

Annual Report 2023

Dublin
Rape Crisis
Centre





Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC)
Annual Report 2023
Published June 2024

Charity information:

DRCC is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital, registered (CRO 147318).

It holds charitable tax exemption from the Revenue Commissioners (CHY 8529).

It is registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority (RCN 20021078).

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About Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) is a registered charity and a company limited by guarantee. It was founded in 1979 as the first rape crisis centre in Ireland.

Our mission is to prevent the harm and heal the trauma of rape and other forms of sexual violence.

Our core values are Trustworthiness, Respect, Empowerment and Empathy.

For 45 years, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre has been at the forefront of the Irish response to sexual violence and we have worked tirelessly to prevent the harm and heal the trauma of sexual violence. We will help anyone who has experienced or been affected by sexual assault, rape or childhood sexual abuse. Over the years our services have grown to include crisis support through the National 24-Hour Helpline, one-to-one therapeutic counselling and accompaniment services.

We work to prevent sexual violence and to eliminate its tolerance in society through education, training, policy, advocacy and awareness-raising campaigns.

We also advocate on behalf of survivors of sexual violence to help ensure that they have access to responsive and sensitive services provided by law enforcement officials, medical personnel and the courts.

We offer a safe and confidential space and a person-centred, trauma-aware approach that aims to empower clients and callers.

A note on DRCC statistics for 2023: The statistics contained in this report relate to details disclosed by callers, clients and those availing of DRCC's other support services during 2023. These have varying levels of detail and have been anonymised to preserve confidentiality, as the primary aim of DRCC is to provide confidential support and information. The value of these statistics is that they tell of the experiences of the people who have availed of our services.

DRCC Director Information

Chair:

Ann Marie Gill

Company Secretary:

Carol Keane

Chief Executive:

Noeline Blackwell (to October 2023)

Rachel Morrogh (from November 2023)

Directors:

Aibhlin McCrann

Síona Cahill

Eoghan Cleary

Fergus Finlay

John Fanning

Nikki Gallagher

Carol Keane

Anne Marie James

Madeleine McCarthy

Grace O'Malley

Charity Number:

CHY 8529

Company Number:

CRO 147318

Charity Registered Number:

RCN 20021078

Registered Office:

McGonnell House, 70 Lower Leeson Street,
Dublin 2, D02VW13

Auditors:

JPA Brenson Lawlor, Argyle Square,
Morehampton Road, Dublin 4, D04 W9W7

Bankers:

Permanent TSB, 70 Grafton Street,
Dublin 2, D02 AP68

Allied Irish Banks, 40/41 Westmoreland
Street, Dublin 2, D02 VY45

Solicitors:

LK Shields Solicitors LLP, 38 Mount Street,
Dublin 2, D02 PR89

Donations link:

www.drcc.ie/donate

Glossary

Accompaniment: A service offering practical information, emotional support and personal accompaniment to victims and survivors and those supporting them, such as friends or family, in accessing facilities. Our support workers accompany survivors attending the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) in the Rotunda Hospital, reporting sexual crimes to An Garda Síochána, and attending court and other such settings. It can include familiarisation, which means visiting the courtroom before the trial to allow the survivor to get a sense of the workings of the courtroom and the trial process.

Consent: A freely given, ongoing and voluntary agreement between people in a sexual encounter that allows each individual to decide what they want and do not want, and to have that respected. For more on consent visit we-consent.ie

Coercion: The use of force to make someone do something they do not want to, such as engage in sexual activity. Coercion can involve physical force, psychological intimidation, blackmail or other threats.

Counselling and psychotherapy: Forms of therapy involving a one-to-one relationship between a client and therapist. They provide the support and encouragement necessary to allow someone to talk about the experiences and events that have affected their lives and their way of being in the world. Counselling is usually for a shorter term than psychotherapy, which is a more in-depth, longer-term process.

Director of Public Prosecutions: The independent State service that decides whether criminal cases will be prosecuted in Ireland.

An Garda Síochána: The Irish police force that enforces laws, gathers evidence and investigates crimes on behalf of the State.

Sexual assault treatment unit: A medical facility where victims and survivors of rape or sexual assault can go to have a forensic medical examination and receive specialised medical treatment. There are seven sexual assault treatment units (SATUs) in Ireland.

Sexual violence: Any kind of unwanted sexual activity or contact, whether physical or non-physical. This includes words or actions of a sexual nature forced upon a person without their consent. Sexual violence, including rape, is never the fault of the victim.

Trauma: A physical or emotional response experienced by a person following a distressing event, such as sexual violence. People react differently to trauma and it can affect emotions, behaviour and/or relationships with other people.

Trauma-sensitive or trauma-aware: Understanding and accommodating the ongoing effects of traumas like sexual violence on victims and survivors when delivering a service or in the course of your work.

Victim and survivor: We use these terms to refer to people who have been raped, assaulted or experienced other forms of sexual violence, acknowledging that not everyone will identify with these terms.

Abbreviations

CARI – Children at Risk in Ireland

CPD – continuing professional development

CSO – Central Statistics Office

DEIS – Delivering Equality of opportunity In Schools

DRCC – Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

DSGBV – domestic, sexual and gender-based violence

ESHTE – Ending Sexual Harassment & Violence in Third Level Education

HAP – Housing Assistance Payment

NAC – National Advisory Committee

NGO – non-governmental organisation

PTSD – post-traumatic stress disorder

RSE – relationships and sexuality education

SATU – Sexual Assault Treatment Unit

SAVI – Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland

SPHE – Social, Personal and Health Education

SVS – Sexual Violence Survey

UK – United Kingdom

V-SAC – Victim Support at Court

We-Consent
all people, all situations, all relationships

People we know and
love are **survivors** of
sexual violence.

Let's
listen.

They deserve to
be **heard** and
understood.

Find out more at
we-consent.ie
#WeConsent



Ionad Fáilte | Tourist Information Centre





Foreword Chairperson



I am delighted to welcome all readers to Dublin Rape Crisis Centre's annual impact report for 2023.

As I reflect on the progress made, challenges faced and opportunities taken by DRCC over the course of the last year, I want to sincerely thank the staff and volunteers who were beacons of compassion, kindness and professionalism for anyone affected by sexual violence. I see colleagues across the organisation adopting and embedding our organisational values in their work which has had a positive impact within our staff community, as well as in interactions with our clients and wider stakeholders.

Every year since 1979, Dublin Rape Crisis Centre has been there for people who reach out for support and advice, and find in us a helping hand, a listening ear and a determined advocate. Our decades of trauma-informed experience have shaped the organisation of today and the wide range of holistic services and supports we are now able to offer. It has been 45 years since our establishment, yet we are driven by the same desire as our founders to live in a country free from sexual violence.

However, at times it can seem like this aim gets further and further away from being achieved as hard fought-for progress is made and then quickly eroded by a technology and media environment that is moving at a faster pace than the speed of regulation. In my role as Chair, I regularly meet survivors and they underline to me the importance of focusing as much on the prevention and keeping pace with change, as on providing services that will help victims heal after sexual violence.

Eliminating sexual violence will only happen if we get prevention right. In March 2023, I was immensely proud that Dublin Rape Crisis Centre took a leadership role by establishing and launching the 'We-Consent' campaign. This long-term national programme of work is focused on informing, educating and engaging with all members of Irish society about sexual consent.

I am increasingly convinced that this is some of our most important work, given that sexual violence is entirely preventable. Imagine a future where consent was practiced in everyone's lives – there would be people right across the country who would never know the trauma of sexual violence, never need to come into contact with Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, never have to go to the sexual assault treatment unit and never have to face the judicial system. Through the cultural change that We-Consent has already brought about, I feel this future is possible if the right actions are taken to address some emerging challenges.

As a front-line service provider, we are often the organisation that will be one of the first to hear of changing patterns or emerging trends in the area of sexual violence. Our support services regularly hear from survivors that alongside the sexual violence inflicted on them, they have also been subjected to physical, emotional and psychological violence. I am particularly troubled by the growth of influence of social media, the internet and technology and the role it may be playing in fuelling this trend. I was pleased that during 2023, the SPHE curriculum for the Junior Cycle was updated to include the topics of consent, relationships and the effects of pornography on sexual expectations. As my fellow Board Member and secondary school teacher, Eoghan Cleary, has pointed out, SPHE is one of the most essential life courses in young people's lives but no teacher qualifies in it and this needs to be addressed.

I am also concerned that the gender norms that I thought had successfully been rewritten over many decades, are starting to creep back towards misogynistic stereotypes. The internet is a place where certain groups in the 'manosphere' are pushing a toxic agenda that typifies men as being aggressive, strong, dominant and unemotional. The rise in a toxic influencer culture and the growth in alpha masculinity and female subordination will and is having an effect on the lives of both women and men in this country. For our clients, there is a real and direct impact of toxicity on the internet and I urge Government to bring in the strongest of regulations that keep pace with new technology and communication channels our young people are exposed to. Until this is done, there is nothing stopping the social media platforms and telecommunications providers taking action themselves and I appeal to them to do so.

As I conclude my terms of Chair of the Board of Directors of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, I want to recognise that none of our work would be possible without the support of our State funders, private donors, corporate supporters and individual givers. As much of our statutory funding is being transferred to the State agency 'Cuan' during 2024, I want to take this opportunity to thank and recognise the people working in the Department of Justice and Tusla who saw the immense value of DRCC's support and services over the years and provided us with funding to grow and expand to meet increased demand from survivors of sexual violence.

Finally, I want to thank the hugely experienced Members of the Board of Directors, as well as the three Chief Executives, who I have worked alongside over the past nine years. There is a lot to be proud of and still a lot more to do, and I hand over the role of Chair of the Board to Anne Marie James knowing the organisation is well-positioned for a hugely positive future.

Ann Marie Gill
Chairperson

Overview

Chief Executive Officer



Over the course of 2023, the work of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre had a profound impact on thousands of people impacted by sexual violence. Our staff and volunteers listened, counselled, advised, informed, advocated and supported all those who turned to us for help.

Underpinning this work was the principle that we believe victims and survivors. In a world where it can seem the odds are stacked against them, this is one of the most important roles we have. We were there 365 days a year, 24 hours a day for anyone who needed us. We are proud to be the organisation our clients knew would believe them, to be the organisation they trusted to help, and the organisation that will be there for those who need us in the future.

Our mission – to prevent the harm and heal the trauma of rape and other forms of sexual violence – guides every decision, every service and every initiative. While percentages are mentioned throughout this report, I am mindful that there are thousands of people behind the figures and each of them has an individual experience of sexual violence that will never be represented in aggregated numbers.

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre is honoured to operate the National Rape Crisis Helpline and in 2023 we had over 18,600 contacts from around the country to the 24-hour service. This is a slight increase on 2022 figures and more than half were first time callers. What this tells us is that the National Helpline is a vital first support for people affected by sexual violence, but also that our counsellors are trusted allies to repeat callers who need ongoing support.

The largest proportion of callers to the National Rape Crisis Helpline contacted us for support around a rape that had occurred as an adult (39.8%). The second most common reason for calling us was to discuss child sexual abuse (33.6%), followed by sexual assault as an adult (16.7%).

A concerning trend noted by the staff and volunteers who operate the Helpline, was an increase in people disclosing mental health challenges and feeling that there was nowhere to turn. The impact of increased levels of distress and additional support requirements led to greater numbers of clients requiring longer periods of counselling. A worrying and growing number of callers reported suicidal ideation, with almost 500 calls involving feelings of suicide over the course of 2023.

