



Regarding termination by HSE
of *all* core funding to Rape
Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)
from 30 June 2011

RCNI Briefing
9 May 2011

Regarding termination by HSE of all core funding to Rape Crisis Network Ireland

Please read this briefing for a better understand of how this has come about, why your support is necessary, how you can support the RCNI and some information on why the RCNI role is vital in addressing sexual violence including a case study. (Please note the Domestic Violence Network, SAFE Ireland, has also had its core funding withdrawn in a similar manner)

How can this happen?

The RCNI is a non government organisation and a significant proportion of our core funding is from public monies, currently administered by the HSE. The HSE has informed us that this funding will terminate, in its entirety, on June 30th 2011.

As a result, the RCNI Board has had no choice but to implement a major downsizing of the RCNI, effective from May 30th 2011. 3 RCNI posts are on notice of redundancy effective may 30th and the three remaining posts have part-time funding for some months at which point the RCNI will have to close if no further funding is available.

The HSE have put in place a tender process of sorts to use an undisclosed amount of the funding which has been previously the two network's core funding, to seek expressions of interest to progress HSE work. The 2 programmes of work are problematic and betray a lack of expertise and capacity on the part of the HSE. In addition the HSE withdrew two of the stated programmes from the expression of interest at the last minute, thus effectively jettisoning the gold standard data collection system (whose development the HSE has part-funded for the past 7 years) which they are to replace with a paper form system independently assessed as delivering '*unreliable, inaccurate, incomplete and therefore misleading information*' (Dr Maureen Lyons).

What you can do about it?

Action is urgent as there are key decisions being made very quickly

Immediate Actions sought by RCNI

Rape Crisis Network Ireland and Safe Ireland seek reversal of decision by HSE to retain responsibility and budget line for 2 National Networks and immediate release of same to Cosc, the National Office for Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence, as sought by Secretary General, Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr. Sean Alyward, in January 2011.

We additionally seek immediate suspension of actions under implementation by HSE National Office, i.e.: removal of all core funding to 2 National Networks from June 30th and circulation of documents seeking Expressions of Interest by May 20th 2001 (sic) for 2 programmes of work.

Support us by:

- Immediately engaging your influence and advocate on our behalf.
- A particularly helpful focus at this moment in time is on influencing the Minister for Health, Dr Reilly and an Taoiseach, Enda Kenny as there is a short window of opportunity to reverse this process.
- Publicising this issue.
- Write an endorsement. Send same to us (cliona@rcni.ie), upload it onto our Facebook page or other social media outlets available to you, send it or a press release to a media outlet, send it to

an elected representative or other decision maker.

- Contact politicians and other relevant decision makers and influencers and advocate on our behalf.
- 'Like' the *RCNI Irish national information and resource centre* Facebook page and follow our campaign.
- Follow @rcnireland on Twitter
- Visit our website www.rcni.ie and find out more

For more information please ring Cliona Saidlear on **0872196447** or email cliona@rcni.ie you can also contact Fiona Neary on 087 2222009

Why does the RCNI matter?

Sexual Violence remains prevalent in Ireland. Addressing sexual violence to ensure an appropriate response for survivors of sexual violence and in preventing its occurrence involves many different professionals, individuals and agencies playing their part in a coordinated manner. The RCNI have been and remain a lead agent in creating transformation in Ireland towards addressing sexual violence. Our role remains critical.

The RCNI, along with the Domestic Violence Network SAFE Ireland, have a vital role in building the national capacity of local service providers to deliver best-practice, efficient responses. This is essential within the context of a continually fragmented HSE structure which lacks dedicated expertise in Domestic and Sexual violence responses.

Ineffective action on domestic and sexual violence, which fails to recognise the complexity of the issues involved and which fails to link up across a range of policy areas simultaneously enables the perpetration of domestic and sexual violence. In decision-making during the last month the HSE has clearly demonstrated that, under the guise of 'value for money'/'reorganisation of funding' via seeking Expressions of Interest, it is in fact implementing a 'one-size-fits all' approach to over 50 frontline services with distinctly different functions and service users, it is substituting ineffective, non-fit-for-purpose, tick-box exercises for nationally effective programmes of work, as executed by the two National Networks for over a decade.

