

# **Submission to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media on Safe and Respectful Working Environments in the Arts**

**Dublin Rape Crisis Centre**

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## Executive Summary

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) is pleased to provide comment to the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sport and Media for their examination on the delivery of a safe and respectful working environment in the Arts. In this submission, we highlight the following proposed solutions to better cultivate a safe and respectful working environment in the Arts:

### Create Shifts in Culture to Ensure Safe and Respectful Working Environments in the Arts

- Deliver awareness raising on what constitutes as harmful workplace behaviours, how to recognise them as a bystander, how to report them as a victim/survivor and the support services available. It will be crucial that any awareness campaigns target everyone working in the Arts, which includes gig-economy workers.
- Deliver victim-centred, trauma-informed training.
- Develop an inter-organizational working group to ensure complementary measures on awareness raising and trainings are streamlined within leadership roles.
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### Reform Existing Policies, Frameworks, and Procedures

- Create a Dignity at Work Tool Kit that contains comprehensive information on available supports and resources for freelance artists and arts workers. It should also contain comprehensive information for victim/survivors of sexual harassment and abuse of internal and external support services available.
- Create an anonymous reporting tool that documents (1) complaints – which would otherwise go unreported; (2) provides the industry with the opportunity to inform people about the safeguards and supports that can be put in place if they decide to take a complaint further; and (3) enables the industry to address the matter and act on general safety mechanisms as required.

Governance Standards

- Require government departments, state agencies and funders to require organisations/institutions to develop, implement, and report annually on effective and enforceable accountability solutions and procedures.
- Institute regular compliance checks in all public funding systems to ensure ongoing adherence to dignity at work policies.
- Make public funding of any arts organization or institution contingent on signing a memorandum of understanding regarding dignity at work standards.

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## Introduction

- 1 Dublin Rape Crisis Centre aims to prevent the harm and heal the trauma of all forms of sexual violence in Ireland. We provide services including running the National 24-Hour Helpline and associated Webchat, therapeutic counselling and other supports to survivors; accompaniment to those attending Sexual Assault Treatment Units, Garda stations and court. In addition, we provide training and education for a wide variety of professionals, frontline staff and volunteers who work with those who have experienced sexual violence. Through our work in the DRCC, we see first-hand the life-long consequences of the trauma and harm caused by sexual violence of all kinds. These serious consequences negatively impact health, families, relationships, social well-being, education and work.
- 2 Of interest to the Committee, the DRCC is currently committed to a research project<sup>1</sup> on identifying the prevalence of workplace sexual harassment and abuse in Irish society, barriers to accessing justice under existing reporting mechanisms, and any proposed solutions that can be determined within the research.
- 3 Through the DRCC's work with victims/survivors of workplace sexual harassment and abuse, we understand that barriers to accessing justice exist across all sectors and industries. However, our collaborative work with arts related organisations and institutions has made us privy to the heightened vulnerabilities faced by creatives and those working in the sector due to the precarious nature of work in the sector. Every sector has power imbalances. In sectors where popularity, individual decisions by those with power, tight-knit groups and grace and favour are part of the culture, such as the Arts and culture sector, abuse of that power can cause disproportionate harm and damage to people personally and professionally.

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<sup>1</sup> DRCC (2021) Workplace Sexual Harassment & Abuse  
[https://www.drcc.ie/assets/files/pdf/drcc\\_discussion\\_paper\\_sexual\\_harassment\\_in\\_the\\_workplace\\_oct\\_2021.pdf](https://www.drcc.ie/assets/files/pdf/drcc_discussion_paper_sexual_harassment_in_the_workplace_oct_2021.pdf)

### **Current Research on Harmful Workplace Behaviours in the Arts**

- 4 The Irish Theatre Institute's *Speak Up: A Call for Change Towards Creating a Safe and Respectful Working Environment for the Arts*<sup>2</sup>, highlights the majority of people surveyed in the Arts sector have experienced and witnessed harmful behaviour in the workplace. The report also determines that the supports available to make complaints regarding instances of harmful workplace experiences were insufficient or often subverted by perpetrators given their power or status in the industry. The report recommends that a multi-faceted approach be applied in regards to reporting tools that are easily accessible and proven to be effective.

