

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre

Pre-Budget Submission 2020

DRCC PRIORITIES FOR BUDGET 2020

- **Appropriate, high-quality support and treatment for victims to address the harm done to them;**
- **Better support for those reporting and testifying in criminal proceedings;**
- **Prevention measures to deter sexual violence from being perpetrated in the first place;**
- **Recognition of the worth of those working against sexual violence in Ireland.**

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. DRCC is the largest of the 16 Rape Crisis Centres in the country. DRCC run the National 24-Hour Helpline which takes over 270 calls on average each week from victim/survivors of sexual violence and their supporters. DRCC provides face to face therapy for nearly 600 people a year. DRCC also provides training for about 2,000 people, including those working on the frontline with victim/survivors of sexual violence and those working with children and young people. DRCC personnel accompany victim/survivors to the Rotunda Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU), to Garda Stations and to court. DRCC advocates on behalf of victims/survivors and carries out public awareness campaigns to prevent sexual violence.

Context

- Sexual violence is one of the most endemic crimes and harms in our society. It has been long known from the available research that 4 in 10 women and 1 in 4 men experienced some form of sexual abuse or assault in their lifetime in Ireland.¹ While those who suffered the harm and crime of sexual violence have always understood its severe impacts, there has been a substantial rise in the last few years in the numbers willing to report the crime involved to the Gardaí. The Central Statistics Office (CSO) reports of sexual offences have shown an inexorable rise in those reporting;² in turn, there has also been a substantial rise in those seeking support and help from specialist services such as those provided by rape crisis centres, including DRCC.³
- In March 2019, the State ratified the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (the Istanbul Convention).⁴ This treaty obliges Ireland to now ensure that it has:
 - Comprehensive, robust and disaggregated data on all forms of violence against women in Ireland, so that it can understand the problem fully;⁵
 - Measures in place to protect and support the victims of sexual, domestic and other gender-based violence; and
 - Effective mechanisms to hold those responsible to account.

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 CSO Recorded Crime Incidents: <https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/rc/recordedcrimeq12019/additionalstatisticaltables/>

³ <https://www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/ireland-in-grip-of-sexual-violence-crisis-rape-crisis-centre-sees-demand-for-services-soar-937176.html>

⁴ <https://www.coe.int/en/web/istanbul-convention/text-of-the-convention>

⁵ Statement from IHREC on the CoE ratification: <https://www.ihrec.ie/app/uploads/2019/06/Statement-on-Ratification-of-CoE-Convention-on-Preventing-and-Combating-Violence-Against-Women-and-Domestic-Violence.pdf> Published July 2019

- While sexual violence has been a plague on our society for some time, the extent of the harm is now more obvious than ever. By recognising and dealing with the harm it causes, the State could both reduce the impact on victims and prevent it happening in the first place. This requires the State to recognise that this is a serious national problem with consequences for our economy, our health system, our justice system and our society and that investment in tackling sexual violence would repay the cost.

The 2020 Budget is an important opportunity to recognise the economic and social advantages in tackling sexual violence now, to advance the State’s aims and obligations and to reduce and even prevent that violence which constitutes a public health and a public order and safety challenge. This challenge will require the attention of a number of government departments. Issues for various departments are addressed below.

Department of the Taoiseach

- A whole of government approach to tackling the pervasive, harmful nature of rape, sexual abuse and sexual harassment and to promoting a culture which safeguards against the harms of sexual violence is required.
- In light of their statutory public sector duty,⁶ their legislative and international commitments, and the protection and welfare of the people they deal with, all government departments and publicly funded agencies and organisations should review their own practices and culture to ensure that sexual harassment and abuse is not tolerated. The Department of the Taoiseach should take the lead in implementing and following up such reviews across departments.

Department of Children & Youth Affairs

- DRCC’s funding needs to be systemised if we are to plan and to deliver adequate services and prevention strategies.⁷ In order to ensure consistency of service for those who so desperately need it, statutory funding that covers the full cost of providing services should be allocated on a multi-annual basis.⁸
- Swingeing cuts suffered by DRCC services in the recession have not been reversed. In particular, there has been no funding whatsoever allocated to reinstate salary cuts imposed during that time. Nor has there been a recognition of the need for funding for increments or

⁶ Irish Human Rights & Equality Act 2014. S.42: <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/2014/act/25/section/42/enacted/en/html>.

⁷ DRCC 2018 Annual Report press release: <https://www.drcc.ie/2019/07/press-release-2018-annual-report-launch/>.

⁸ See DRCC Annual Report 2018, <https://www.drcc.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/FINAL-DRCC-Annual-Report-2018-D4.pdf>.

even to take into account the sharply increased costs of living, particularly in Dublin. This should also be considered in allocating DRCC's funding for 2020.

Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment

- Recent reports have highlighted the dangers for children growing up today and their exposure to an unprecedented level of harmful communications.^{9 10} DRCC welcomes the Department's commitment to the creation of an office of Digital Safety Commissioner.¹¹ Budget 2020 should ring-fence funds for the immediate provision and adequate resourcing of such an office to ensure capacity to carry out the mandate of the role.

Department of Education & Skills

- DRCC welcomes the ongoing review commissioned by the Department of how children learn about consent and healthy relationships, the first in 20 years. In 2020, the Department will be required to implement its findings. This budget should allocate ring-fenced resources in line with the draft recommendations issued already,¹² to ensure that there is no delay in building a capacity for healthy relationships in our young people.
- DRCC has already trained over 500 facilitators in schools and alternative education settings in its BodyRight Programme¹³ which develops capacity for teachers and others working with young people.¹⁴ Many of those trained fund it from their own resources, or from very limited school training funds.¹⁵ The Department should provide sufficient funding to allow the DRCC and other bodies to provide this essential skills training to teachers and guidance counsellors nationwide.