Actions which are not fit for purpose undermine responses and leave women and children vulnerable to greater victimization and crime. 54 front-line service providers are in no doubt that these shoddy HSE substitutes risk putting women and children in danger and it is on this basis that they are unacceptable.

The RCNI:

- Work to prevent sexual violence.
- Raise capacity and standards across service delivery for survivors of sexual violence and their supporters.
- Gives voice to survivors whose experiences of sexual violence are silenced and denied.
- Expertly record and analyse information uniquely available to us and make it public
- Improve access for survivors to appropriate services to meet changing needs.
- Inform responses to sexual violence.
- Share gold standard capacity with others in Ireland and internationally
- Lead change on the basis of evidence.
- Work in partnership at local, regional, national and international level, with the public, private, academic and not for profit sectors.

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- Model excellence in governance and accountability.
- Hold public sector agencies and government to account and deliver solutions.
- Provide evidence base to support and inform work across 6 government departments and over 100 NGOs.
- Raise funding for and commission groundbreaking research.
- Constantly innovate to harness new opportunities and technologies towards improving survivors' experience.

Things you may not know about the RCNI:



RCNI member centres provide services to more child survivors of sexual violence than any other non governmental agency (72 children accessed services in 2009).



The RCNI data collection system is now being used in Scotland and is actively being considered in other countries across Europe.



Through our data we can see that our services are Ireland's largest NGO providers of specialist counselling for male survivors of sexual violence and male supporters of survivors (206 male survivors and 54 male supporters accessed RCNI member centre counselling in 2009).



The RCNI is the longest serving continuous member of the National Steering Committee on Violence Against Woman.



The RCNI drafted the national guidelines on Public Awareness Raising on Domestic, Sexual and Gender Based Violence.



The RCNI has driven improvement and innovation in Sexual Assault Treatment Unit availability and standards through national committees for almost a decade.



The RNCI has long been the lead NGO in progressing justice for victims of sexual violence.



Oh and PS - we're great value for money!

Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) is a specialist **information and resource** centre on rape and all forms of sexual violence with a proven capacity in strategic leadership. The RCNI role includes the development and coordination of national projects including expert data collection, supporting **Rape Crisis Centres** to reach best practice standards, using our expertise to influence **national policy and social change**. We are the representative, umbrella body for our member Rape Crisis Centres who provide **free advice, counselling and support** for survivors of **sexual abuse** in Ireland.

CASE STUDY re Reliable Data collection:

How HSE actions are impacting negatively on the national capacity to respond to sexual violence.

The National Strategy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence 2010 - 2014 states:

“The first and most fundamental action required is the development of a systematic approach to data capture and collation. The lack of consistent information ... limits our ability to respond to the problem. Improving data on domestic and sexual violence will involve working with the relevant organisations to develop and improve data, including realising the statistical potential of data collection for administrative and research/policy purposed. With an improved approach to data, Ireland will be in a better position to evaluate effectiveness of activity and impact.” (Pg 4, *National Strategy on domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence 2010 – 2014, Executive Summary.*)

The HSE recently informed RCNI that following on from removing all core funding to the two national networks the HSE would no longer issue an expression of interest for Data Collection. A Template that the HSE would adopt as a substitute was attached to this correspondence. The RCNI has sought an independent evaluation of the paper based data collection to be implemented by the HSE in comparison with the web-based Programme of reliable, national data collection that the RCNI has developed and operated for over 7 years. To summarise this evaluation:

*The outstanding detail, accuracy and quality of the data collected by the RCNI web-based data recording system is being replaced with unreliable, inaccurate, incomplete and therefore misleading information. The substitution of the RCNI database with the proposed HSE Template would essentially replace a well-designed, well functioning system that delivers systematic, accurate and useful information with a ‘poor data in, poor data out’ template with no discernable methodology. It is not possible to discern service usage patterns and therefore impossible to accurately examine current service delivery or plan for the future. **The major consequence of poor data collection is persistent violence, increased harm to victims and potentially death.*** (The document by Dr Maureen Lyons, Director of Research Design and Methodology, UCD, is available on request.)

HSE decision-making regarding data collection on sexual violence is clearly at odds with Government policy and the National Strategy and demonstrates that the safety of women and children is not a priority across HSE decision-making in general in terms of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence.