



25th July 2019

RCNI Budget submission on the ending of Sexual Violence

RCNI calls on Government action to centre and resource the ending of sexual violence through investment in responses, knowledge and infrastructure.

CONTEXT & OVERVIEW of a sexual violence budget 2020

In addressing sexual violence RCNI acknowledges and welcomes the recent Government action in:

- ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on Violence Against Women (Istanbul Convention),
- the Minister for Justice and Equality's review of the victims' experience in the justice system,
- the national prevention campaign on sexual harassment,
- the further roll out of An Garda Síochána's specialist DPSUs,
- the Minister for Health's Sexual Assault Treatment Units (SATU) review and implementation group,
- the Minister for Education and Skills' review of the schools' curriculum by the NCCA,
- the Minister of State for Higher Education's Consent Framework for HEIs adopted by HEA,
- the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs' Expert Assessment Group on the HIQA report implementation in the handling of child sexual abuse allegations by Tusla,
- the piloting of the Barnehus model for handling child sexual abuse and
- the CSO development of the national survey instrument on sexual violence.

This Government has begun to put in place, for the first time, a cross government infrastructure around sexual violence with these structurally significant initiatives.

All of these must be continued and their outputs made sustainable through their resourcing being embedded in budgets. However, given this welcome activity it is imperative that government coordinate and develop a whole of government strategic lead on the subject to avoid duplication, redundancy and ineffectiveness in a subject where limited resources must be made to count.

Recommendation: A priority for the Taoiseach and this government must be to scope and establish a national whole of government coordinating infrastructure to ensure the success, sustainability and efficacy of all activity in this area. We would recommend that government establish sufficient resources for 2020 to scope and successfully plan the capacity and resourcing needed for such an infrastructure in time for the 2021 budget.

Supports and Services

Behind this level of government activity much remains under-resourced, poorly informed and unsustainable.

Accessible services for all survivors:

The resourcing of Rape Crisis Centres must to be addressed urgently. The sector's funding has still not returned to 2008 levels of funding despite the fact that demand has grown year on year in the past decade. The DRCC, which is the only centre of 16 with the scale to release individual centre statistics in the absence of national data, published an 8% increase in demand in the 2016 – 2018 period alone. Tracking increase nationally is not possible given Tusla's fragmentation of the national data system.

Organisation	2008*	2017	2018	2019	2008 – 19 %
1. Donegal SARCC	148,488	€168,500.00	€230,000.00	€253,000.00	+70
2. RCC Midwest	404,132	€361,400.00	€407,400.00	€448,100.00	+11
3. Mayo RCC	224,656	€188,400.00	€201,400.00	€221,400.00	-1
4. RCC Kerry	276,814	€214,000.00	€221,000.00	€243,000.00	-12
5. RCC Wexford	255,665	€216,900.00	€221,300.00	€243,300.00	-5
6. Galway RCC	363,076	€400,805.21	€404,250.00	€444,250.00	+22
7. RCC Sligo, Leitrim and West Cavan	186,030	€184,300.00	€252,550.00	€277,550.00	+49
8. Dublin RCC	1,323,009	€1,141,627.25	€1,229,214.00	€1,359,214.00	+3
9. Rape Crisis North East	145,354	€169,110.15	€187,110.00	€205,810.00	+42
10. Carlow and South Leinster RCC		€165,500.00	€249,310.00	€274,310.00	
11. Waterford RCC	290,621	€240,200.00	€241,200.00	€265,200.00	-9
12. Tipperary RCC	205,648	€170,100.00	€167,350.00	€184,050.00	-11
13. Athlone (Midlands) RCC	161,587	€113,100.00	€113,500.00	€124,500.00	-23
14. Tullamore RCC	159,256	€116,900.00	€120,300.00	€132,300.00	-17
15. Sexual Violence Centre Cork	379,789	€290,500.00	€293,000.00	€322,000.00	-15
16. Kilkenny RCC		€179,500.00	€175,900.00	€193,400.00	

**The 2008 funding was administered mainly through the HSE but centres had a variety of statutory funding streams they drew upon. Most of these various local funding models were then transferred to Tusla as the single point of funding. Therefore, while these 2008 figures represent what was previously thought of as 'core' funding they may not represent the exact equivalent of the statutory funding RCCs now receive through Tusla. This 2008 data was researched and published in 2015 by independent researcher Julien Mercille.*

In 2018, 5 out of 14 RCC had reached 2008 levels of funding. In 2019, 6 out of 14 have reached 2008 levels of funding.

Waiting lists are not reliable measures of unmet need as they largely arise from choices services make about the allocation of their limited resources rather than survivors' actual needs. For example some centres may reduce counselling contact with survivors to bring more survivors off the waiting list sooner, thus shortening their waiting list, while others maintain counselling hours and still others may invest in prevention work as a long term means of tackling demand.

There is therefore an unmet need which waiting lists are silent upon. Unmet need for survivors of sexual violence trauma is likely to impact on Health and other budgets. For example survivors of rape may present to primary care for anxiety and depressive symptoms and may well be medicated in the absence of a trauma-informed response¹. Tusla have contracted out a number of local Needs Assessments Projects to determine that need and allocate funding accordingly.

In addition, the sector's 2020 budget must anticipate the emerging pay and retention issues which are a risk to the viability of services on current budgets. Most staff were capped or cut in 2008. Pressure is now mounting to reinstate the sector's workforce to the Murphy Report 2007, HSE-aligned, pay and conditions.

