted to the Comptroller & Auditor General (C&AG) by 01 April 2025.

Following the establishment of the Office, an arrangement was put in place whereby payroll processing for the Office is carried out by DCDE through the National Shared Services Office. In addition, considering the time-bound nature of the Office, a special arrangement was put in place regarding payment of suppliers of the Office through the Department's Finance Unit with ODAIT mirroring the DCDE accountability structures. Procedures for all key financial control processes are in place and are being reviewed and updated as the Office develops in compliance with the Public Spending Code.

Owen McDonough & Associates Ltd. assisted ODAIT in the preparation of the financial statement and reports for year ended 2024.

Audit

In 2024, ODAIT was audited by the C&AG as well as by the internal audit function of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE). DCDE continued to support the office in the establishment and consolidation of audit procedures. ODAIT has ensured that an effective system of internal control is in place and the Office's monitoring and review of this system has been informed by the work of DCDE as part of their internal audit functions.

Data Protection

ODAIT is committed to protecting the rights and privacy of individuals in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. The Data Protection and Data Privacy policies have been agreed and implemented since the establishment of the Office and are available on our website. Any concerns on how we process personal data or any additional information in respect to any of our data protection policies, can be forwarded to our Data Protection Officer (DPO) at dpo@dait.ie.

Protected Disclosures

ODAIT has established reporting channels and procedures for the receipt, review and investigation of all protected disclosures set out in its protected disclosure policy.

Under section 22 of the Protected Disclosures 2014 as amended in 2022, ODAIT is obliged to provide to the Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform not later than 1 March in each year information detailing the number of protected disclosures made during the preceding year and the action (if any) taken in response to those protected disclosures. ODAIT is also obliged to publish this information on its website not later than 31 March in each year.

ODAIT can confirm that it has fulfilled these obligations for the 2024 reporting period, and that no protected disclosures were received in 2024.

Premises

The Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam operates from Custom House, Flood Street, Galway. This office space was provided by the Office of Public Works. The Director is working in conjunction with OPW to secure an adequate laboratory premises in or around the Tuam area.

Advisory Board

The Advisory Board was appointed by the Minister for Children, Disability and Equality (DCDE) to provide advice and guidance to the Director in the performance of his or her functions.

The Board met for the first time on 23 January 2024 and met seven times over the course of the year including a meeting in Galway on 11 June, a visit to the Tuam site on 12 June and a meeting with Catherine Corless (historian), Franny Hopkins (found the burial site as a child in 1975) and David Burke (Tuam Herald) on the same day.

S.13 of the Institutional Burials Act 2022 requires that the Board will be chaired by a former coroner or someone with coronial expertise and will include scientific experts, former residents and/or family members. Consultation with the Advisory Board is required at regular intervals, including at key decision points in the intervention.

The persons appointed to the Advisory Board are:

- Chairperson: Dr Brian Farrell, Dublin District Coroner emeritus and past President of the Coroner's Society of Ireland
- Scientific Expert: Dr Barra Ó'Donnabháin, Department of Archaeology, University College Cork
- Scientific Expert: Dr Denise Keating, Consultant Osteo-archaeologist
- County Council Representative: Eileen Ruane, Director of Services, Galway County Council
- Former Resident: Peter Mulryan
- Family Member: Annette McKay



First Meeting of the Advisory Board, January 2024

Sitting (L-R): Laura McGarrigle, DCDE; Daniel MacSweeney; Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam; Annette McKay, member of Tuam Advisory Board; Dr Denise Keating, member of Tuam Advisory Board.

Standing: Peter Szlovak, DCEDIY; Gráinne Morrissey, DCEDIY; Selina Brogan, Office of the Director, Tuam; Oran Finegan, Office of the Director; Dr Niamh McCullagh, Forensic Archaeologist; Bláithín Kennedy, Office of the Director; Peter Mulryan, member of the Tuam Advisory Board; Dr. Brian Farrell, Chairperson of the Tuam Advisory Board.

On the screen: Dr Barra Ó Donnabháin, member of the Tuam Advisory Board.

