

In March 2010, Cosc, an executive office within the Department of Justice and Law Reform with responsibility for the prevention of domestic, sexual and gender-based violence, published their four-year strategy. In the report, current action to prevent and respond to domestic violence and sexual violence is described as disjointed and ineffective as far as its' overall strategic impact. Equally, research on domestic violence and sexual violence in Ireland is depicted as having "been developed on an ad hoc basis ... with little co-ordination between stakeholders and the potential eventual implementers of research recommendations" (Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, 2010: 97). To address current shortcoming in the area of data on domestic violence and sexual violence, the Strategy's commitment is to "... the development of a systematic approach to data capture and collation" (*ibid*: 94).

In May 2009, Cosc commissioned the UCD School of Social Justice to undertake a short background piece of research focused on assessing current efforts to collect, to record and analyse administrative data on domestic violence and sexual violence by the principal statutory and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Ireland. The research findings highlighted that the level of data collected by the RCNI web-based recording system far exceeds the minimum data requirements described by Ruuskanen and Aromaa in their recent Council of Europe report on domestic violence and places RCNI member RCCs well ahead of all other Irish statutory and non-statutory services involved in the collection of sexual violence data (Ruuskanen *et al*, 2008).

A number of key changes in the RCNI data statistics project which have occurred since 2009 are worth highlighting here. This current report reflects a significant development over the past couple of years in the level of information recorded on the database system, addressing earlier key information gaps. The 2011 data report from RCNI will see the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) also using the RCNI web-based recording system. With these most welcome and important developments, we are witnessing a major step forward towards eventually having a national services database in the area of sexual violence.

As well as providing training and support to member RCCs in relation to the compilation and entry of service information, RCNI now conducts the statistical analysis of these data and the production of the annual statistical report in-house. It has been my pleasure to work with RCNI staff on the statistics project over the past five years. Unwavering dedication to excellence in terms of standards of data quality has been achieved by time intensive mentoring, support and training to each member RCC by Susan Miner and Elaine Mears. In turn, the RCNI has been fortunate in working with women in member RCCs who fully recognise and appreciate the critical importance of accurate and complete information in service provision and planning. The importance of such a co-operative approach cannot be emphasised enough; success of a statistical data project such as this is wholly dependent on the existence of trust and the sharing of long-term objectives, as well as the continuity of resources by funders. Particularly now, at a time of financial crisis and public finance cutbacks, it makes complete sense to continue to look to such routine administrative data sources for consistent, comparable, high quality data in order to answer basic research questions about sexual violence, as well as to guide policymakers in key areas of service provision and planning.

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