### **Proposed Solutions on Achieving Safe and Respectful Working Environments in the Arts**

- 5 Given the findings from the Irish Theatre Institute, DRCC's own research on the broader issue of workplace sexual harassment and abuse, and our collaboration with Comedy Safety Standards to providing training to those working in the comedy sector, to follow are a list of suggested solutions that offer various avenues for reform to existing issues that are preventing safe and respectful working environments in the Arts in Ireland.

#### Create Shifts in Culture to Ensure Safe and Respectful Working Environments in the Arts

- 6 Creating shifts in culture to ensure safe and respectful working environments in the Arts will be key. Raising awareness to what constitutes harmful workplace behaviours, how to recognise them as a bystander, how to report them as a victim/survivor and the support services available are necessary. It will be crucial that any awareness campaigns target everyone working in the Arts, which includes gig-economy workers. Awareness campaigns would be beneficial as they can provide concise information for those in need and create working environments where the issue is acknowledged head on and validated in its seriousness.

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<sup>2</sup> Irish Theatre Institute (2021) <https://www.irishtheatreinstitute.ie/resources/speak-up-call-it-out/>

- 7 Training in relation to dignity at work policies given by a number of esteemed arts organisations and institutions are needed but there are general and specific objectives that the DRCC finds would be most helpful in promoting the prevention, recognition, and intervention of mistreatment like workplace sexual harassment and abuse.
- 8 From our experience, working with our own clients and callers, with other professionals who interact with victim/survivor of sexual violence, we know that training needs to be trauma informed. To actually deliver victim-centred, trauma-informed training which has meaningful impact for those engaged in it, there has to be a recognition that trauma is not about how the trauma story is constructed that matters, it is a willingness to be with the reality of what happened. It is an approach rather than a delivery of facts, although factual knowledge will be delivered through that. It requires a participative and experiential approach. By that we mean an approach which includes closed group discussion, case studies, videos, and experiential exercises as well as presentations and lectures. Such training must include the development of resourcing strategies for participants themselves in order to prevent or reduce vicarious traumatisation and burnout.
- 9 The following is a list of general objectives that would be beneficial to add to training frameworks:
  - Definition and understanding of consent
  - Rape myths
  - Unconsciousness biases
  - Trauma-informed approaches to aiding victim/survivors of sexual harassment and abuse
  - Victim supports services
  - Resiliency

The following is a list of specific objectives that would be beneficial to add to trainings frameworks:

- How to recognize signs of workplace sexual harassment and abuse as a bystander and victim/survivor;

- How to respond sensitively and appropriately to a disclosure of sexual harassment or abuse;
- An understanding of the attitudes and biases that may be ingrained in relation to consent and to societal attitudes/ rape myths;
- An understanding of the impact of trauma on behaviour and memory;
- Exploring ways to be a helpful ally to those who may be in a potentially dangerous situation in a safe way.

10 Another proposed solution in the area of shifting culture towards safe and respectful working environments in the Arts is to develop an inter-organizational, multi-stakeholder working group to ensure complementary measures on awareness raising and trainings are streamlined within leadership roles. In addition to the proposed aims of the inter-organizational working group, it could also be beneficial to use this group as a tool for leadership; to establish civil society connections to which creatives may refer to or consult with on projects related to each civil society organisation's area of expertise.

### Reform Existing Policies, Frameworks, and Procedures

11 Per the Irish Theatre Institute's research examining harmful workplace behaviours, some of the existing reporting frameworks, policies, and procedures do not appear to be aiding victim/survivors to a satisfactory extent. The DRCC acknowledges and understands the difficulties victim/survivors face when reporting instances of sexual harassment and abuse, in or out of the workplace. In particular to sexual harassment and abuse in the workplace, we have found that a significant number of reports from multiple industries have displayed that employees are not privy to or have adequate knowledge on existing reporting tools within their own workplaces<sup>3</sup>. In correlation to Committee's work on facilitating safe and respectful working environments, it could be beneficial to begin reform in this area on how these policies and procedures, and their