Appendices

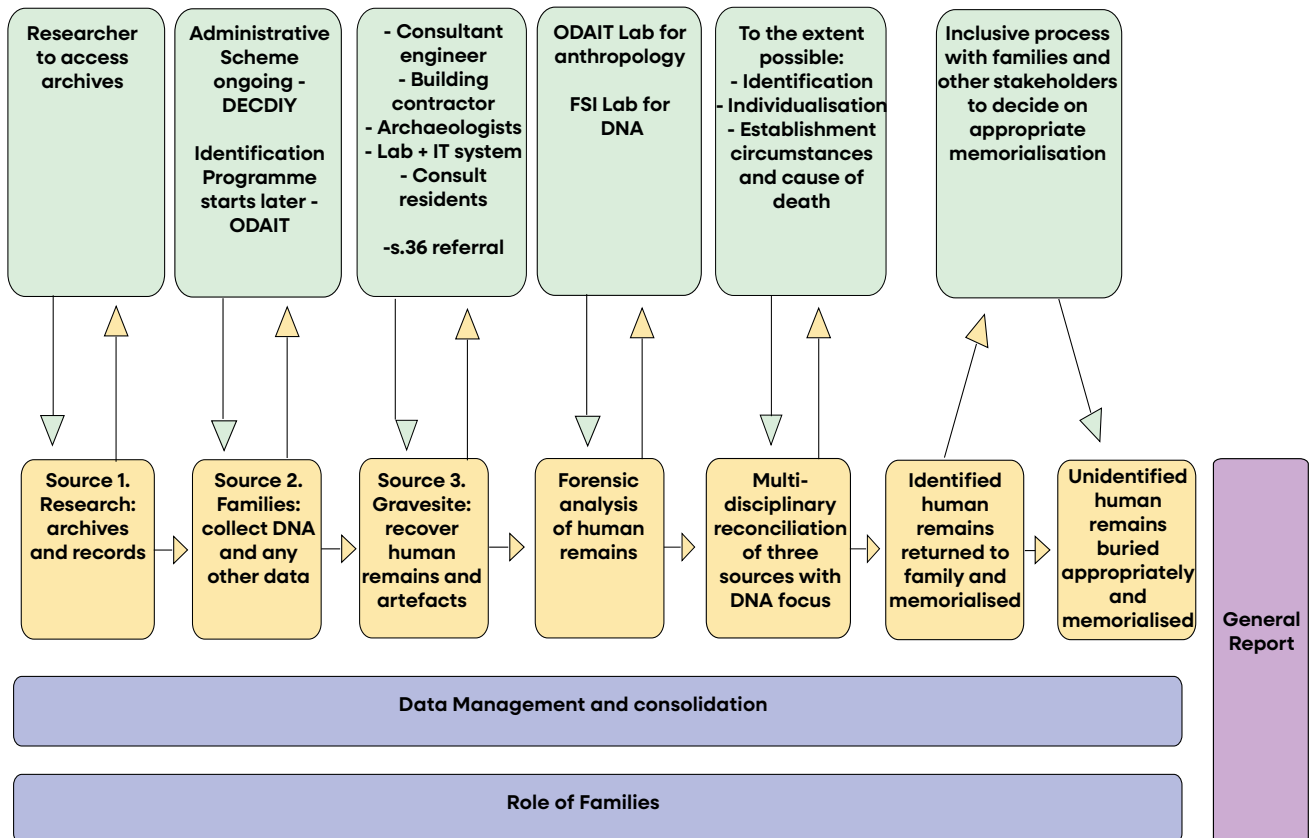
Appendix 1

Map of the Tuam site from [S.I. No. 518/2022](#)



Appendix 2

Overview of Process *



*this is a living document and is updated as the process for the Tuam intervention develops and is clarified

Appendix 3

Glossary of Terms

DAIT	Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam
ODAIT	Office of the Director of Authorised Intervention, Tuam
DCEDIY	Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration & Youth
DCDE	Department of Children, Equality and Disability
HR	Human Resources
OPW	Office of Public Works
ETG	Expert Technical Group
MBHCOI	Mother and Baby Home Commission of Investigation
FSI	Forensic Science Ireland



Oifig an Stiúrthóra um Idirghabháil Údaraithe, Tuaim

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