Some clients chose to tell their therapist about additional forms of violence that have been inflicted upon them, which may have occurred to facilitate a once-off sexual attack or may be part of longer-term pattern of abuse our client has been subjected to. Over recent years, our therapists have observed an increased number of clients mentioning the use of additional violence by the perpetrator. The types of violence that are allied to sexual violence can be physical and/or psychological and cause deep trauma for victims. Our therapists are skilled at working with the individual needs of clients, including dealing with complex trauma, in a compassionate, patient and understanding way so that they can heal. However, the increasing number of clients mentioning additional violence underlines the urgency to focus on prevention, as our chairperson Ann Marie Gill highlights elsewhere in this report.

Over the course of 2023, we provided therapy to almost 500 clients, which was fewer than in 2022. There are a number of reasons behind this, most notably the ongoing recruitment challenges. Thankfully, towards the end of the year we recruited a new cohort of therapists and this meant we finished 2023 having fulfilled 3,761 appointments.

Almost 4 in 10 of our therapy clients had experienced rape or sexual assault in the previous 6 months with the remainder subjected to sexual violence over 6 months ago. Rape and sexual assault as an adult were the types of abuse most frequently reported to our therapists and almost 3 in 10 needed therapeutic support because of child sexual abuse.

During 2023, we continued to offer a number of accompaniment services along the continuum of support needed after sexual violence. Any victim or survivor of a recent rape or sexual assault can access the services of the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) in the Rotunda Hospital. From our experience, this is a very difficult and often traumatic time which is why we offer accompaniment there, providing information and psychological support to those attending. In 2023, DRCC volunteers and support workers accompanied 308 people while they underwent necessary medical and forensic procedures in the SATU. We supported a further 202 family and friends with information and emotional support during this period of heightened distress and anxiety.

We also offered guidance to people who were going through the justice system, from the point at which they started to consider reporting a sexual offence to the Gardai, right through to attending court and after a verdict. Our accompaniment service offered support and information to 186 victims and survivors who were considering or in the process of reporting and 100 victims and survivors attending court or a hearing. This accounted for 255 days of accompaniment over the year.

It is worth reflecting on the small numbers of people who report a sexual offence to Gardai. Data published by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) in 2023 uncovered that 1 in 2 people who have experienced sexual violence never tell anyone else. Of the people who do disclose to another person, only 4% of women and 6% of men go to the Gardaí. This tiny proportion of the total number of people who experience sexual violence reflects the findings from the CSO that people don't think they will be believed, that they don't think what happened was serious enough or that they feel too ashamed or embarrassed to speak out.

Amongst the clients who come to Dublin Rape Crisis Centre for therapy, the reporting rate to Gardai is higher than the national average. Thirty-three per cent of new clients have reported an alleged sexual offence to Gardaí. However, the pathway to justice can take years and the delays to trials starting caused great distress for clients. Further anxiety is caused by the fact our clients' counselling notes can be requested by law and this practice may be having a chill effect on people's decision to seek justice or indeed deter them from receiving therapy and counselling to support their healing process.

Other notable work throughout the year included the training of almost 650 people working in frontline services. Our staff and volunteers covered topics such as the impact of trauma, managing disclosures and working with victims of childhood sexual abuse. Dublin Rape Crisis Centre also ran an education and training initiative for other Rape Crisis Centres and NGOs who work with victims of sexual violence through the 'Tackling Sexual Violence' training network. We also launched 'Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence', a comprehensive new online resource for victims and survivors of sexual violence. It offers independent, reliable information that is available online at any time on issues like reporting to An Garda Síochána, navigating the legal process, attending a sexual assault treatment unit or supporting a friend or family member.

During 2023 we focused on the prevention of sexual violence in a new way and launched a nationwide initiative called We-Consent. Dublin Rape Crisis Centre believes that it is only through cultural change that we can make the progress needed to be able to consider a future without sexual violence. Since its launch in March, We-Consent carried out workshops to almost 500 people and trained 19 We-Consent Ambassadors who will lead out on the issue of consent in their communities.

Advocacy remains at the heart of our work and in 2023 we engaged with policy makers, collaborated with partner organisations and amplified the voices of survivors to drive legislative change. Of particular note was that legislation establishing the State agency 'Cuan' was signed into law in November 2023 and welcomed by Dublin Rape Crisis Centre. The process of establishing Cuan was through co-design with the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Sector; we believe that through further political and sectoral collaboration and commitment, the Agency can have significant impact for victims of sexual violence in the future.

Our achievements would not have been possible without the support of Dublin Rape Crisis Centre Chairperson Ann Marie Gill, the Board of Directors, former Chief Executive Noeline Blackwell, staff, volunteers, donors and partners.

I thank each and every person who has supported the organisation because I believe that by working together, we can chart a different course for people's lives – one without sexual violence, without trauma, without pain and without fear.

This is the future that drives Dublin Rape Crisis Centre forward, and I want to thank you for coming on that journey with us.

Rachel Morrogh
DRCC Chief Executive Officer

DRCC Strategic Goals

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) has three overarching goals under the strategic plan in operation to the end of 2023:



Ensure that victims and survivors of current and historic sexual violence receive the supports that they need to heal



Eliminate tolerance of sexual violence in Irish society and support the rights of victims and survivors



Be a strong, sustainable organisation

Each goal is to be achieved through delivery of relevant strategic objectives. The 10 objectives are laid out below with an account of the organisation's work in each area.

A new 3-year strategic plan was developed in 2023 and adopted in 2024.

Goal One

Ensure that victims and survivors of current and historic sexual violence receive the supports that they need to heal

This goal will be achieved through the delivery of the following objectives

0

1



Objective One

Providing high-quality services to victims and survivors of current and historic sexual violence

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) defines sexual violence as any sexual act which takes place without freely given consent or where someone forces or manipulates someone else into unwanted sexual activity:

The word ‘violence’ as a term is sometimes associated with the use of force but it can also mean “having a marked or powerful effect” on someone, which includes actions or words that are intended to hurt people.
(CSO Sexual Violence Survey, 2023)

Under our healing mission, DRCC supports victims and survivors who have been impacted by many forms of sexual violence. Our services to victims and survivors of sexual violence are delivered through:

- The internationally accredited freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline 1800 77 8888
- An online webchat support service
- An interpreting service for those wishing to access the National Rape Crisis Helpline in 240+ languages
- A text service for Deaf and hard-of-hearing callers
- Face-to-face counselling and psychotherapy
- A client support/welfare service, and
- Survivor accompaniment support services in the justice and forensic healthcare systems.

Figure 1: National Helpline contacts 2023



Freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline 1800 77 8888

The freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline 1800 77 8888 offers free and confidential listening and support to adult victims and survivors of sexual violence. Trained telephone counsellors are available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to provide non-judgmental support to anyone affected by sexual violence. The line can also support families and friends of victims and survivors, as well as those who work with victims and survivors in their employment or in volunteering. The National Helpline is accredited by the Helplines Federation.

2023 data: There were 18,605 contacts with the freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline in 2023, a slight increase on 2022, when there were 18,400 contacts, and up from 14,012 contacts in 2021. Most contacts were from first-time callers (10,106) (see Figure 1).

- As in previous years, most contacts related to rape as an adult (39.8%), followed by child sexual abuse (33.6%), and sexual assault as an adult (16.7%).
- Sexual harassment was cited by 1.5% of callers.

Table 1: National Helpline Contacts in 2023

| | |
|-----------------------|---------------|
| Counselling calls | 16,218 |
| Emails | 1,306 |
| Text messages | 262 |
| Webchat | 805 |
| Social media contacts | 14 |
| Total | 18,605 |

It can be so hard to make that first call: Mary's story

One caller, "Mary" told us how hard it was for her to make the first step, saying she had "no one to turn to," no one she could trust. She described how she had tried many times to call us, and how afraid she was to speak. She felt that no one could believe what had happened to her, how a trusted friend could hurt her that way. But after making that first contact, she realised that, yes, we did believe her. Speaking to us on that call was a turning point for "Mary". After a number of calls to the Helpline, she made the empowered decision to take the next step into therapy.





Age and gender

In terms of age, the largest group calling the Helpline was people in their thirties, who formed just under 20% of contacts. The next largest group was those aged 40–49, who formed 18.5% of contacts. In total, 38.2% of contacts were aged under 30 years (see Table 2). Of those calling the Helpline in 2023 who disclosed their gender, some 71.3% percent were female, 17.5% percent were male and 11.2% identified as other (see Table 3).

Table 2: Age of contacts to the 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline

| Age of victim | % of calls |
|---------------|------------|
| Under 16 | 2% |
| 16 – 17 | 2.7% |
| 18 – 23 | 17.6 |
| 24 – 29 | 15.9% |
| 30 – 39 | 19.6% |
| 40 – 49 | 18.5% |
| 50 – 59 | 15.9% |
| 60 – 69 | 5.9% |
| 70+ | 1.9% |

Based on the 44% of contacts who disclosed their age

Table 3: Gender of contacts to the 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline

| Gender | % of calls |
|--------|------------|
| Female | 71.3% |
| Male | 17.5% |
| Other | 11.2% |

Based on the 91% of contacts who disclosed their gender

Location and origin of contacts

Although callers were from 77 countries in total, among those who indicated their country of origin, the vast majority (87.6%) were Irish, with 3.3% from Europe and 9.1% from further afield. 44% of those contacting the Helpline in 2023 were located outside Dublin, while 56% were calling from within the capital.

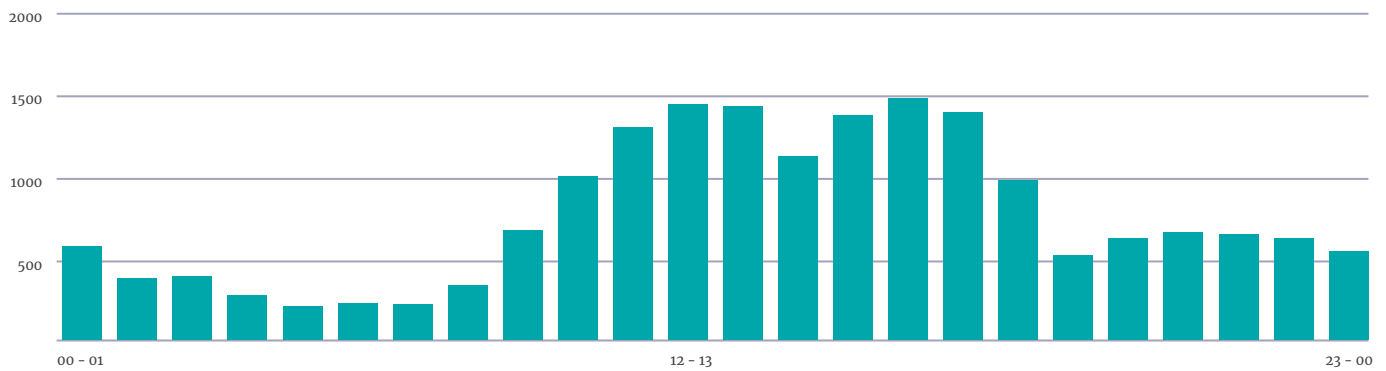
Busiest contact times

January was the busiest month, followed by July and August. The busiest time for calls on average were between the hours of 11am to 1pm and 2–4pm

Referrals to other agencies

For contacts who needed further information or support beyond DRCC services, most were referred to another Rape Crisis Centre (23%) followed by referrals to other counselling services (20%), An Garda Síochána or specialised Garda service (15%) and the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) at the Rotunda Hospital Dublin (9%). Some 6% of referrals were referred to suicide prevention services, and 5% were referred to Children at Risk in Ireland (CARI). In 2023, 4% of referrals were to mental health services.

