

INTRODUCTION

The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) is a non-governmental organisation which aims to prevent the harm and heal the trauma of rape and sexual abuse in Ireland. We are the largest of the 16 Rape Crisis Centres in the country. We run the National 24-Hour Helpline which takes over 1,000 calls a month from victim/survivors of sexual violence and their supporters. We provide therapy for over 500 people a year. We provide training for about 2,000 people, including those working on the frontline with victims of sexual violence and those working with children and young people. We accompany victim/survivors to the Rotunda Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU), to Garda Stations and to court. We advocate on behalf of victim/survivors and carry out public awareness campaigns to prevent sexual violence.

CONTEXT

- Sexual violence is one of the most endemic crimes and harms in our society. The available research shows that 4 in 10 women and 1 in 4 of men experienced some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime.¹ Further research has found that violence against women and girls is pervasive and extensive across the EU, including Ireland, with 8% of Irish women saying they had experienced sexual violence since the age of 15 as against the European average of 11%.²
- The past year has seen an upsurge in disclosure of sexual harassment, triggered by the #MeToo Movement, as well as identifying concerns about the treatment of the victims in the justice system. In addition, there has been widespread debate on the need to build a culture of consent against sexual violence. The impact of all of these means that while current approaches are valuable, the entire tenor of the debate has changed. Simply doing more of the same will not respond adequately to the scale of the issue and will not achieve the kind of fundamental shift that is needed. Further, it will mean that opportunities, presented by the events of the past year and more, nationally and internationally, to truly challenge a culture which accepts sexual violence, will be missed.

¹ THE SAVI REPORT (2002) *Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland* Hannah McGee, Rebecca Garavan, Mairéad de Barra, Joanne Byrne and Ronán Conroy. Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland Commissioned by the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre <http://www.drcc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2011/03/savi.pdf>

² European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) https://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra-2014-vaw-survey-at-a-glance-apr14_en.pdf

- The State has signed and proposes to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (The Istanbul Convention)³. This legally binding treaty obliges the State to ensure that it will implement further meaningful changes to reduce the incidence of sexual and domestic violence, better support victims, bring perpetrators to justice and ensure there is a gold standard in data collection, surveys and research.
- Furthermore, each part of the public service is now obliged to ensure the protection and promotion of human rights and equality through a number of other international treaties and recommendations made by treaty bodies and through the obligations of the 'public sector duty'.⁴ This includes the right of everyone to be free of the serious human rights abuses of rape, sexual assault and violence.
- Pragmatically speaking, there are significant consequences for the State in not dealing effectively with this endemic problem, including:
 - Health: Victims of sexual violence suffer significant and debilitating trauma, which can be minimised by the provision of adequate, accessible and affordable health services including counselling but which can cause life-long damage if ignored;
 - Access to justice; The criminal justice system fails to vindicate the rights of those who suffer sexual violence when it fails to ensure adequate investigation, prosecution and penalties or when it re-traumatises victims and further, fails to prevent and minimise crime when it allows perpetrators to evade justice;
 - Economic: There is a significant cost to the state of failure to adequately address the harms and the crimes of sexual violence including the loss of economic activity and increased health care costs;
 - Quality of decision making: It has been 15 years since the SAVI Report (Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland) on the prevalence of sexual violence was conducted. This means that decisions are being made and state funding placed without adequate information and understanding. Additional resources are required to put effective data/IT systems in place and to carry out routine, robust surveys and analysis in order to inform decision making;

³ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

⁴ Irish Human Rights & Equality Act 2014. S.42

- Sexual Violence remains a crime which disproportionately affects women and girls and where the impact is more severe on them. State attempts to increase gender equality for women and girls are being hampered by the endemic, systemic nature of sexual violence.
- The State is best served when sexual violence is prevented to the greatest extent possible and where those who suffer it have effective access to the services that they need. This requires:
 - A comprehensive understanding of the issue, including good data collection;
 - Early intervention for those harmed or at risk;
 - Holding perpetrators to account;
 - Educating everyone, particularly children and young people on healthy relationships;
 - Building a culture of prevention for our entire society.

The 2019 Budget is an important opportunity to advance the State’s aim to reduce the prevalence of sexual violence and to improve the lives of those experiencing it. A number of Government Departments have a role to play in ensuring that necessary resources are dedicated to fostering societal change on sexual violence.

DRCC PRIORITIES FOR BUDGET 2019

Department of the Taoiseach

- To achieve a whole of government approach to tackling the endemic, harmful nature of rape, sexual abuse and sexual harassment and promoting a culture which safeguards against the harms of sexual violence, as well as promoting equality for women, as an act of leadership and overview, a specific and adequate project fund should be allocated to ensure that all government departments and agencies and all publicly funded agencies and organisations review their own practices and culture to ensure that sexual harassment and abuse is not tolerated.⁵

⁵ Some steps have been taken already. The approach taken by the Department for Culture, Heritage & the Gaeltacht to provide training to organisations funded by it could be a starting point for such work - [https://merriionstreet.ie/en/News-Room/Releases/Statement by Culture Minister Josepha Madigan on Workplace harassment in the arts and culture sector.html](https://merriionstreet.ie/en/News-Room/Releases/Statement%20by%20Culture%20Minister%20Josepha%20Madigan%20on%20Workplace%20harassment%20in%20the%20arts%20and%20culture%20sector.html)

