# Survivors mark first public commemoration of UK forced adoption scandal with memorials in Cornwall and Cumbria



Survivors of forced adoptions in the UK are taking a pivotal step towards acknowledging the profound injustice they suffered as they gather for the first public commemorations of a national scandal that has affected hundreds of thousands. A significant plaque is set to be unveiled at Rosemundy, St Agnes, Cornwall, marking its historical significance, while a memorial garden will be opened in Kendal, Cumbria, near the established St Monica’s home.

These events, which will bring together women who endured this traumatic chapter, adoptees, and relatives, emerge after years of campaigning for a formal government apology, which remains notably absent. The scale of the forced adoption issue in Britain between the 1940s and the 1980s was substantial, with hundreds of homes providing refuge for unmarried mothers. Initially established with promises of support from organisations like the Church of England, the Salvation Army, and various local authorities, these institutions often subjected women to neglect, cruelty, and immense psychological stress.

Phil Frampton, a campaigner who was himself adopted from Rosemundy, has been a vocal advocate for the movement, expressing that these commemorative events are a starting point for a long-overdue national movement for recognition and healing. Frampton, whose mother was coerced into giving him up due to societal stigma around having a mixed-race child in the 1950s, highlighted the punitive conditions experienced by many women, stating that they were made to work under unbearable circumstances while being pressured to relinquish their babies.

The systemic failures of these mother and baby homes have come under further scrutiny through various investigations. Research conducted by Michael Lambert at Lancaster University revealed that the hormone drug diethylstilbestrol, linked to health risks including cancer, was administered to mothers in some of these institutions. Additionally, a recent ITV investigation uncovered the chilling reality that nearly 200 babies from church-run homes were buried in unmarked graves, a stark reminder of the suffering and neglect endured. Some families were only made aware of these tragic truths after watching reports featuring their long-lost relatives.

The emotional toll of forced adoptions extends beyond the individuals directly involved, reverberating through families and communities. Steve Hindley, who lost his wife Judy to the mental health impacts of her experiences at St Monica’s in Kendal, has campaigned for a memorial garden to honour the babies who died due to inadequate care. The memory of their son, who passed away from grave untreated health conditions, serves as a painful reminder of the injustices faced by many.

A parliamentary inquiry from 2021 revealed that more than 185,000 children were adopted under these coercive circumstances, with the state ultimately bearing responsibility for the negligence and abuse that characterised this period. While Scotland and Wales have extended formal apologies acknowledging the injustice of forced adoptions, the UK government has yet to follow suit, dismissing recommendations for an outright apology despite growing pressure from activists and survivors alike.

The Church of England has expressed “great regret” over the events, the Catholic Church has apologised, and the Salvation Army has voiced its deep remorse. However, these statements fall short of the collective acknowledgment that many survivors seek. A spokesperson from the Department for Education reiterated the gravity of the issue, offering sympathies but stopping short of a formal apology, stating that such “abhorrent practices” should never have occurred.

The commemorative events in Cornwall and Kendal serve not only to honour those who suffered but also to push for a more profound societal recognition of the injustices endured. Survivors like Lyn Rodden, who was subjected to inhumane conditions while pregnant at Rosemundy, have waited far too long for validation of their experiences. “This plaque means everything … because so many people called me a liar,” she expressed, encapsulating the lingering stigma that still envelops these narratives.

Amid these developments, survivors and advocates remain steadfast in their demand for justice, continuing to highlight the necessity for a formal apology and governmental accountability that acknowledges the pain of those affected by forced adoptions. These commemorative events are a momentous occasion, not only signifying healing for survivors but also calling for an end to the prolonged silence that has surrounded the narrative of forced adoptions in the UK.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 7
2. Paragraph 3, 4
3. Paragraph 1, 6
4. Paragraph 1, 4, 5
5. Paragraph 3, 4
6. Paragraph 3, 6
7. Paragraph 6

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2025/may/09/plaque-and-memorial-garden-to-mark-scandal-of-britain-forced-adoptions> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.itv.com/news/2024-12-10/nearly-200-babies-from-church-run-homes-buried-in-unmarked-graves> - An ITV News investigation reveals that nearly 200 babies from church-run homes in England are buried in unmarked graves. Between 1949 and the mid-1970s, an estimated 200,000 women were sent to mother and baby homes, where infants were taken from their mothers or died due to poor care. Burial records obtained through Freedom of Information requests show that 197 babies are buried in mass graves across at least ten cemeteries in England. Some families discovered the truth only after watching the ITV News report. The investigation highlights the need for a formal apology from the UK government for these practices.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/2025-02-27/forced-adoption-scandal-i-deserve-an-apology-for-my-stolen-childhood> - Victims of forced adoptions in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s are increasing pressure on the UK government to formally apologize for the state's role in the practice. Hundreds of thousands of mothers were coerced into giving up their babies for adoption between 1949 and 1976 in the UK due to societal stigma against unmarried women. Adult adoptees have shared their experiences of enduring a 'lifetime of trauma' and are still 'searching for answers.' The Adult Adoptee Movement is campaigning for better mental health support, easier access to adoption records, and a formal apology from the UK government.
4. <https://www.itv.com/news/2024-07-09/the-women-haunted-by-forced-adoptions-looking-for-answers> - Between 1949 and the mid-1970s, nearly 200,000 unmarried women in England and Wales were pressured into giving up their babies for adoption. This practice led to a lifetime of trauma for many women, who were often ostracized by their families and society. The ITV News investigation highlights the lasting impact of these forced adoptions and the ongoing search for justice by those affected. The report underscores the need for a formal apology from the UK government and recognition of the suffering endured by these women.
5. <https://www.itv.com/news/2024-08-29/a-mass-grave-and-forced-adoption-inside-historic-church-homes> - An ITV News investigation reveals that between 1949 and the mid-1970s, an estimated 200,000 women were sent to mother and baby homes run by churches and the state, where babies were put up for adoption or died due to poor care. Burial records obtained through a Freedom of Information request show that 45 babies who were born and died at St Monica’s maternity home in Kendal are buried in a mass unmarked grave. The investigation highlights the need for a formal apology from the UK government for these practices.
6. <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20220715-uk-owes-apology-for-grave-wrong-of-forced-adoptions-inquiry> - A UK parliamentary inquiry has found that between 1949 and 1976, approximately 185,000 children were taken away for adoption in England and Wales. The committee chairwoman, Harriet Harman, stated that the bond between mothers and babies was 'brutally ruptured' over this period. The report acknowledged the 'grave wrong' done to the mothers and their children and called for the government to issue an apology. This follows similar actions by Australia and Ireland, which have previously apologized for forced adoptions.
7. <https://news.sky.com/story/welsh-government-apologises-in-senedd-for-appalling-forced-adoptions-12866255> - The Welsh government has formally apologized for the 'appalling' practice of forced adoptions in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Thousands of unmarried women were subjected to forced adoptions during this period. The apology was delivered in the Senedd in Cardiff Bay, acknowledging the 'societal failures' that led to the practice. This move follows similar apologies from Scotland and Ireland, and campaigners are now calling for the UK government to follow suit and issue a formal apology for these practices.