Figure 2: Number of contacts per hour of day



Trends

Continuing the trend of recent years, many callers to the freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline in 2023 had mental health concerns, with several reporting suicide ideation. This was in evidence throughout the year, with spikes in such calls occurring in April, August and towards the end of the year. Helpline support workers also noted more callers expressing worry about homelessness throughout 2023. In these instances, we immediately validate the caller’s concerns, reassure them that they are in a safe space to talk it through and inform them of all relevant services.

The Helpline also had calls from older survivors, many disclosing their experience for the first time, often following media reports of child sexual abuse, in particular past abuse in school settings. There were also calls in response to the launches of the We-Consent national campaign in March and the *Finding Your Way After Sexual Violence* guide in April, with many callers noting increased awareness of the issue of consent and that sexual violence is never the fault of the survivor.

It happens to men too: Male victims and survivors of sexual violence

Male callers face unique challenges and barriers in seeking support, due to stereotypes surrounding masculinity and sexual violence. This often means they carry this burden alone for long periods, never sharing their experience. One male caller said it was the first time he had ever spoken “out loud” about what had happened to him, as the thoughts and memories were circling around his head, buried for decades. He cried during this call and apologised for being so upset. Breaking the silence was all this caller needed in that moment, and although he realised he would need more support in the future, at the end of the call he felt “validated” and “not so alone”.



Other National Helpline services

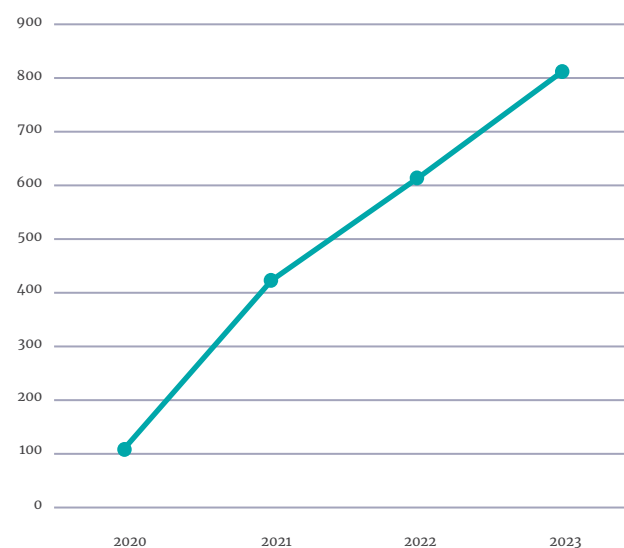
Alongside the freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline, we provide some additional specialist services for those seeking crisis help (note that these services are not 24/7 and are closed on public holidays):

- We provide a text service for those who are Deaf or hard-of-hearing. It operates Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6.30pm, at 086-823 8443. In 2023, this service received 262 texts.
- We provide a Webchat Support Service on our website, drcc.ie, offering a written mode of communications, particularly helpful to those who cannot verbally articulate their needs or who don't have a private space in which to speak.
- We provide a live Helpline Interpreting Service for those who do not speak English. It operates Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6.30pm, and from midnight to 8am daily.

Webchat Support Service

Since its beginning during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Webchat Support Service has grown steadily. In 2023, we supported more people than ever before. We had 805 webchats over the course of the year, up from 607 in 2022, an increase of 33%.

Figure 3: DRCC Webchats 2020 - 2023



The service offers a support for those who prefer to type rather than talk, or where privacy issues mean telephone conversations are difficult. The chats can vary in duration, with some lasting longer and involving multiple issues. In some instances, the person will end up calling the freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline to engage further, with some contacts eventually progressing to seek therapy support.

We extended our webchat hours to two night-time shifts per week in April. The service is available Monday to Friday, from 10am to 5pm, and from midnight to 3am on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Counselling & Therapy

Through our team of skilled and dedicated counsellors and psychotherapists, DRCC provides counselling and psychotherapy for adult survivors of sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual harassment and childhood sexual abuse. We offer a counselling and therapy service for 16- and 17-year-olds, with the consent of their parent(s) or guardian(s), strictly by consultation.

With staff retiring or moving on to other opportunities – coupled with an increased demand for DRCC therapeutic care – we have focused on significantly increasing the number of therapists we employ. However, the ongoing very challenging recruitment environment means that DRCC has had to operate its therapy service without a full complement of therapists. As a result, our waiting list for therapy grew throughout 2022 and into early 2023. Having an insufficient number of therapists during most of 2023 also affected our ability to provide services such as support for women prisoners in the Dóchas Centre and in other outreach locations. However, in the second half of 2023, DRCC was fortunate to recruit a number of skilled and experienced psychotherapists to provide our vital service. Thus, towards the end of 2023 we were able to resume our outreach capacity as well as reduce our growing waiting lists for therapy.

To ensure that language is not a barrier to accessing our therapy services, in 2023 our Therapy Team received training on working with interpreters to provide counselling and therapy to those whose first language is not English. Our Education and Training Team delivered the training, which has greatly enhanced the capacity of our therapists to support our clients.

Trends

Our Therapy Team is seeing more complex mental health issues among clients whose lives have been deeply impacted by the trauma of sexual violence. This includes suicidality, complex post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), personality disorders and psychosis. Our clients also mention other forms of violence inflicted upon them, whether coercive, physical or psychological, all of which cause trauma. Our therapists are trained to recognise and deal with the symptoms of trauma. Working with clients who have experienced trauma, including complex trauma, requires compassion, understanding, patience and time to facilitate healing.

Overview of therapy services in 2023

Note that the statistics in this section are divided between sexual violence experienced by adults and by children, and the percentages are of the total client cohort.

DRCC provided therapy to 497 clients in 2023, compared with 551 clients in 2022 and 580 clients in 2021. This decrease can be directly attributable to our challenges in recruiting therapists. When we recruited additional therapy staff towards the end of 2023, there was a direct and positive correlation between new therapy staff and the numbers of clients we saw. Of the 497 clients, 310 were new clients (62.3% percent of total clients) in 2023.

In 2023, we offered a total of 4,744 appointments to our clients and 3,761 took place. The cancellation rate of 21% is connected to the trauma associated with sexual violence. Clients who cannot face attending a therapy appointment when the day of the appointment comes around will often cancel. This is most notably a feature of people attending therapy for the first time and is very understandable. However, it meant we struggle to fill these appointments at such short notice. In 2024, we have been looking at new ways to engage with our clients so that the cancellation rate is reduced and more appointments are filled.

Of appointments kept, 37% were people who had experienced a recent rape or sexual assault within the previous 6 months, and 63% were for clients who had experienced past sexual violence as an adult or childhood sexual abuse.

A total of 71.6% of clients had experienced sexual violence as adults, with 28.4% abused as children. The majority of clients were female (89%) with 10% male and 1% identifying as other (see Table 4). Some 20 clients disclosed having a disability.

Figure 4: Counselling and therapy 2023

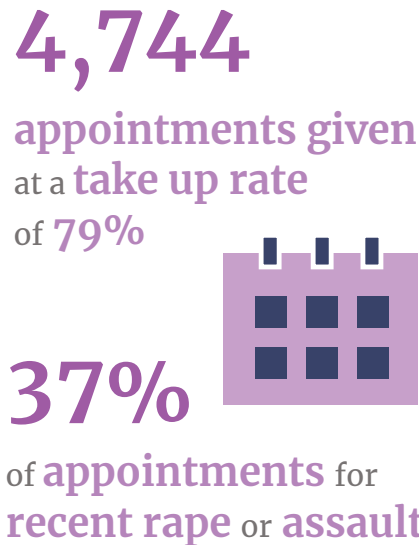


Table 4: Gender of clients

| Gender | % of clients |
|--------|--------------|
| Female | 89% |
| Male | 10% |
| Other | 1% |

Clients ranged in age from 16 years to 60 years and over. The largest age cohort was 18–23 years, making up 26% – more than a quarter of therapy clients. There was an even spread across three age cohorts of 19% each: 24–28 years, 30–39 years and 40–49 years. Almost half (47%) of therapy clients in 2023 were aged under 30 years (see Table 5).

Table 5: Age of clients

| Age | % of clients |
|---------|--------------|
| 16 – 17 | 2% |
| 18 – 23 | 26% |
| 24 – 29 | 19% |
| 30 – 39 | 19% |
| 40 – 49 | 19% |
| 50 – 59 | 10% |
| 60+ | 5% |

Types of sexual violence

In 2023, a total of 265 therapy clients (42.2%) reported being raped as an adult (see Table 6). Another 3.7% cited marital or intimate partner rape, 17.4% cited sexual assault and 2.1% sexual harassment as adults. Online abuse was cited by 2.2% of therapy clients, aggravated sexual assault by 2.1% and suspected drug-facilitated rape by 1.9%. Child sexual abuse was experienced by 28.4% of clients (see Table 7).

Table 6: Abuse experienced by clients as adults

| Type of Abuse | % of all incidents |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| Rape | 42.2% |
| Sexual assault | 17.4% |
| Marital rape | 3.7% |
| Online abuse | 2.2% |
| Sexual harassment | 2.1% |
| Aggravated sexual assault | 2.1% |
| Suspected drug-facilitated rape | 1.9% |

Table 7: Abuse experienced by clients as children

| Type of Abuse | % of all incidents |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| Child Sexual Abuse | 28.4% |



New clients in 2023

Statistics provided in this section relate only to the 310 clients who entered our therapy services in 2023. The data include incidents of additional violence disclosed by those clients, as well as information on the outcome of pregnancies (recent or historic) as a result of rape and information on those who reported the sexual violence to the gardaí at any time, either in or prior to 2023.

Sexual violence experienced by new clients

The 310 new clients who started therapy with DRCC in 2023 disclosed 326 abuse incidents.

Of these new clients, 146 had experienced other forms of violence in addition to the main abuse (see Tables 8 - 10). Collectively, these 146 clients reported 192 incidents involving other forms of violence.

Table 8: Types of sexual violence experienced by new clients

| Category | % of all incidents with additional violence |
|---------------------------|---|
| Adult rape/sexual assault | 49% |
| Child sexual abuse | 6.5% |

Table 9: Violence experienced by new clients as adults

| Type of violence experienced by adults | % of incidents |
|--|----------------|
| Physical abuse | 31.2% |
| Psychological abuse | 21.2% |
| Harassment/Intimidation | 18.8% |
| Coercive control | 13% |
| Threat or attempt to kill | 7.1% |
| Abduction | 3.5% |
| Stalking | 2.9% |
| Spiking | 1.7% |
| Trafficking | 0.6% |

Note: A separate incident can have multiple types of violence.

Table 10: Violence experienced by new clients as children

| Type of violence experienced by children | % of clients |
|--|--------------|
| Psychological abuse | 50% |
| Physical abuse | 27.3% |
| Harassment/Intimidation | 18.2% |
| Threat to kill | 4.5% |

Relationship between victim and offender(s)

As in other years, most of our clients in 2023 knew the person who had raped or assaulted them. Some 92.4% of childhood abuse incidents and 82% of sexual violence incidents during adulthood were perpetrated by a person or persons known to the victim or survivor. Of those subjected to sexual violence as adults, 23.1% reported intimate partner abuse, and for those abused as children it was almost 1 in 10 (9.8%) (see Table 11).

Table 11: Relationship between victim and offender

| Relationship | Child Sexual Abuse | Adult Rape/ Sexual Assault |
|---------------------|--------------------|----------------------------|
| Parent | 12% | 1.3% |
| Sibling | 3.3% | 0.4% |
| Partner | 9.8% | 23.1% |
| Other relative | 13% | 0.8% |
| Other known person | 47.8% | 53.4% |
| Person in authority | 6.5% | 3% |
| Stranger | 7.6% | 18% |

Pregnancy

In 2023, 1.6% of our female clients disclosed pregnancies resulting from rape. The outcomes of these pregnancies included miscarriage, termination, and parenting.



