

Rape Crisis Network Ireland 2016 Annual Report

Chairperson's Report

As chairperson of Rape Crisis Network Ireland I would like to welcome you all to this year's Annual General Meeting. This meeting provides the opportunity for us to reflect back on the activities and achievements delivered by RCNI while at the same time recount the demands and the challenges that us as a National Network has had to endure over the past year.

Given the emphasis that is being placed on Accountability and Transparency I feel it is important to clearly state that RCNI has always placed a strong emphasis on governance, compliancy and transparency. The Executive Director and Board have worked together to ensure that RCNI acts in a responsible and accountable manner. Our accounts are audited annually and are publicly made available through the Charities Regulatory Authorities of whom we are registered and up to date with. I can confidently confirm that our network complies with the Governance code for the community, voluntary and charitable sector of Ireland and that RCNI have drafted and submitted to the CRO our new constitution.

Rape Crisis Network Ireland has undergone a number of positive changes in 2016. The most significant being the move from Galway to Carmichael Centre in Dublin. RCNI are now better positioned to meet the growing needs of survivors of Rape and Sexual Abuse and other necessary and supporting organisations were made accessible.

RCNI accomplished and were very successful in many task in 2016. One of those being the launch of the excellent report on LGTB survivors. This report highlighted how LGTB survivors took twice as long to report the crime committed against them compared to their straight counterparts.

It also highlighted the vulnerabilities and the need for a safe and open conversation about their issues. By working together Rape Crisis Centres where able to shine a light on how sexual violence affects minorities and vulnerable groups differently to others. It is these differences that are critical to understand if we are going to have responses that are right for everyone. Through working collectively we can find safe ways to tell the stories of the most vulnerable.

As a Rape Crisis Centre Manager often consumed with pressing matters of delivering the services, survivors and their supporters the community seek; it is invaluable and supportive to have a collective body that can champion survivors' rights and work towards prevention. As a manager, being a front of the RCNI ensures we are committed to survivors and gain strength, learning and support from each other now and in the future.

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Grace McArdle, RCNI Chairperson



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Chairperson's Report *cont...*

And Finally I would just like to say it is my honour to have been elected to chair the RCNI in this time. I'd like to acknowledge and thank my predecessor Anne Scully who guided us throughout much of 2016 dealing with the 70% cut in funding and the reduced capacity of the team while the need for the RCNI remained so pressing has been a challenge for the board.

Throughout 2016 I am proud to have been part of the board who were reflective and courageous in their vision, turning challenge into opportunity. We are truly fortunate to have a board of directors who contribute such a wealth of knowledge in so many areas of our work. As chairperson I would like to thank all board members of RCNI for their important role in working with the Executive Director and who have provided me with such expert advice and support in my short time as being chairperson.

That board was supported in their work by the small but determined and committed team led by our Executive Director Cliona Saidléar. Under Cliona's leadership RCNI has a clear purpose and with very strong momentum.

The goodwill generosity and expertise of other collaborators and experts throughout the year was of great assistance also.

Grace McArdle
RCNI Chairperson

Executive Director's Report

2016: A year of transition and transformation for RCNI

In 2016 RCNI adapted, transformed and reconnected. We rigorously examined our vision and mission and put fundamental questions on the table given the changed context arising in 2015. We relocated the head office to Dublin, restructured the staff team and rewrote our constitution.

We wish to warmly thank the Women's Committee of Congress and the PSEU in particular who accommodated us in their building on Merrion Square as we made the transition from Galway to Dublin and a new staff team. Their generosity and support was a significant support to us. We are delighted to now call the Carmichael Centre our home and wish to thank Carmichael Centre for their warm welcome and support.

In July 2016 the company secured the full award from Pobal for a three year cycle of funding to cover core costs. Both the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime and Cosc: the national office for the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender based violence continued funding some of our national programmes. Towards the end of the year RCNI as the beneficiary, in partnership with Tusla, on a restricted call for funding from the EU on sexual violence prevention, was awarded a grant for 30 months to commence in 2017.

We continued to invest in and prioritise the integrity of our mission to support survivors' experiences to be heard in ways that are safe and empowering to survivors, while challenging and transformative to society and the state.

As the **EU Victims' of Crime Directive** came into force on 16 November 2015, the **General Scheme of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill 2015** was a priority all year. All victims of crime are entitled to the benefit of the Directive. RCNI provided **training on the Directive** in 2016 to ensure survivors could be informed of their Rights under the Directive and that service providers knew their new obligations. The interagency collaboration centred on the Directive, the **Victims' Rights Alliance** went from strength to strength this year also and it was our privilege to work closely with all our colleagues across the victims of crime sector on this important alliance.

In terms of legal policy there was one Bill that dominated all others. For the whole of the year we tracked and engaged with **The Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Bill 2015**. While much of the public debate surrounded the sex buyer aspects of the Bill, our focus was on the multitude of other clauses impacting on survivors of sexual violence, their paths to justice, their support and their protection. In the course of this Bill the adoption of amendments originating from and driven by the RCNI is largely down to the substantive and collaborative work of our legal Director Caroline Counihan.

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Dr Cliona Saidléar, Executive Director



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Executive Director's Report *cont...*

The Bill creates important new offences in relation to the sexual exploitation of children and vulnerable persons. It also deals with third party disclosure issues (requests to have access to counselling notes) and improved special measures in court for child victims, amongst other topics.

Building connections and examining emerging best practice fed into the formation of a vulnerable witnesses group and the revised strategy on cyber bullying. Garda liaison continued to be one of the most important relationships we foster aiming to inform and support best responses to survivors. The new garda specialist teams and victim liaison are matters we have advocated upon for almost a decade and are delighted that they are now becoming a reality with a clear commitment from senior Gardaí and the government. Survivor satisfaction rates with Gardaí improved overall from 2014 – 2015 (RCNI national RCC statistics).

The Vulnerable Witnesses Group: RCNI took the initiative to bring together a diverse group in response to a general movement within the common-law world (UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and US mostly) to improve the standing of vulnerable witnesses, mostly victims, in criminal proceedings. In Ireland to date, there has been no co-ordinated attempt to get all the criminal justice agencies, the prosecutors, the judges and the specialist support NGOs (SV/DV, intellectual or physical disabilities, children's advocates e.g) to work together to research, define, agree and implement a common response to vulnerable witnesses designed to reduce trauma and improve the quality of their evidence. There are some legislative provisions, hardly any regulations or rules of court, and some enlightened policies used by the Gardaí and others, but there is no commonly agreed approach to vulnerable witnesses as there is in other countries. This inter-agency group of experts aims to produce a report setting out workable recommendations for each justice agency or group of professionals, by the end of 2017.

RCNI continue to provide the **vetting support** to the sector and transitioned smoothly in 2016 to the new e-vetting system, providing information and updated policy and practice.

The **RCNI Court and Garda Accompaniment Service**, funding by the Commission for Support of Victims of Crime, continued to be much in demand. As RCC volunteers who have sat in a court room with a survivor know, this accompaniment can be a critical support to the survivor as they walk the lonely path of being a witness in their case.

The **RCNI Legal Service**, funded by Cosc as part of RCNI Legal Policy Director role, provided legal advice, information and support on an ad hoc basis both to rape crisis staff and to survivors directly. This role has a particular focus on those areas where legal advice and assistance is not available from the Legal Aid Board. In 2016, the service was kept constantly busy by both groups.

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Executive Director's Report *cont...*

Addressing Sexual Harassment in Third Level. Building on a long standing investment in research and partnerships on the issue of sexual violence prevention in third level, RCNI collaborated with a multidisciplinary, north-south group to develop best practice responses. The partnership included multidisciplinary academics, NGOs, student representatives and university administrators. Subgroups on prevalence, prevention, policy and communications were established and after a year of building the foundations for this ground-breaking collaboration, an official launch of the RESPECT network took place in October 2016.

Contribution to knowledge

On the 11th of July, the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, Dr. Katherine Zappone launched the RCNI statistical report *Finding A Safe Place: LGBT survivors of sexual violence and disclosure in Rape Crisis Centres*. The report is testimony to the power of working together as to generate statistical analysis on this minority took the collective data of 15 rape crisis centres. The report highlights the particular vulnerabilities and the need for safe places for LGBT survivors. RCNI welcomed our partners Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN), and Gay Switchboard Ireland in helping to launch this report and bringing forward the learning from it. Even with the national pool of data, the numbers of trans people attending RCCs was still too low to report on safely. We engaged with TENI about how to include and address the needs of this critically vulnerable group. A significant aspect for us was the LGBT partners' using the report as a talking point in a series of collaborative community conversations. At this launch we very much welcomed the Minister's firm commitment to meet with us to better understand the right to privacy questions that had arisen between the RCNI and Tusla.

Ensuring Rape Crisis Centres are safe places: Data Protection

A significant aspect of empowering survivors to help transform responses and prevention is supporting a data collection system. The well-established and proven RCNI data system, arising from a decade of commitment from the rape crisis sector, is a recognised European best practice national data collection system that the rape crisis sector in Ireland built and into which 93% of all survivors accessing specialist NGO sexual violence services were contributing their experiences. Through this system we turn survivors' collective experiences into an evidence-base to drive policy and culture change. For many survivors this is the only place where they get to count publicly as they cannot and/or do not choose to report to the authorities or speak publicly.

Since 2015 Tusla have removed support from the RCNI data system and have sought to increase their levels of access to and control over RCC data much of it held in the RCNI database. RCNI, in our duty to survivors and the Rape Crisis movement, worked

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Executive Director's Report *cont...*

throughout 2016 to protect survivors' privacy and sought to negotiate to prevent any inappropriate actions under service level contracts. RCNI also explored and raised its concerns about the possible lack of a firm legal basis for the sharing of rape crisis data, and about linking continued funding to compliance with data sharing demands in the absence of a data sharing agreement.