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<sup>3</sup> [Dublin Rape Crisis Centre, DRCC Sexual Harassment Survey, 2018.](#), [The Law Society of Ireland, Dignity Matters, 2021](#), [Bambrick, L, Sexual Harassment in the Workplace, ICTU, 2020.](#)

functions, are efficiently and effectively conveyed to people in the Arts. Of particular focus on the concept of accessibility, these reforms should also make efforts to ensure gig-economy workers within the Arts also have the tools and knowledge to utilize reporting tools. The Irish Theatre Institute has recommended to address accessibility issues people are facing that a Dignity at Work Tool Kit be developed that contains comprehensive information on available supports and resources for freelance artists and arts workers. It should also contain comprehensive information for victim/survivors of sexual harassment and abuse of internal and external support services available. The DRCC reiterates this recommendation and also commits to aiding in the development of the Tool Kit to ensure any of our expertise and support services can be utilized.

- 12 Through the DRCC's general expertise on sexual harassment and abuse and research within the context of the workplace, we have noted that many victim/survivors do not wish to make formal complaints in the workplace, but just want the inappropriate behaviour to stop. With this concept in mind, another possible solution regarding reporting tools, is the use of anonymous tools to report sexual harassment or abuse in the workplace. The proposed anonymous tool could be related to existing models of anonymous reporting mechanisms such as the University College Dublin's Report and Support tool<sup>4</sup> or the Transparency International Ireland's use of the Signal app<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, the proposed anonymous tool could ensure, inter alia, that: (1) complaints – which would otherwise go unreported – are captured; (2) the industry is provided with the opportunity to inform people about the safeguards and supports that can be put in place if they decide to take a complaint further; and (3) the industry is enabled to address the matter and act on general safety mechanisms as required.
- 13 However, it is important to note that anonymous reporting tools are not designed to report harassment or abuse in the traditional sense; rather, they are used for data collection purposes. Patterns, trends, and workplace compliance issues can be monitored and collected to create reports on individual workplaces or trends across

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<sup>4</sup> <https://reportandsupport.ucd.ie/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://transparency.ie/helpline>

particular industries. This kind of reporting allows victim/survivors of harassment to come forward, avoid any fear or stigma by remaining anonymous, and hold perpetrators accountable.

### Governance standards

14. Akin to health and safety standards in all workplaces in Ireland and particularly in the Arts, another possible solution to address the issue of workplace sexual harassment and abuse in the Arts is to create consequences for non-compliance of the standards outlined by the Committee that create a safe and respectful working environment in the Arts. To begin this initiative, it could be suggested to require government departments, state agencies and funders to require organisations/institutions to develop, implement, and report annually on effective and enforceable accountability solutions and procedures. This creates clear accountability measures for organisations/institutions to consistently monitor compliance, but also to be held culpable if found their findings are unsatisfactory relating to the prescribed standards.
15. In parallel to health and safety standards, regular compliance checks in all public funding systems to ensure ongoing adherence to dignity at work policies could be instituted to ensure compliance of the Committee's determined standards on safe and respectful working environments.
16. Continuing, another possible solution is to make public funding of any arts organization or institution contingent on signing a memorandum of understanding regarding dignity at work standards requires training. By signing this memorandum of understanding, arts organisations or institutions have provided adequate assurances that there are safe guards in place that provide creatives with safe and respectful working environments as a matter of governance.

## Conclusion

17. DRCC thanks the Joint Committee on Tourism, Culture, Arts, Sports, and Media for the opportunity to provide commentary on their examination on the delivery of a safe and respectful working environment in the Arts. We are available for any questions the Committee or Committee members have on the contents of this submission and are available to appear before the Committee to further discuss the issues outlined in this submission. Once again, please note, that the DRCC provides services including running the National 24-Hour Helpline, one-to-one therapeutic counselling and other supports to survivors; accompaniment to those attending Sexual Assault Treatment Units, Garda stations and court; and education, training and advice to a wide range of people. These services can be availed of in the construction of any initiatives proposed by the Committee.

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