New clients: Reporting to gardaí

Of 310 new therapy clients in 2023, some 102 had reported the crimes against them to An Garda Síochána (either in 2023 or previously), a reporting rate of 33%.

Outcome information was known for 59 of the 102 cases reported (58%) (see Table 13).

Table 12: Case outcomes among new clients reporting to An Garda Síochána

| Outcome | Total |
|---|-------|
| Under Garda investigation | 45 |
| Dropped by Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP)/client | 12 |
| Went to trial | 2 |
| Outcome not disclosed | 43 |

There was an acquittal in one case that went to trial and a conviction in the other.

Table 13: Relationship between victim and offender

| Relationship | Child sexual abuse | Adult rape/sexual assault |
|---------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Parent | 54% | 0% |
| Sibling | 8.3% | 0% |
| Partner | 0% | 25.6% |
| Other Relative | 16.7% | 0% |
| Other Known Person | 21% | 40% |
| Person in Authority | 0% | 6.4% |
| Stranger | 0% | 28% |

Accompaniment Support

Victims and survivors of sexual violence must have a pathway to seek justice for the crimes committed against them if that is what they choose to do. However, for someone harmed by sexual violence, it can be daunting and may even seem impossible to engage with the justice system alone, without knowing how the system works or where to find assistance. Victims and survivors may even be reluctant to seek appropriate medical attention, which may have serious long-term health implications.

In this space, DRCC provides a specialised support service. Our accompaniment support workers are there for victims and survivors of rape and sexual assault who attend the SATU at the Rotunda Hospital in Dublin, who report sexual violence to An Garda Síochána or another authority and/or who attend court or other proceedings in relation to sexual violence. This support is also available to friends and family members of victims and survivors who may attend these services with them.

Our new *Finding Your Way After Sexual Violence* resource (see Objective 6 for more information) is also very useful for those seeking to know more about the forensic, reporting and legal processes.

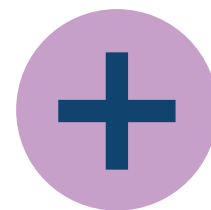
SATU accompaniment

The support we provide in the SATU at the Rotunda Hospital is available 24/7 to those seeking medical/ forensic attention after sexual assault or rape. In 2023, our Accompaniment Team supported 308 people at the SATU, up slightly from 291 in 2022. DRCC also offered emotional and psychological support to 202 friends, family members and other supporters at the SATU, providing them with information and guidance on how to support their loved one.

To further enhance the SATU's work, DRCC is part of a liaison committee at the Rotunda Hospital which advises on and monitors services. DRCC is also represented on the national SATU Implementation Project Team.

Figure 5: SATU accompaniment support 2023

308 victims
and **survivors** supported
at **forensic medical**
treatment in SATU



202
friends and
family offered
emotional support

Justice system accompaniment

Victims and survivors who are considering reporting a sexual offence to An Garda Síochána or other investigating authority, or who are already undergoing the process, may have questions or concerns about how it works, whether they are reporting a recent crime or something that happened in the past. The act of talking through the process or voicing these worries may be a first step or a further step, and the DRCC service will provide that experienced support.

For those attending a trial or hearing, our accompaniment service can offer support, information and accompaniment. Our team can answer specific questions, explain unfamiliar language and structures, and help navigate what can be a complex criminal legal process. The service can also include a visit to the court ahead of the trial so that clients will be familiar with the layout and process.

In 2023, the shortage of judges and courtrooms resulted in a considerable delay in trials starting. This caused great distress for clients, compounding their existing levels of upset and trauma as they awaited a court date. Of the victims and survivors we supported in the criminal courts, half (30) had their cases adjourned during the year. In 2023, 286 people contacted DRCC's justice accompaniment service, of which 255 were women and 31 were men.

Reporting accompaniment

In 2023, DRCC accompaniment support workers provided support, information and accompaniment to 186 victims and survivors who contacted the service about reporting sexual violence in Garda stations and other settings where sexual violence may be notified. We provided 44 days of accompaniment support to those reporting sexual violence in 2023.

Figure 6: Justice system accompaniment 2023





Court and hearing accompaniment

Our main focus is on the Criminal Court. In addition, we supported people attending the Garda Síochána Ombudsman Commission, the Workplace Relations Commission, the International Protection Office and the Family Courts in 2023. We also accompanied victims and survivors to college disciplinary hearings and meetings with bodies such as religious orders.

The service provided support, information and accompaniment to 100 victims and survivors in relation to court, trials and other hearings in 2023, compared with a total of 85 victims and survivors in 2022. There were 211 days of accompaniment support given to those attending court, trials and hearings during 2023.

Training

We provided accompaniment training for DRCC staff and volunteers throughout the year, including visits to the courts for familiarisation, and we also advanced training in the Criminal Court of Justice for our experienced court accompaniment support workers. In addition, we provided training and information to other bodies involved in victim support and engagement.



Objective Two

Building the capacity of Irish society to better understand and guard against the harm of sexual violence, as well as meet the needs of victims/survivors

Figure 7: Education and training 2023



Promoting an appropriate response for victims and survivors through frontline training

Given the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland, and the impact it has on those affected, it is striking but not surprising how many frontline staff encounter disclosures of sexual violence in their daily work. It is imperative that key services are provided to victims and survivors in a way that does not further traumatise them and that is sensitive to their circumstances. DRCC aims to help frontline services and professionals become more trauma-aware and better able to understand and support victims and survivors and their needs.

DRCC provides specialised training and information to staff and professionals who support those impacted by sexual violence. During 2023, we delivered 52 training sessions, some of which ran over a number of days, involving 643 people.

Topics included working with victims of childhood sexual abuse, the impact of trauma, managing disclosures and supporting refugees and asylum seekers impacted by sexual violence. Our courses were attended by a variety of frontline groups representing sectors such as third-level education, disability, refugee/asylum seekers, mental health, addiction, embassies and consulates, homelessness, community outreach, and primary healthcare.

Graphic Recording by : hazelhurley.com

Panel Moderator Shirley Scott

Open Door Policy

We believe you? We listen!

STRESS

Struggling to find Funding

to keep the doors open

There is a Desire to understand

Education Work in Prevention

Galway Rape Crisis Centre Cathy Connolly

Learning Mean

Waiting Lists

OPEN Conversations

Lack of Male clients

We're not anti male

I just need someone to listen!

opening Paedars box!

Interagency Working

Mental health

joined up Services

one in four To Wright

Frustrating Needing Support

Trauma Informed Trained Staff

working together

Accreditation

people unable to Call

Web chat started in 2020

Cześć

Language Line

Stay with me even though I might push you away

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre Michelle Grehan

Helpline 24h

Meeting Demands while improving Services

Feeling ENERGISED

HOPE for change with the new AGENCY

The Government needs to know what it's like!

Time for Change & Innovation

Teacher

KEEP SURVIVORS CENTRAL!

Funding not enough to retain staff

Multi-Annual Funding

Adequate Funding = Adequate Response

Pay Standardisation

Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre Vera O'Leary



Agency for Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence

Panel Discussion 2

Thank you!

Value Staff

Funding for the journey

Sustainable reliable sufficient Funding

+1 +1 +1 +1

WHAT DO WE NEED?

Linked up. Thinking

Not Fire Fighting

Prevention Upstream

Education & Training

Schools want to hear from people with expertise



keeping the client at the centre of all decisions

Trauma Informed agency

Break down Barriers

Collaboration

All centres working together

Outreach

raising awareness about services & assessing needs

Data & Statistics

Tackling Sexual Violence in Ireland graphic harvest of ideas from the conference

“Tackling Sexual Violence” training network

During 2023, DRCC ran this training initiative for rape crisis centres and non-governmental organisations working with victims and survivors of sexual violence. This work was enabled by funding from The Wheel. Topics included adolescent therapy, the impact of coercive control and sexual violence, disability and neurodiversity. To bring together the learnings from the network, in February we organised a conference in Kilkenny, “Tackling Sexual Violence in Ireland”, and looked at issues facing survivors, including those from minority and vulnerable groups. We examined the challenges facing frontline groups like rape crisis centres, including underfunding and how much time is required to raise funds. Agencies attending the conference all stressed that no matter how great the challenges they face, they always prioritise survivors and their needs. They also debated the issues that they would like to see addressed by Cuan, the new domestic, sexual and gender-based violence (DSGBV) agency, which was established in early 2024.



Tackling Sexual Violence in Ireland conference graphic harvest

Feedback on DRCC education and training courses

“Provided me with a greater understanding of victims of childhood and adult sexual assault and abuse which has given me an insight into their perspectives around themselves and wider communities.”

“Truly one of the most impactful trainings I have participated in as a professional. Trainers had an immense knowledge of the topic and were able to convey it in a manner that was understandable and applicable. Attention was given to resourcing during the training, as the content could be intense, and it didn’t feel like any part of the day was rushed.”

“I learned so much in two days from two very knowledgeable facilitators. I loved the group discussions on case studies and the meditation and mindfulness exercises. The emphasis on self-care I feel has really impacted on me as I am much more conscious of its importance.”

“Anyone working with vulnerable people should at least know about DRCC if not do some training at least once...”

“I found this training extremely useful for my professional role.”

“I loved the training! The facilitators were really approachable and knowledgeable and great at answering questions that came up. The training was also delivered in a trauma informed and sensitive way – from the perspective of delivering training this is really practical as can be modelled and carried forward.”

“It truly felt like a safe space.”



Education & Training Officer Ciara Lynch
with DRCC Youth Programme alumni

Providing tailored training

Different groups and organisations will have various ways of working and intersecting with survivors. DRCC's Education and Training Team adapts its programmes to suit those needs and delivers the training in person or online, as suits the situation. Examples of organisations which have worked with our team include film production companies, arts and creative groups, State bodies, businesses and a wide variety of other agencies.

Curriculum reform

Among many other issues, the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence 2022-2026 focuses on increasing awareness of consent across society. This includes implementing relationships and sex education in schools as part of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE). During 2023, DRCC worked to raise awareness of the need to update curricula with age-appropriate material at all levels of our education system, as recommended in our youth programmes and indicated in our consent research. This included a submission in October and to the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) on the Senior Cycle SPHE curriculum.

Youth programmes

DRCC prioritises work equipping frontline staff working with young people to understand key issues around sexual violence, healthy relationships and consent. In 2023, we had 160 participants in our two core youth education programmes, BodyRight and #LetsGetReal and associated programmes. Those who take part in our youth programmes gain access to an information portal with relevant online resources where they can share best practice.

BodyRight

Our flagship training for BodyRight facilitators is a 4-day programme designed to equip those working with young people to raise awareness of respect and healthy relationships, consent and online safety, and to prevent sexual violence. In 2023, we delivered BodyRight facilitator training on six occasions to teachers, guidance counsellors, youth workers, therapists and other youth professionals. We also ran a 2-day BodyRight refresher course and a session on our youth programmes with alumni, in order to gather feedback on their experience of using the programmes. In total, BodyRight was delivered to 111 individuals.

Feedback on youth programmes

“Fantastic training! From the content, the contact beforehand, the facilitators and the diverse trainees coming together, the entire training was incredible and I can't praise it enough! I am very excited to roll out the training now when I come back from mid-term.”

“As an RSE [relationships and sexuality education] teacher I thoroughly enjoyed the training. The resource pack is very useful and methodologies are applicable to second-level education. I think there is an opportunity to make it more cross-curricular so it can be addressed throughout the curriculum rather than a series of lessons.”