Department of Children & Youth Affairs

- Dublin Rape Crisis Centre funding for therapeutic services comes from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs via Túsla. We have experienced significantly increased demand for our services in 2017-2018. It is a good thing that more people are seeking and availing of our services. However, even before this current additional demand, our funding through Túsla was inadequate to meet needs. Despite some welcome extra funding from Túsla, our waiting lists and waiting times have grown. We prioritise crisis appointments but, given limited resources, some people have to wait far too long, often up to 8/9 months to access therapy services.
- A substantial increase in funding is vital if people are to be able to access services as they need them, within an acceptable time frame of 3/4 months. Cuts to our Centre and others made during the recession mean our state funding is still less than it was pre-recession. We calculate that in order to meet existing need, which we stress will still be insufficient, our Centre alone would need to double its state funding for therapeutic services to approx. €2.75 million.

Department of Justice & Equality

- After years of commitment to specialist services in the Gardaí to deal with crimes of intimate violence, such services remain thin on the ground. This budget should prioritise the allocation of the necessary resources to An Garda Síochána to ensure specialist units to deliver on the fight against sexual violence country-wide. Despite a long standing commitment and the existence for some time of a Garda National Protective Services Unit, enough Divisional Units have not been established. While there should be one in every one of the 28 Garda Divisions, only four have been set up.⁶ While there are plans for 6 more in 2018, no definite plans exist for their establishment and proper resourcing.
- Update SAVI. Ensure that adequate resources are allocated in 2019 to effectively carry out and complete a promised national sexual violence prevalence survey, assisted by an advisory committee to develop recommendations based on its findings.
- Ensure adequate funding for accompaniment to SATU, Garda and Court. This work is carried out by a large number of trained volunteers, but DRCC must resource their training, oversight, management and supervision.

⁶ The four units are based in Cabra (Dublin), Clondalkin (Dublin), Anglesea Street (Cork) and Dundalk (Louth) <https://www.garda.ie/en/About-Us/Our-Departments/Office-of-Corporate-Communications/Press-Releases/2017/June/FOUR-NEW-DIVISIONAL-PROTECTIVE-SERVICES-UNITS-GO-LIVE.html>

- Allocate sufficient funds to implement recommendations from the Department of Justice & Equality review of the treatment of sexual offences in the justice system when made.
- Provide adequate legal aid and advice for victims of sexual violence in their dealings with the criminal justice system and sufficient funding to recommend recent recommendations from a wide number of NGOs and others interested in the rights of vulnerable victims⁷ to ensure a less traumatic experience for vulnerable victims.

Department of Health

- Ensure sufficient resources to the HSE to support sustainable provision of Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) services 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Currently some of the SATUs, particularly the Dublin one at the Rotunda Hospital, are frequently closed because of a lack of personnel for a full forensic examination team. This means that victims of sexual violence may have to travel to one of the other 5 SATUs in the country for forensic examination and essential after-care.
- Even when operational, the current SATU has a responsibility to see men and women aged 14 years and above. Many much younger children are raped and abused. The lack of a consistently available dedicated paediatric forensic sexual assault treatment unit means that there is frequently no appropriate facility in which to examine younger children.

Department of Education & Skills

- Allocate sufficient resources to the National Council for Curriculum Assessment (NCCA) to ensure that the current review into how healthy relationships and consent are taught is able to carry out its work effectively so that it can conclude quickly.
- The Provision of Objective Sex Education Bill 2017 which sought to advance objective healthy relationship education to all children was blocked on the basis that there was a money message attached to it. We urge the Department to identify and secure adequate funding to ensure that every child is given high-quality, objective and comprehensive healthy relationship education.

⁷ <https://www.rcni.ie/wp-content/uploads/210807-Rape-Crisis-Network-Ireland-Hearing-Every-Voice-Report-3.pdf>

Department of Finance/ Public Expenditure and Reform

- Embed human rights, equality, gender and poverty proofing of all government budgets. An equal society is the foundation upon which any sustainable economy must be built.
- Community and voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises struggle to plan and to deliver adequate services, because statutory funding is allocated on an annual basis. In order to ensure consistency of service for those who need them, statutory funding to cover the full cost of providing services should be allocated on a multi-annual basis.
- Our organisation, like others, seeks to adhere to the highest standards of governance and accountability, including ensuring compliance with compulsory codes such as the Companies Act, Charities Regulatory Authority in relation to funding and reporting obligations and voluntary codes such as the Governance Code. State funding is available for activities and services but the cost of administration is rarely factored into that funding. If government seeks to build capacity in the voluntary sector, then administrative and compliance costs should be factored into all state grants.
- Highlighting the costs of sexual violence in terms of direct cost to the health system, the justice system and to social services, as well as indirect costs, such as lost wages, productivity and potential, indicates the need to eliminate sexual violence as both a social and economic priority.⁸ We believe the Government should place an economic cost on sexual violence to help us understand, to some degree, the scale of the problem in financial terms.

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⁸ <https://rm.coe.int/168059aa22> - Overview of studies on the costs of violence against women and domestic violence.

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