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

- DRCC welcomes the publication of the Third National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security,¹⁶ with its recognition of the particularly adverse effects of conflict on women and girls and the recognition of the principles of prevention, participation, protection and

⁹ https://cybersafeireland.org/media/1300/csi_annual_report_2018_w.pdf

¹⁰ *Cyber safety is the child protection issue of our time* warns the ISPC: <https://www.siliconrepublic.com/life/ispcc-cyber-safety-child-protection>

¹¹ <https://www.dcae.gov.ie/en-ie/communications/consultations/Pages/Regulation-of-Harmful-Online-Content-and-the-Implementation-of-the-revised-Audiovisual-Media-Services-Directive.aspx>.

¹² Draft Report on the Review of Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) in primary and post primary schools: <https://www.ncca.ie/media/4004/draft-report-on-the-review-of-rse.pdf> published July 2019.

¹³ DRCC BodyRight programme: <https://www.drcc.ie/get-informed/education-and-training/bodyright/> <https://www.drcc.ie/get-informed/education-and-training/bodyright/>.

¹⁴ DRCC is also an associate partner with Túsla in a EU funded sexual violence prevention and consent project called the Manuela programme which is based on programmes of the 16 Rape Crisis Centres: <https://connachttribune.ie/manuela-legacy-will-live-forever-211/>.

¹⁵ Department of Justice & Equality provides some funding for Youthreach facilitator training but not for schools.

¹⁶ <https://www.dfa.ie/media/dfa/ourrolepolicies/womenpeaceandsecurity/Third-National-Action-Plan.pdf> published 21 June 2019.

promotion to counter those effects. The plan recognises violence against women as a particularly heinous human rights abuse. It also recognises the need to ensure support for women victims of conflict in Ireland. From DRCC's support of women and girls in the direct provision system, it is clear that their treatment and support needs should be more thoroughly understood and provision made in this budget that fulfils the ambitions of the Plan.

Department of Health

- Sexual violence is a significant public health and social inclusion issue, which requires a positive approach to both treatment and prevention. The Department of Health Policy Review: Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATUs)¹⁷ identifies necessary steps to support victims of sexual violence. Resources should be ring-fenced in accordance with its recommendations.
- In developing its e-health strategy, the Department should take into account the DRCC's ground-breaking pilot developments on e-health measures for victims of sexual violence.¹⁸
- An understanding of consent in sexual activity is a key factor in the prevention of sexual violence and must be at the heart of relevant public health programmes. This requires a wide-ranging structured debate in our society which has public health as a core issue and form a significant module within public health programmes.

Department of Justice & Equality

- DRCC eagerly awaits the outcome of the interdepartmental review of how victims are treated in the court system chaired by Mr Tom O'Malley BL. DRCC's submission¹⁹ highlights the need for better support for victims, including access to legal aid and advice; more case management; speedier trials and specialised investigation. Budget 2020 should take account of the need for resources in assessing the budgets of the Legal Aid Board, Courts Services and An Garda Síochána (AGS).
- DRCC welcomes the commencement by the CSO of its study into the prevalence and trends of sexual violence in Ireland. However, DRCC remains concerned about the ongoing deficit of data on sexual violence in Ireland until the report issues in 2022/23. The State should take interim steps to ensure that its data collection improves, including resources to allow CSO to

¹⁷ Department of Health Policy Review: SATUs: <https://health.gov.ie/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/SATU-ONE-PAGER-FINAL-FOR-PRINT.pdf> published March 2019.

¹⁸ Irish Times article on the launch of DRCC 'e-health initiative': <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/social-affairs/online-support-service-for-sexual-violence-victims-a-world-first-1.3957569>.

¹⁹ DRCC submission link: <https://www.drcc.ie/get-informed/policy-publications/5816-2/>.

remove the status of under reservation in its Garda figures.²⁰ In addition, the State should undertake research into the prevalence of sexual violence in minority and hard-to-reach groups e.g. LGBT, Travellers & Roma, children and new communities, which appear to be omitted by the terms of reference for the major CSO study.

- All personnel in frontline provision of services to victims of sexual violence, including social workers, teachers, defence forces, prison officers, medical personnel and court personnel, need comprehensive training on dealing with the survivors of sexual violence. In particular, AGS personnel need varying levels of training, dependant on role. That training too should have an element of support for those who work on the front line, risking vicarious trauma.²¹

Department of Finance/ Public Expenditure and Reform

- All of the above recommendations concern the Department of Finance / Public Expenditure and Reform, which has financial oversight of the entire budget and can recommend or veto expenditure. It is important therefore that it recognises that there is a significant cost to the State of failure to adequately address the harms and the crimes of sexual violence. This includes loss of economic activity,²² costs associated with criminal activity, increased health care costs and social exclusion. It should also recognise the value of the services being delivered by voluntary organisations which are consistently underfunded.

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²⁰ Statistics under reservation:

<https://www.cso.ie/en/releasesandpublications/ep/p-rc/recordedcrimeq12019/underreservationexplanation/>

²¹ See Recommendation 22 for Garda wellness in the report of the Commission on the Future of Policing:

[http://www.policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland\(web\).pdf](http://www.policereform.ie/en/POLREF/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf/Files/The%20Future%20of%20Policing%20in%20Ireland(web).pdf).

²² While there is limited Irish information available on this, a US meta-analysis study estimated the economic cost per victim at approx. \$230,000 over a 10-year period: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5438753/>.