“This was the best professional training I have participated in as a teacher. It was very insightful, interactive, very practical and delivered by experts. I would highly recommend the training to colleagues.”

“I am really glad I had the opportunity to do this training. I feel it has benefitted me hugely as a professional. I am excited about implementing the programme in my school.”

“Great to set the tone of a very slow pace so everyone is supported and listened to, and that has been modelled so we can bring that pace and tone to our own classrooms.”

“I think this is an excellent programme and should be part of SPHE/RSE in schools. It should also be delivered in part to parents to help them understand the changing world their children are navigating.”

#LetsGetReal

In light of the growing awareness of the need to educate young people to become more critical in their consumption of advertising, popular culture and pornography, DRCC's #LetsGetReal educational resource for youth workers and school staff has become increasingly popular. We were able to offer this important programme twice in 2023, with 31 participants in total. Thanks to a funding grant, we were able to offer it free of charge.

We also ran two youth awareness and education sessions for organisations working with vulnerable young people, with a total of 18 participants. DRCC began work on updating the youth programmes in 2023 to support curriculum and trend changes while improving resources for those delivering the programmes to young people. The new updates will be launched in 2024.

Work with third-level colleges

DRCC was part of the steering group for Speak Out, the anonymous reporting tool. We are represented on the National Advisory Committee (NAC) of the Ending Sexual Harassment and Violence in Third Level Education (ESHTE) project, and we joined the newly established Consent, Sexual Violence, Harassment and Equality in Higher Education (COSHARE) network in Autumn 2023. DRCC staff and our Chairperson all sit on consent committees for higher education institutions as they tackle the issue of sexual violence and harassment on campus. Our Education and Training Team also provided consultancy guidance and support on policies and resources to various third-level groups.



Tackling Sexual Violence in Ireland conference, Kilkenny, February 2023



i
TELEPHONE

We-Speak
Every story matters

To really heal
we need to
**talk about our
experiences...**

I'm so glad
there is this
**space to
share our
stories.**

These are quotes
from survivors who
have shared their
stories, to safely
share yours visit
wespeak.ie

We-Speak is a place for survivors
of sexual violence to tell their
stories and reclaim their voices.

 An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Department of Justice

 **DRCC**
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

 Community
Foundation
Ireland



Objective Three

Recognising the diversity of those who are victims and survivors of sexual violence, ensuring our services are available to whoever needs them

Client Support Service

The aim of this service is to specifically support clients who are particularly vulnerable due to financial, social, immigration or other circumstances, assisting them with practical life issues so they are able to focus on healing. It seeks to empower our clients and help them access their rights and entitlements, find relevant information and seek referral to other services as appropriate.

Due to a change of personnel, the service was paused between May and December 2023 and, as such, the following figures relate to the period January to May 2023. The service supported 37 clients during this time, most of whom were female (81%), 14% of whom were male and 5% identifying as other. The age range was diverse, with the largest cohort being in their 30s (30%), followed by those aged 24–29 years (24%) and those aged 40–49 years (22%).



Education & Training team at Baleskin Reception Centre

Our Client Support Officer visited external venues where vulnerable individuals are based, such as direct provision centres. She conducted 130 interventions, noting that an intervention might address one or multiple issues. There were 60 contacts with external agencies. Issues relating to housing formed the largest area of intervention. This included Housing Assistance Payment (HAP), priority housing lists and housing transfers. Interventions also covered issues of social welfare, referrals to other agencies, homelessness/emergency accommodation, immigration issues, asylum process issues, access to the health system and to the mental health system.

This service was restarted in early 2024.

National Helpline Interpreting Service

DRCC operates a freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline 1800 77 8888 in English, but if you prefer to engage in another language, the Helpline Interpreting Service can help. It runs Monday to Friday, from 8am to 6.30pm except on public holidays. It also operates from midnight to 8am, 7 days a week.

The service is free, non-judgemental and confidential – you can read more on our website: www.drcc.ie/services/helpline/interpreting-service/



Training to support survivors from vulnerable and minority groups

In 2023, DRCC continued its work of training and upskilling frontline staff who support vulnerable and minority groups. The aim is to equip such staff with a stronger understanding of the impacts of sexual violence and how to cope with disclosures.

We provided training to 217 professionals working with minority and vulnerable groups, including those working in addiction services, homeless support organisations and refugee and asylum seeker support bodies. Thanks to grant funding, we were able to offer this training for free. DRCC also began to use resources in education and training for those supporting Deaf, migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking communities who experience sexual and gender-based violence. The resources were developed from our collaboration on the JUSTISIGNS 2 project over the previous two years. The JUSTISIGNS 2 project was led by a consortium of experts in Ireland, Belgium, Spain and the United Kingdom collaborating on resources, training and research.

Supporting women prisoners

In autumn 2023, we restored our therapy support service for the community living in the Dóchas Centre, the women's prison in Dublin. The weekly service allows the women detained in Dóchas to access support for the impact of sexual violence they are encouraged to continue therapy with DRCC after they have finished serving their sentence. Demand for this service is considerable, and we will try to extend our support in 2024.

Recognising barriers to participation and support

DRCC is aware that due to status, disability, poverty or other discrimination or social inclusion factors, many victims and survivors may find it particularly hard to seek and access support. While we ask our clients to make a monetary contribution towards therapeutic services if they can, those who cannot are welcome to access the service without charge.

Ukrainian emergency response

Refugees from Ukraine fleeing conflict in their homeland can access information in Ukrainian and Russian about available supports for victims and survivors of sexual violence. Throughout 2023, DRCC participated in the Ukraine Civil Response Forum, providing information and assisting as appropriate.

Celebrating Pride

In June, DRCC with its We-Consent campaign marched in Dublin Pride for the first time. It was a great day, with many staff and volunteers marching under the banner and receiving incredible support and engagement from the public.

Supporting survivors through consular contacts

One of the important ways DRCC can support people from foreign communities who have been harmed by sexual violence in Ireland is by reaching out through their national embassies. During 2023, DRCC was visited by ambassadors and consular staff to learn about our work and services. We attended information events, including a talk by the Brazilian actor and activist Luíza Brunet hosted by the Brazilian embassy, to highlight domestic violence. DRCC was part of a panel discussion organised by the Department of Foreign Affairs, “Staying Safe Overseas”. In the discussion, DRCC focused on striking a balance between providing practical advice and promoting a culture of safety without victim blaming.



DRCC staff marking Immigrant Council Ireland’s Wear Red Day



Goal Two

Eliminate tolerance of sexual violence in Irish society and support the rights of victims/survivors

This goal will be achieved through the delivery of the following objectives



Objective Four

Building, maintaining and disseminating knowledge and expertise on the topic of sexual violence

Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence 2022-2026

This strategy was launched in June 2022. It has four pillars – prevention, protection, prosecution and policy and cross-government approach. In 2023, the government announced that a new statutory agency, Cuan, was to be established, with a mandate to drive actions and progress this sector. DRCC took part in development meetings around the new agency and was invited by the Justice Committee to make a submission on the General Scheme of a DGGBV Agency Bill. We also engaged in meetings to drive the implementation of the National Strategy throughout 2023.

Cooperating with international partners

In March, DRCC hosted a visit from Feminoteka, a Warsaw-based organisation that provides direct support to survivors of sexual violence in Poland. The group was seeking to establish Poland's first rape crisis centre. The Feminoteka team met with DRCC staff to learn about our services and wider work, and we also arranged for them to meet other organisations supporting survivors of gender-based and sexual violence to share experiences and strategies. In May, DRCC presented at Feminoteka's international conference in Warsaw to mark the opening of the centre. Our We-Consent campaign also assisted Feminoteka by running webinars on consent for Polish and Ukrainian activists. We travelled to Warsaw in October to conduct accompaniment training. Feminoteka is well on the way to achieving its goal of providing the holistic, specialised support of a rape crisis centre, and DRCC is honoured to assist them in this aim.

In July, We-Consent won international attention, with the team invited to present on the campaign to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The European Union's COVIS project (court-based victim and witness support service) aims to build knowledge and provide tools to establish and deliver quality court-based support services for victims and witnesses of crime. This includes a best practice handbook for witness support. Our colleagues in Victim Support at Court (V-SAC) are involved in this project and hosted a learning day for partners from Sweden, Portugal, Finland and Denmark to hear from NGOs and statutory agencies working in the Irish court system. DRCC staff spoke to the group about our observations and our work to promote better criminal processes and access to safe justice.



Policy Manager Shirley Scott and other speakers at the Feminoteka Conference in Warsaw

Highlighting the key role of data

In April, the CSO published its long-awaited survey on the prevalence of sexual violence in Ireland. This Sexual Violence Survey (SVS) was the first such national research in over 20 years, since the ground-breaking Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland (SAVI) Report in 2002, commissioned by DRCC and conducted by Hannah McGee, Rebecca Garavan, Mairead de Barra, Joanne Byrne and Ronán Conroy of the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI). DRCC was a member of the SVS Liaison Group tasked with reviewing the progress and offering advice to the development of the survey. DRCC was also privileged to assist the CSO in its preparatory work for this much-needed study, particularly in facilitating a survivor focus group and feedback for the researchers.

The research revealed that sexual violence is extremely widespread in Ireland, affecting over half of women (52%) and almost 3 in 10 men (28%) in their lifetimes. Some groups are particularly affected by sexual violence, such as younger women and bisexual people. More than half (53%) of those affected had never told another person about the abuse, and most (78%) knew the person who had assaulted them.

The CSO issued five releases of data over the space of several months, each focusing on a theme: adult and childhood experiences of sexual violence, disclosure, sexual harassment and attitudes to sexual violence. DRCC welcomed this important data, calling for greater acknowledgement of the population-wide impact of sexual violence as well as the need for more survivor-friendly justice and health systems.

International Women's Day

We marked this annual call for action with a campaign on the theme "online sexual violence is sexual violence." We drew attention to the harm caused by abuse online, which can be viewed as somehow less harmful than off-screen abuse. Callers to the National Rape Crisis Helpline talk about receiving threats of sharing intimate images or being sent unwanted sexual images and videos. With more people accessing violent pornography online, there has been an accompanying rise in online abuse, which makes it all the more important that young people in particular understand that pornography does not represent real life and is certainly not something on which to base their own encounters and relationships.



Working with others

Joining forces to increase impact

While we aim to build our own organisational capacity and expertise, we recognise that we gain in knowledge and impact when we collaborate with colleagues in other organisations in the community and voluntary sector and beyond. These include the following:

- **The National Women’s Council and the Observatory against Violence against Women.** In June, DRCC joined the National Women’s Council (NWC) in celebrating its 50-year anniversary. Later in the year, DRCC supported the NWC’s Pre-Budget Submission, calling for ring-fencing of funding to protect, prevent and prosecute domestic, sexual and gender-based violence. In October, DRCC joined an event hosted by MEP Frances Fitzgerald in Brussels that provided an opportunity to learn more about EU decision-making and the impact of the EU on gender equality.
- **Rape Crisis Centre Forum Ireland** is a collective group of 9 of the country’s 16 rape crisis centres and during 2023 DRCC shared experiences and expertise with other Forum members. In September, we submitted a joint submission to Coimisiún na Meán (the Media Commission) with 7 other rape crisis centres regarding the Online Safety Code. We highlighted the harms of technology-facilitated abuse and the need to treat online harms as seriously as offline harms as well as the overlap between both forms. On intimate image abuse, we sought more effective removal and review procedures to enable prompt action on non-consensual sharing.
- **The Victims’ Rights Alliance**
- **The Strategic Human Rights Advisory Committee of An Garda Síochána**
- **The National Advisory Committee of the Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management group, SORAM**
- **The Children’s Rights Alliance:** DRCC offered feedback and other input to its annual Score Card, which evaluates the State’s performance in upholding children’s rights in Ireland and to which DRCC contributes.
- **The Wheel**, which represents and engages with community and voluntary organisations around Ireland
- **The Victims of Crime Forum**, the purpose of which is to facilitate dialogue between civil society organisations working with victims of crime, the Department of Justice and other stakeholders to help ensure appropriate responses, enhance outcomes and support healing.



Norwegian Ambassador to Ireland Mari Skåre visited the centre in August. L-R: Shirley Scott, Celine Newman, Michelle Grehan, Ambassador Mari Skåre, Noeline Blackwell, Xénia Ferigoule, Catriona Freir, Sarah Monaghan.

Objective Five

Building greater recognition in the law and throughout society on the key role of consent

National We-Consent campaign

Campaign launch

In March 2023, after years of research and planning, we launched the We-Consent campaign. It is Ireland's first national consent campaign aimed at all demographic cohorts and is a long-term movement to inform, educate and engage with all members of Irish society about consent.

The campaign messaging and concept development were guided by in-depth research carried out over several years. The most recent research, both quantitative and qualitative, in early 2023 explored attitudes towards consent with 15 focus groups and a large-scale national survey. The focus groups included 8 community-specific sessions with marginalised groups with unique consent perspectives including lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and other (LGBTI+) people, migrant groups and people with disabilities. The findings of this research outlined the appetite for a broad campaign implementing positive consent framing and the need for direct and specific resources for a variety of people.

On 22 March, we launched We-Consent in the Royal Irish Academy, with Justice Minister Simon Harris officially launching the campaign. This was followed by an address from Denise Charlton, the CEO of Community Foundation Ireland, which has funded the campaign since its earliest days. Broadcaster and columnist Louise McSharry then compered an

insightful panel discussion with Noeline Blackwell, Ger Gilroy, Jarlath Regan, Dr Caroline Kelleher and Chris Rooke discussing the need for survivor-based research and campaigns, the need for all members of society to get involved in the consent conversation, how far Ireland has come and how far we have yet to go.

The launch weekend also saw We-Consent messaging projected on the Dublin City Tourist Office building, where We-Consent staff and volunteers handed out badges and chatted about consent with hundreds of people in the city centre.

In tandem with our physical launch, we premiered our television advertisement created in 2022 by Pull the Trigger, arising from a Cannes Young Lions-winning concept developed by Rothco. The advertisement, which featured on Sky TV for 6 weeks, depicted different couples, varying in age, sexuality and gender, navigating consent in a real, fun and sexy way. Since the advertisement was launched, the video has been viewed by almost 3 million people across social media alone.

We also created our We-Consent.ie website, including a treasure trove of consent resources within our Resource Hub. We collated hundreds of guides, articles and videos on a variety of consent topics ranging from talking to young people about consent to supporting someone who has experienced sexual violence.



Launch of the We-Consent campaign

Workshops

A key aim of We-Consent is to spark important conversations about consent and to provide people with an open, non-judgemental space to do so. Throughout 2023, We-Consent delivered innovative consent workshops to almost 500 people across 10 counties in Ireland. Alongside an external facilitator, the We-Consent Conversation Workshops supported a wide range of groups to build their consent skills. They included mental health groups, young farmers, sci-fi convention attendees, LGBTI+ groups, sports groups and medical and care staff.

Ambassadors

The We-Consent Ambassador programme is a 6-week activist training initiative that aims to equip volunteers with all of the skills and tools they need to be consent leaders in their communities. Run in conjunction with the DRCC Education and Training Team, the Ambassador training covers signposting, consent conversation starting, activism, and the impact of trauma. After a successful pilot in June, 19 Ambassadors graduated in 2023. Since then, the Ambassador team has played a vital role in spreading the We-Consent message around Ireland by engaging in outreach, distributing materials, promoting events, co-facilitating workshops, and much more.



Minister Simon Harris launching We-Consent at the Royal Irish Academy in March 2023.

Collaborations and engagement

- In June, We-Consent marched in Dublin Pride for the first time. Following this event, our engagement with the LGBTQIA+ community continued as we launched a successful advertising campaign on Grindr, and our Outreach and Engagement Officer spoke on a panel at QCon, an Irish conference for queer women. In addition, we produced a leaflet informed by and created by gay men for gay men, which was also translated into Portuguese.
- In collaboration with Irish Rail, We-Consent posters were displayed on the DART network in the Dublin area; our messages also featured on digital kiosks across Ireland thanks to Clear Channel, eir and Dublin City Council (DCC).
- In July, we continued our collaboration with Feminoteka, a Polish group establishing the first ever rape crisis centre in Poland, by participating in a series of webinars with Polish and Ukrainian women's rights campaigners.
- In September, We-Consent travelled to Paris to give a presentation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in a consent-focused session alongside other European experts in the area.
- Throughout the year we worked in collaboration with Galway Rape Crisis Centre, Kilkenny Rape Crisis Centre and Rape Crisis Midwest to run workshops, produce a video and produce stickers which were co-branded and promote local services.
- We engaged with the public and spread the consent message through selling We-Consent merchandise, including sweatshirts, tote bags and more.
- In December, we began a collaborative project with AsIAM (Ireland's autism charity) to conduct research with the autistic community. This research will be used to produce accessible consent resources for autistic people and their families.



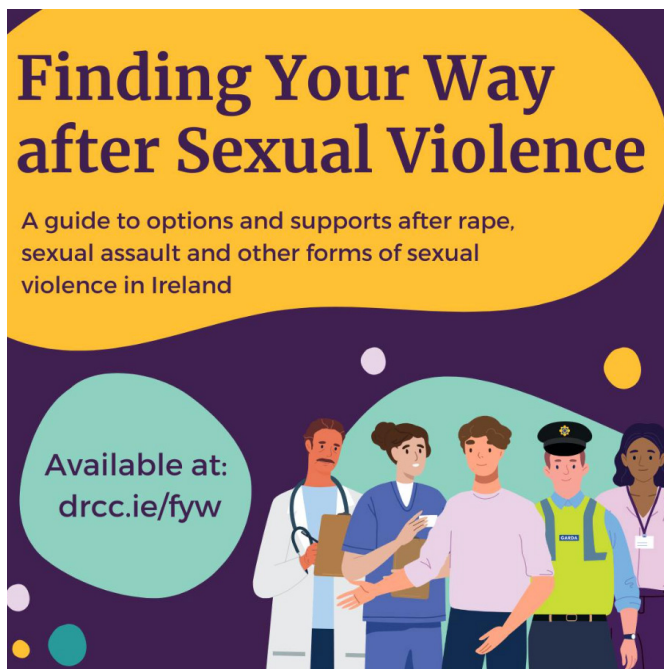
Panelists and singer Toshín at Culture Night 2023

Culture Night 2023

DRCC once again took part in Dublin's Culture Night, with an evening dedicated to the discussion and examination of the representation of consent and sexual violence in the world of arts, film, television, literature and culture. After a 'Conversation on Consent' Workshop in our headquarters, we headed to the Sugar Club for a star-studded panel event with author and playwright Roddy Doyle, intimacy coordinator Ita O'Brien, film director Lenny Abrahamson, and author and journalist Sarah Gilmartin. Topics ranged from artists' safety as creators in the workplace to whether it is legitimate to re-write 'problematic' works of literature, to how to authentically portray social issues in arts and culture. We closed the evening with a set from our musical guest, Toshín.

Objective Six

Increasing the incidence of reporting offences of sexual violence



Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence

Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence is a new specialised, online resource for victims and survivors of sexual violence. From the early stages of seeking medical and forensic help at a SATU, to reporting a crime to Gardaí, to navigating the criminal justice system and courts, the guide offers independent, reliable information that is available online at any time.

Developed by DRCC and funded by the Department of Justice, the guide was launched by Minister for Justice Simon Harris on 17 April 2023 at the Mansion House in Dublin. At the event, Karen Stanley, a survivor of sexual violence, spoke movingly about her experience in the justice system. A number of other survivors who had contributed to the guide attended the launch, for which we are deeply grateful.

Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence is intended to help victims, survivors and their supporters understand what services are available to them, where to find them and how to access them. It is there to assist people during a challenging, upsetting and often re-traumatising period.



Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence launch at the Mansion House
L-R: Shirley Scott, Karen Stanley, Lord Mayor Caroline Conroy, Minister Simon Harris, Noeline Blackwell

Interspersed throughout the guide is a diverse range of personal experiences or testimonies that victims and survivors have shared with us. We have also included testimonials from staff and volunteers in the health and justice systems.

The guide is trauma-informed, which means it takes into account the impact of sexual violence on a person's mental, physical, social and emotional well-being, and thus how people may react to different types of information. It is also victim-centred, prioritising those who have been subjected to sexual violence. You can access the guide at www.drcc.ie/fyw

During the year, information packs with cards and flyers were distributed to all rape crisis centres, Garda Divisional Protective Services Units, and non-profit organisations/charities that might use the information for clients/service users. Digital assets also played a key role in the roll-out, with social media graphics being created and shared across online platforms. In May, September and December, the guide was promoted on digital pedestals across Ireland as part of DRCC's collaboration with Clear Channel, eir and DCC.

DRCC's volunteers in SATU highlight the guide to those attending the unit for forensic/medical care. In addition, National Helpline staff and volunteers as well as our therapy team recommend it to callers and clients who may find it useful.

Since the launch, we have been gathering feedback, which has been overwhelmingly positive. It is of great importance to us that those working with victims and survivors find the guide beneficial and are able to refer clients to it. We will continue to gather feedback into 2024 and use it to improve and update the information. When asked why they use the guide, stakeholders said:

"I recommend it all the time during trainings. I hand out the flyers and cards, as well as bring the group through the FYW [*Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence*] website. I do this because it's an excellent resource for them to use in their own lives and work - to pass on to others."

"It is easy to understand and find the information that may be needed, depending on what stage the victim of sexual violence is at on their journey of recovery. It could have been promoted more in the media."

Supporting a Victim's Journey

This Department of Justice plan is focused on improving reporting and criminal justice systems for victims and vulnerable witnesses in sexual violence cases. DRCC is one of a number of subgroups helping to implement particular recommendations of Supporting a Victim's Journey, notably on advancing specialist training programmes for all those who deal with victims in sexual offence cases, and on mapping the journey faced by victims as they navigate the reporting and legal system.

Creating a safer internet

DRCC is part of the 123 Online Safety campaign to increase protections online, led by the Children's Rights Alliance (CRA). In 2023, Coimisiún na Meán commenced operations and appointed an Online Safety Commissioner, something the campaign had been seeking. An individual complaints mechanism was included in the Online Safety and Media Regulation Act 2022, which is also something DRCC and campaign partners had been calling for. On 8 March, DRCC marked International Women's Day with a campaign highlighting that 'online sexual violence is sexual violence'. DRCC's CEO attended a stakeholder consultation in Brussels on the EU's Digital Services Act (DSA). The DSA is about ensuring a safe and accountable online environment. The DSA also recognises gender-based and cyber violence as particular risks that digital platforms will have to be alert to when assessing and mitigating harms their services can cause.

Advocating for an improved police response to domestic and sexual violence

The Sex Offenders (Amendment) Act 2023 aims to strengthen management and monitoring of sex offenders who have served their sentence and are in the community. This includes changes to the notification requirements for those on the sex offenders register and a ban on them working with children or vulnerable people. DRCC is part of a working group to oversee the commencement of this law and to ensure that it continues to form part of the Sex Offender Risk Assessment and Management Advisory Committee (SORAM).



Karen Stanley speaking at the launch of *Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence* at the Mansion House





TELEPHONE




An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Department of Justice

Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence

A guide to options and supports
after rape, sexual assault and
other forms of sexual violence in
Ireland

- Getting treatment after recent rape or sexual assault
- Reporting sexual violence
- Going to court
- After court and sentencing
- Support available to you

 www.drcc.ie/fyw



Finding Your Way after Sexual Violence featured on digital kiosks throughout Dublin, facilitated by Clear Channel in cooperation with eir and DCC.

Objective Seven

Facilitating victims/survivors in making their voices heard and promoting innovation in strengthening protection for victims/survivors of sexual violence



Chris Rooke speaking as part of a panel discussion at the launch of We-Consent

Towards a more victim-centred justice system

Many aspects of our criminal justice system can re-traumatise victims and survivors during rape and sexual assault proceedings. In July, DRCC welcomed a wide-ranging new Bill on sexual offences and human trafficking, the Criminal Law (Sexual Offences and Human Trafficking) Bill 2023. This draft legislation aims to address long-standing issues affecting victims and survivors of sexual violence, including providing anonymity for victims and the accused in sexual offence trials, repealing provisions for sentences to be delivered in public, and making provision for legal representation for victims in certain circumstances. One such provision dealt with the ‘honest belief’ defence in rape cases by introducing an objective test of whether a ‘reasonable person’ would believe that consent was agreed. However, this was removed from the Bill in November and as of early 2024, the Minister for Justice is considering a separate piece of legislation to deal with the issue.

As provided in the Third National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual & Gender-Based Violence 2022–2026, the Department of Health is examining and reviewing the rationale for disclosure of survivors’ counselling notes in court proceedings. Victims and survivors can – understandably – be distressed and angry to learn that their private notes may be sought in a criminal case. During 2023, DRCC met and conveyed information and insights to the responsible working group on this very important and sensitive issue.

Recognising the intersection of legal jurisdictions

Many victims and survivors may face multiple proceedings in the justice system. As well as a criminal law case, they may be involved in private legal proceedings on separation, divorce, maintenance or child custody in the Family Courts, or proceedings brought by Tusla on taking a child into care. These courts operate independently, with different standards of evidence and different rules, which can be confusing and procedurally complex. Research on how these three systems intersect, commissioned by the NWC and funded by the Department of Justice, was published in 2023. It recommended ways that the different arms of the justice system can better work together to ensure that victims' rights are upheld and respected throughout the justice system. DRCC contributed information to the report authors, Ellen O'Malley-Dunlop and Nuala Egan, and was part of the Advisory Committee on the research.

Amplifying the voices of victims and survivors

Victims and survivors are at the centre of DRCC's work and of our vision of an Ireland free from sexual violence. Accordingly, we have as a key aim to amplify and promote the voice of victims and survivors of sexual violence as the true experts by experience in combating sexual violence in all its forms. In 2023, we have been privileged to work directly with victims and survivors in a number of ways:

- Our Consent Project Survivor Panel helped guide the development of our new campaign in the second half of the year.
- We provided support to survivors who waived their anonymity following court proceedings and who shared their insights and experiences in media and other public fora.
- We included first-hand survivor testimonies and experiences with reporting and legal systems in our *Finding Your Way After Sexual Violence* guide, and in other information resources.
- We included survivor feedback in our policy and research outputs throughout 2023.

DRCC is deeply grateful to each and every person for their generosity in sharing their invaluable insights.



DRCC services leaflets





Lavinia Kerwick speaking at the *Tackling Sexual Violence* conference in Kilkenny

Holding the State to account on obligations to eliminate gender-based violence

The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, better known as the Istanbul Convention, is an international human rights treaty. It maintains a Europe-wide legal framework to protect women against all forms of violence, and to prevent, prosecute and eliminate violence against women, based on a victim-centred approach and linked to a wider goal of achieving gender equality. The Convention places obligations on the Irish State across a range of targets. In 2023 Ireland was assessed for the first time on how it is meeting these obligations by GREVIO, the independent expert monitoring body. DRCC met with GREVIO members when they visited in January and we welcomed the subsequent evaluation report published in November.

We-Speak survivor story platform

In June 2023, as part of the We-Consent campaign, we launched We-Speak – a secure, anonymous online platform that aims to empower survivors of sexual violence to safely tell their own stories, in their own time, in their own words. We-Speak was designed to offer another option for survivors of sexual violence to share their stories, while building a community and learning that their stories hold the power to build awareness, cultivate empathy, and ultimately create change.

Alongside our US technology partners Our Wave and with expert legal advice from A&L Goodbody’s pro bono team, enormous work was put into ensuring that the platform is safe, is compliant with all EU law and encrypted for complete anonymity. The story sharing process is clear, easy to navigate and was designed with the care, well-being and safety of the user at its core. The stories are moderated by trained DRCC staff before being published on the site.

Since We-Speak was launched, we have received stories full of enormous compassion, healing and support. Media coverage and feedback, and support from survivors of sexual violence, has been overwhelming in its positivity.

Table 14: Policy submissions in 2023

| | |
|-----------|---|
| February | Submission to the Department of Justice on review of civil legal aid scheme |
| March | Submission to the Joint Committee on Justice on the General Scheme of the Domestic, Sexual and Gender-Based Violence Agency Bill |
| March | Contributed to public consultation by the European Commission on proposed revisions to Directive 2011/36/EU on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims |
| May | Submission to the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth on the Work Life Balance and Miscellaneous Provisions Act 2023, with a specific focus on paid domestic violence leave |
| September | Coordinated response from eight rape crisis centres to Coimisiún na Meán on the consultation process on Ireland's first binding online safety code for video-sharing platform services |
| September | Contributed to public consultation by the European Commission on proposed revisions to the Victims' Rights Directive |
| October | Submission to National Council for Curriculum and Assessment on the draft specification for Senior Cycle SPHE |
| October | Contributed to Pre-Budget 2024 Submission with members of the National Women's Council |



Goal Three

Be a strong, sustainable organisation.

This goal will be achieved through the delivery of the following objectives



Objective Eight

Maintaining and further developing the sustainable financial base for our work

DRCC depends on raising funds from a wide variety of sources in order to provide support to victims and survivors seeking to recover from the trauma of sexual violence. In 2023, public fundraising financed the support we provided to one in five survivors. In total, individuals and organisations raised more than €1 million to prevent the harm and heal the trauma of rape and sexual violence.

2023 saw an array of campaigns, challenges, sports achievements and fun events being organised to raise funds for DRCC. Among these was the VHI Women's Mini Marathon in Dublin in June, when a band of brave women togged out for #TeamDRCC. During the year, we also benefitted from sky dives, yoga sessions, and sea swim challenges. In addition, UCD Students Union named DRCC as a charity partner, which we greatly welcomed.

In March, the Corporate Quiz returned, hosted by broadcaster Pat Kenny, with more than 40 teams taking part. The Annual Golf Classic took place in September and in October we organised the 'Dip4DRCC' sea swimming challenge. In November, we held the 'Countdown to Christmas' fundraising lunch, DRCC's largest fundraising event. We also continued to highlight the impact of leaving a legacy in your will through our membership of MyLegacy.

DRCC is deeply grateful to the companies, trusts and philanthropists who supported our work in 2023, standing behind the issues we champion and the values we stand for. DRCC also benefitted from pro bono support in areas such as legal assistance and advice.



Dip4DRCC social media promotion

In addition to sources such as generous public donations, fundraising events and corporate partnerships, the State continued to part-fund DRCC's work and services. We are very grateful to Tusla and the Department of Justice, as our main State funders, for their partnership approach and significant part-funding of our core work. Simply put, we could not have provided the requisite services and supports for our clients without this funding. During 2024, the State funding model will change, with the new agency Cuan becoming our main channel of funding support. We look forward to working in partnership with Cuan to deliver the best services, support and care for our clients.

We are indebted to everyone who chooses to contribute in any way to DRCC's work and mission of preventing the harm and healing the trauma of sexual violence in Ireland.



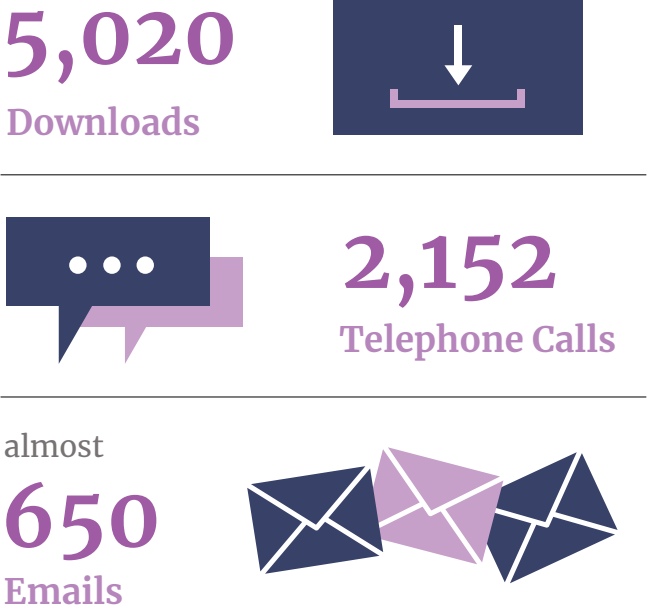
DRCC staff and friends taking part in the Dip4DRCC

Objective Nine

Implementing a comprehensive & coherent communications plan

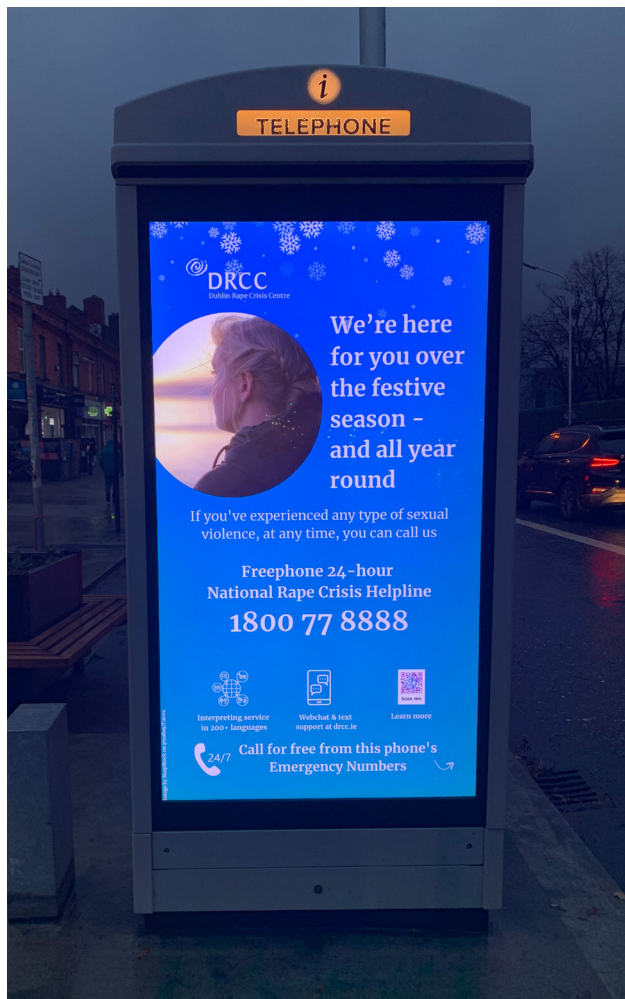
Communications underpin and support how DRCC meets its strategic objectives and transmits our values. We use communications tools and channels to broaden understanding of sexual violence and its impacts, to promote our services and supports to victims and survivors, and to campaign for a society with zero tolerance for sexual violence and that understands and values sexual consent. It is also important that we share our insights, learnings and trends from across all facets of our work, both internally and externally, with a variety of stakeholders. Finally, the voice of victims and survivors is at the heart of our communications work and we seek to support and amplify survivors' voices wherever possible.