In late 2016 we challenged the absence of a legal basis for Tusla's collection of Rape Crisis data and Tusla withdrew its publication of its statistical report from the public domain. In addition, Tusla recognising the data they gather is methodologically unsound, referring to its resultant 'statistical figures' as 'indicative data' as they cannot attribute accuracy to it. It continues to be of concern to us what data Tusla may hold now and additionally that Tusla may continue to make policy, funding and strategic decisions on the basis of their inaccurate statistics. In 2016 we again continued to support all Rape Crisis Centres with expert advice on their legal obligations to survivors' personal data and their practical engagement in data sharing with their funder under these irregular circumstances. As a result of our intervention on data protection, Tusla took the decision to remove RCNI from the sexual violence prevention EU project as the beneficiary partner.

We provided this data protection support by drawing on many of Ireland's leading experts in the area of privacy, data protection and the EU General Data Protection regulation (GDPR). RCNI are immensely grateful for their continued support and advice. We are also grateful for Elaine Mears' continued engagement and passion for this project.

In 2016 RCNI also published the **2015 Annual Rape Crisis Statistical Report**. This was the 10th annual report from the system. Unfortunately, in 2016 we could no longer support the infrastructure of data collection officers in RCCs and the standards and accreditation that went with those roles. These are an invaluable asset in good data governance and indeed in any effort to get GDPR-ready for 2018. Neither could we clean and verify 2016 data to our usual standard. For this reason RCNI will not be producing an annual report of the 2016 data as the data falls below the acceptable standard of integrity and accuracy that we commit to with survivors.

The disengagement from a national data system, so validating to and demanded by survivors, that was independently endorsed by all experts as excellent, and produced credible, accurate and powerful evidence, continues to be a source of disappointment to RCNI.

We also after very careful consideration and discussion adopted a public position on **the 8th amendment of the Constitution**. This position did not vary substantively from the practice of the rape crisis sector over many years. We have and we will continue to be survivor centred, engage in non-directive and survivor empowered work. This means that

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on all matters we support survivors to make any and all of the decisions they need to make following an incident of sexual violence, which may include a decision about a pregnancy, and we support them in their decisions. We recognise that the restrictions on choices and implications of the 8th amendment increases the trauma of rape survivors’ who face the possibility of pregnancy.

We ended the year with a new constitution adopted at the AGM which reinforced our long-standing vision to work towards a society free from sexual violence and confirmed RCNI as the Rape Crisis founded, owned and governed organisation with the remit to advocate for sexual violence survivors and to pursue initiatives to prevent sexual violence.

Cliona Saidlár, PhD
 Executive Director



L-R Anne Scully, RCNI Board Member; Dr Cliona Saidlár; Dr Katherine Zappone, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs

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Accounts Summary

INCOME and EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2016

	2016	2015
	€	€
INCOME	181,570	222,046
Administrative Expenses	(209,936)	(289,141)
OPERATING (DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	<u>(28,366)</u>	<u>(67,095)</u>
DEFERRED (EXPENDITURE)/INCOME FOR THE YEAR	<u>(28,366)</u>	<u>(67,095)</u>

The income and excess of income over expenditure relate to continuing operations as no businesses were acquired or disposed of in 2016 or 2015. A separate Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses is not required, as all gains or losses have been reflected above.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2016

	2016	2015
	€	€
FIXED ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	2,029	2,344
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	97,202	129,903
Trade and other receivables	-	2,500
	<u>97,202</u>	<u>132,403</u>
CREDITORS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	<u>10,306</u>	<u>17,456</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS	<u>86,896</u>	<u>114,947</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>88,925</u>	<u>117,291</u>
REPRESENTED BY:		
Unrestricted funds	88,572	117,291
Restricted funds	353	-
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>88,925</u>	<u>117,291</u>



CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2016

	2016	2015
	€	€
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Cash generated from operations	(32,317)	(69,115)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	(32,317)	(69,115)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Payments to acquire fixed assets	(384)	-
NET CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES	(384)	-
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Interest paid	-	-
NET CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES	-	-
NET (DECREASE)/INCREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	(32,701)	(69,115)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	129,903	199,018
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE YEAR	97,202	129,903

On behalf of the Board:

Director
Miriam Duffy

Director
Vera O'Leary



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BOARD MEETINGS 2016

Convened on: 20th January, 1st March, 6th April, 10th May, 16th June, 8th September, 11th October, 10th November

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2016

- Grace McArdle, Chair, Attended 7 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Anne Scully, Attended 7 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Vera O'Leary, Attended 8 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Miriam Duffy, Attended 7 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Marina Porter, Attended 3 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Margaret Barry, Independent Consultant to the Board



Elaine Mears, RCNI Data Manager



L-R Dr Cliona Saidléar; President of the District Court, Her Honour Judge Rosemary Horgan



L-R Miriam Duffy, RCNI Board Member; Adam Shanley, Director of Gay Switchboard; Grace McArdle, RCNI Board Member



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