What is the RCNI Database?

The RCNI Database is a highly secure online database which allows authorised sexual violence services (SVS) personnel to log in and record specific information on each individual service user. SVS personnel do not record any identification details for service users or any other person. SVSs can download a range of different reports from the database to suit their requirements. This data collection system has been specifically designed to collect data in frontline services dedicated to working with victims of sexual violence.

What does the RCNI Database do?

This system is designed to equip RCNI to deliver comparable national data and simultaneously equip sexual violence services to, at any time, extract data regarding use of their own local service.

The advantages of collecting this type of data in this way include: no additional burden on service users, high level of data reliability, complete coverage of all service users, more cost effective than other methodologies providing complete coverage such as a census, extensive possibilities for local, regional and national use of data, and possibilities for longitudinal analysis.

". . . .the level of data collected by the RCNI web-based recording system far exceeds the minimum data requirements described by ... [a] recent Council of Europe report on domestic violence and places RCNI member Rape Crisis Centres well ahead of all other Irish statutory and non-statutory services involved in the collection of sexual violence data". (Dr. Maureen Lyons, Director of Research Design & Methodology, Equality Studies Centre, School of Social Justice, UCD, 2010).

What information does the RCNI Database collect?

- **Personal, social and context of service user information:** Includes gender, approximate age, nationality, legal status, housing type, education, who knows the service user is attending the service, when they started/finished counselling/support and why.
- **Crime/Sexual Violence information:** Includes age of service user when abuse occurred, type of abuse, information about the abuser, was the abuse reported to any authority.
- **Appointment/Service Up-take information** records data on every time the service user attends the service: Includes: date, time, location and type of appointment, counsellor, was the appointment attended or not, was an interpreter needed.
- **Helpline information:** Includes date, time, why contacting service, gender, type of abuse if any, country of origin, approximate age.
- **Accompaniment information:** Includes date, time and type of accompaniment (SATU, Gardaí, etc), gender, approximate age, type of violence.

How has the RCNI Database developed?

This project commenced in 2003 and is the result of a successful long-term public-private partnership between RCNI and an expert IT company. In addition, academic statistical expertise has been involved since 2005.

From the outset the project has developed through a mutual learning approach between RCNI and RCNI member Rape Crisis Centres (RCCs). This means that continuous feedback from data-entry staff and SVSs is incorporated into improving the data collection. Continuous capacity support from RCNI ensures the best quality data entry and data cleaning.

The RCNI has incorporated further learning through engaging with a range of other stake-holders including: An Garda Siochana Research Unit, the Central Statistics Office, the Commission to Support Victims of Crime, and the HSE.

Data categories have been refined in order to better represent the collective story of sexual violence services service users, answer important questions necessary to provide better services, inform national service planning and inform national discussions, debates and policy formation.

The project expanded in 2010 to service providers who are not RCNI members, including Dublin RCC. CARI began using the RCNI Database in 2012.

How is the Quality of the Data and the Analysis Ensured?

In order to ensure best practice the RCNI coordinates and delivers annual training and capacity building to each local service provider on aspects including: using the RCNI Database, data entry, extracting data, and reliable and accurate presentation of local data. An extensive data cleaning process is carried out nationally before any data is analysed. This involves checking all of the data entered for mistakes and omissions, and rectifying these. The RCNI contracts external statistical analysis expertise for this project to ensure national data presentation is accurate.

Why is the RCNI Database important?

The availability of reliable data is critical in responding to sexual violence specifically and to violence against women more generally.

According to the World Health Organization World Report on Violence & Health (2002) the availability, quality and usefulness of the different data sources for comparing different aspects of violence varies considerable both within and between countries – which can greatly undermine efforts both targeting prevention and planned responses for victims. A collaborative approach towards data collection and violence prevention is most beneficial.

"The national data organized by RCNI is critical because it provides the kind of information necessary for long-term planning and evaluation. We need to know the who's, the how's, the when's, and the what's in order to develop effective services for survivors and to move forward with prevention initiatives. The RCNI data answer these questions and can be used to guide planning efforts in order to make the most of limited resources. Frankly, I wish similar data were available in the United States as it would be an invaluable resource to my work as a sexual assault researcher and consultant to policy makers." (Prof. Rebecca Campbell, Ph.D., Department of Psychology, Michigan State University, 2010).