Figure 8: DRCC.ie website 2023



Communications channels

- Our website drcc.ie provides updates on our work and hosts news and press releases as well as information about campaigns and events. It is also the access point for our Webchat Support Service which enables people to receive crisis support via online chat with a webchat support worker. The website also houses downloadable resources, focused on offering survivors information and tools to understand and manage trauma impacts. In 2023, there were 5,020 downloads, 2,152 telephone calls and almost 650 emails sent via the website.
- We used our social media channels on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, TikTok and YouTube to highlight various aspects our work and draw attention to issues of concern. (Our Consent Project established its own set of social channels in 2023.)
- We issued quarterly online newsletters throughout 2023 to update email subscribers on our work, campaigns and other relevant developments. From time to time, our Education and Training Team issues a newsletter to past attendees of training courses to alert them to training opportunities. To read past issues or to sign up, visit bit.ly/DRCCnl22



National 24-hour Helpline featured on digital kiosks throughout Dublin, facilitated by Clear Channel in cooperation with eir and DCC.

Media

DRCC works with media to share insights and evidence from our work, flag issues of concern, and provide comment on relevant matters. We coordinated over 800 briefings and/or pieces of coverage across media outlets at local and national level in 2023, with a reach of 70 million. We assisted a number of survivors preparing to engage with media or speak publicly about their experience as a survivor, whether in the justice system or in terms of the impacts of sexual violence on their lives and offering messages of encouragement and hope to other survivors.

Figure 9: Media in 2023

Over **800**
media contacts
and coverage
with a reach of
70 million



Raising awareness and creating change

In tandem with our national We-Consent campaign, DRCC ran targeted campaigns highlighting equality, online safety and support for survivors, particularly noting International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence. We were also pleased to support other organisations' campaigns, including the national campaigns launched by the Department of Justice to raise awareness of domestic violence, consent and support services.

Throughout the year, we were grateful for the opportunity to promote our services and supports via street-level advertising in Dublin and other locations in Ireland by Clear Channel in cooperation with eir and DCC. These digital kiosks also feature integrated telephone units with free access to emergency telephone numbers, including the freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline.

In October 2023, we published our annual report and statistical supplement for 2022. Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth, Roderic O'Gorman kindly launched the report in the historic Tailor's Hall. In December, we ran an awareness campaign highlighting our freephone 24-hour National Rape Crisis Helpline availability over the Christmas holidays, in recognition of the fact that many people face particular difficulties at this time.

Noeline Blackwell and Minister Roderic O’Gorman
at the launch of DRCC’s Annual Report 2022



Annual Report
2022
Dublin
Rape Crisis
Centre
DRCC
Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

Objective Ten

Maintaining a robust and accountable organisational structure

In October, Noeline Blackwell resigned as CEO of DRCC. The Board and staff wish her well and are deeply grateful for her dedicated and tireless work in leading and developing the organisation since early 2016. Our new CEO, Rachel Morrogh, took up the role in November 2023.



DRCC staff and board of directors pictured with Minister Roderic O'Gorman and Garda Commissioner Drew Harris at the launch of DRCC's Annual Report 2022. L-R: Commissioner Drew Harris, Noeline Blackwell, Eoghan Cleary, Minister Roderic O'Gorman, Síona Cahill, Grace O'Malley, Ann Marie Gill, Shirley Scott.



DRCC staff

Our professional and dedicated staff carry out DRCC's mission and goals, managed by our CEO and senior management team and overseen by our voluntary Board. In 2023, our staff continued to grow and continued our hybrid working model to maximise the available space in our offices on Leeson Street.

With demand for our services as strong as ever, and with many other State and private sector services seeking to hire people, it continued to be challenging to recruit new staff in 2023 across all areas, but

especially in our therapy services. Our hard work paid off in this respect, with a cohort of therapists recruited in the second half of the year; this has helped us to reduce our waiting lists for therapy.

From mid-year, the Board and Executive worked on the development of a new 3-year Strategic Plan which was adopted in 2024.



DRCC volunteers at the 50+ Expo in the RDS. L-R: Máire Houlihan, Claire McCormick, Úna Breatnach and Pat Barker

DRCC volunteers

Since our foundation, volunteers have been central to how DRCC delivers its supports and services to survivors of sexual violence. They are integral to the freephone 24-Hour National Rape Crisis Helpline and in accompanying victims and survivors in the justice system as well as to the SATU in the Rotunda Hospital. DRCC's Board is made up of volunteer members who provide leadership and governance oversight for the organisation. DRCC benefits enormously from many people who share their expertise with us and who raise funds to support our work.

Celebrating our volunteers

DRCC is very proud of our exceptionally committed and skilled body of volunteers. In May, we began National Volunteering Week with a celebration evening, including a graduation ceremony for volunteers who had completed their 2-year commitment. Later that week, we held an online panel discussion titled 'Making an impact – DRCC Volunteers in Conversation' where volunteers Trish Eadie, Mark Wynne, Cian O'Brien and Maire Houlihan shared their volunteer experience and learnings. With a number of other organisations, DRCC took part in a volunteer information evening and also organised a special lunchtime meditation workshop for our volunteers. We ended the week with a special edition of our Volunteer Update newsletter. In December, we marked International Volunteering Day with a special appreciation evening for volunteers.

Recruitment

The COVID-19 pandemic had a lasting impact on our recruitment of volunteers. It is increasingly difficult for people to find the time and capacity to commit to volunteer roles across the charity sector, especially those as challenging – and rewarding – as those offered by DRCC. We are therefore extremely grateful to each and every volunteer for giving their time, inspiration and energy to our cause, especially those who choose to stay on past the 2-year commitment period.

Support

To those starting on their volunteering journey with DRCC, we offer specialised, comprehensive training delivered by professionals that introduces them to crisis counselling. Our volunteers check in regularly at peer support sessions and our Volunteer Services Support Team provides advice, debriefing and support sessions. There are ongoing training opportunities to update knowledge and explore new areas of interest.

DRCC Board

DRCC is led by a voluntary Board which met eight times in 2023, in seven board meetings and an annual general meeting (AGM). There are three board committees: Audit, Finance and Risk; Human Resources and Remuneration; and Fundraising, which all met as required during the year.

Table 15: DRCC Board member attendance

| Board member | Meetings attended (Total=8) |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Ann Marie Gill (Chair) | 8 |
| Siona Cahill | 6 |
| John Fanning | 7 |
| Fergus Finlay | 8 |
| Anne-Marie James | 8 |
| Carol Keane (Secretary and Treasurer) | 6 |
| Madeleine McCarthy | 6 |
| Aibhlín McCrann | 7 |
| Grace O'Malley | 6 |
| Eoghan Cleary (Joined in Nov 2023) | 1 |
| Nikki Gallagher (Joined in Nov 2023) | 1 |

Note: Board members are not remunerated for their services to DRCC, nor are any expenses reimbursed for travelling to/from board meetings.

Governance

DRCC complies with the Charities Governance Code published by the Charities Regulatory Authority. We met legal requirements throughout the year, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Children First, providing relevant training to staff and ensuring that all requirements were incorporated in organisational policies. Lobbying returns were submitted in a timely way to the Standards in Public Office Commission.

Satisfying funder duties

DRCC fulfilled its targets and reporting obligations for all funders during the course of the year. The financial accounts below give a detailed picture of the income, expenditure and activities of the organisation in 2023.

Commitment to best practice

DRCC complies with the standards contained in the Charity Regulator's Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public. The organisation is compliant with the Code of Practice for Good Governance of Community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations in Ireland (The Governance Code). Our Board and Staff abide by a conflict-of-interest policy.

Company and charity registration

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) is a company limited by guarantee not having a share capital, registered with the Companies Registration Office (No. 147318). DRCC holds charitable tax exemption from the Revenue Commissioners (CHY 8529) and is also registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority (RCN 20021078).

Financial Statements

Statement Of Financial Activities for Year Ended 31 December 2023

| | Designated funds € | Unrestricted funds € | Restricted funds € | Total 2023 € | Total 2022 € |
|---|--------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Income from: | | | | | |
| Donations & Legacies | - | 557,730 | 457,909 | 1,015,639 | 873,740 |
| Income from charitable activities: | | | | | |
| Government grants | - | - | 2,579,322 | 2,579,322 | 2,363,004 |
| Education, counselling & other services | - | 125,506 | - | 125,506 | 107,286 |
| Total income | | 683,236 | 3,037,231 | 3,720,467 | 3,344,030 |
| Expenditure | | | | | |
| Cost of raising funds | - | 253,912 | - | 253,912 | 198,016 |
| Expenditure on charitable activities | - | 399,110 | 3,037,231 | 3,436,341 | 2,835,294 |
| Administration & other expenditure | - | 20,860 | - | 20,860 | 295,342 |
| Total expenditure | | 673,882 | 3,037,231 | 3,711,113 | 3,328,652 |
| Net income | - | 9,354 | - | 9,354 | 15,378 |
| Transfer to/between funds | (124,639) | 124,639 | - | - | - |
| Net movement in funds for the year | (124,639) | 133,993 | - | 9,354 | 15,378 |
| Reconciliation of funds | | | | | |
| Total funds brought forward | 2,640,421 | 513,313 | - | 3,153,734 | 3,138,356 |
| Total funds carried forward | 2,515,782 | 647,306 | - | 3,163,088 | 3,153,734 |

There are no other recognised gains or losses for the financial year except for those listed above. All income and expenditure are derived from continuing operations.

Statement Of Financial Position for year ended 31 December 2023

| | 2023 | | 2022 | |
|--|--------------------|------------------|--------------------|------------------|
| | € | € | € | € |
| Fixed Assets | | | | |
| Tangible assets | | 1,080,962 | | 1,114,354 |
| Current assets | | | | |
| Debtors | 30,455 | | 7,405 | |
| Cash at bank and in hand | 3,446,417 | | 3,591,985 | |
| | 3,476,872 | | 3,599,390 | |
| Creditors: amounts falling due within one year | (1,164,917) | | (1,316,440) | |
| Net current assets | | 2,311,955 | | 2,282,950 |
| Total assets less current liabilities | | 3,392,917 | | 3,397,304 |
| Creditors: amounts falling after more than one year | | (229,829) | | (243,570) |
| Net Assets | | 3,163,088 | | 3,153,734 |
| Funds of the charity | | | | |
| Accumulated- unrestricted | | 647,306 | | 513,313 |
| Accumulated-designated | | 2,515,782 | | 2,640,421 |
| Total | | 3,163,088 | | 3,153,734 |

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Directors and authorised for issue on 16 May 2024 and are signed on its behalf by:

Ann Marie Gill

Director

16 May 2024

Carol Keane

Director

DRCC Employee Salary Range 2023

| | 2023 | 2022 |
|--------------------|------|------|
| €60,000- €70,000 | 6 | 2 |
| €70,001- €80,000 | 2 | 1 |
| €80,001- €90,000 | 1 | - |
| €90,001- €100,000 | - | 1 |
| €110,001- €120,000 | 1 | - |

 RCC **DUBLIN**
RAPE CRISIS CENTRE
Helpline: 1800 77 88 88





DRCC Annual Report 2023

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Photos thanks to Keith Arkins, Maxwells Photography, Andres Poveda, Alan Rowlette, Derek Speirs, Adam Victory. Additional photos by DRCC staff.

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