Recommendation: Overall funding to the 16 Rape Crisis Centres must increase from €5.2m to €8m in 2020

A safe and victim focused response

Strong governance combines survivor-led services with effective accountability and transparency, in harmony with the wider regulatory and accountability environment. Without these survivors risk poor response-fit and potentially unsafe services.

Good governance is not possible without dedicated resources. The Rape Crisis Sector has not had dedicated resources to support governance since 2015.

Rape Crisis Centres now have to fundraise to support collaborative projects towards the revision, updating and development of services standards and specialist training. This has resulted in fragmentation and uneven standards of service delivery, potentially putting survivors at risk in a manner that is both unsustainable and unjustifiable.

In that same period we estimate Tusla has invested more than €5m on the dedicated Tusla team which manages the funding to support services for survivors. This team holds rape crisis centres accountable but does not support their capacity to meet these standards. However, in recognition of the appropriateness of statutory funding to support the governance of these services and Tusla's responsibility therein, Tusla has funded Domestic Violence services' governance support in this

¹ SAVI 2002 found that 50% of rape survivors had been medicated for depression versus 9% of those who experienced no abuse. 37% were medicated for anxiety versus 7% of the non- abused.

period to the tune of approximately €2m but have failed to fund sexual violence services in the same manner.

Recommendation: Funding must be reinstated to the RCNI to deliver this governance and services support to develop best practice services for survivors that is informed and led by survivors' needs

Transparency

It is critical that evidence not only informs the allocation of funding in this sector but that there is transparency and collaboration. Tusla: the Child and Family Agency have not released any of the reports assessing survivors' needs.

Recommendations: We would urge Government to ensure a standard whereby there exists a transparent system of decision making regarding the allocation of public funds to meet survivors' needs.

Independent advocacy for the interests of survivors is a critical component of that process of ensuring rights. This advocacy must be both statutorily funded and the independence of the role valued and protected. This is especially so when the State has created a monopoly in the Child and Family Agency.

RCNI would endorse the critical work being done by the a range of advocates on aspects of the role of the independent voice of civil society in our Democracy, including the alliance on the Electoral Act, The ICCL, The Wheel and Amnesty amongst others, the Victim's Rights Alliance, Digital Rights Ireland, Flac and many others.

Recommendation: We call on government to consider how to better understand, value and protect this essential element of a robust and healthy democracy. RCNI respectfully suggest this might be a useful subject for the Citizen's Assembly.

Knowledge

RCNI commend the government for its decision to embed national survey data gathering into the State infrastructure through the CSO and commend the CSO's dedication and prioritisation of the survey development in a timely manner. We look forward to the evidence emerging from this survey.

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Administrative data in the area of sexual violence has long been a challenge.

- The CSO took over garda crime statistics and is currently releasing the crime statistics ‘under reservation’ while it improves the integrity of this data.
- The subject would benefit from Courts Service data being more comprehensive.
- SATU data is well collated and managed and uniform nationally.
- National Rape Crisis, having been at a gold star standard, is no longer available due to previous funding decisions.

The Rape Crisis sector established a world class system of data collection in 2005. This RCNI system, adopted by EIGE as European best practice and the RCNI infrastructure recognised by the HSE procurement body in 2014 as a unique supplier, continued until 2015 when Tusla removed funding for same. Tusla cannot (and has not) produce data to substitute for this loss. No national data on survivors using sexual violence services has been available since Tusla undermined the existing unique-supplier system that had collected voluntary data from 93% of all survivors attending RCCs.

The loss of the voice of the survivor is a grave matter for Government policy makers as well as for the rights of survivors themselves and will continue without a sustained investment in funding a RCC system. Given the fostering of fragmentation, deskilling and duplication under Tusla, we estimate it would take three years to reach the level of completeness and accuracy of the system undermined in 2015.

A full time staff member is required with a supports and a project budget to include the training and support of the 16 RCC based Data Collection Officers to provide for survivors’ privacy rights, good data quality and management, effective research partnership, analysis and dissemination. We estimate this budget at €130,000.

RCNI, echo NWCI in calling on the government to fund the sector to re-develop its data collection and analysis capacity so that this silencing of survivors’ voices can end. Only the return of funding to the RCNI National Rape Crisis system will allow for the insight offered by approximately 3,000 survivors per year to be heard publicly and made available to policy makers, including Tusla.

Recommendation: the voice of survivors through data collection and analysis should be reinstating by funding the national RCNI Rape Crisis Data system. €130,000 per annum

Specialisation

While statutory bodies such as An Garda Síochána and the HSE with the support of the Department of Health are building new structures to foster specialisation in recognition of the need for same, the existing independent specialisation in civil society is either absent or continually at risk through lack of, wholly inadequate or precarious funding.

For example in the first half of 2019 alone, the RCNI, with a team of 2.5 WTE, responded to the formal requests of three Departments and eight statutory bodies, attended ten separate advisory meetings to which we had been appointed as specialist experts, developed seven written submissions, gave an oral presentation to an Oireachtas Committee and covered eight different pieces of legislation in addition to ongoing engagement across Government, the Opposition, the public and NGO sector. In many of these locations we were the only specialist sexual violence voice.

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Where government projects advanced without sufficient specialist input these have often resulted in costly revision and review.

Only the Department of Justice and Equality & Rural and Community Development make a contribution towards sustaining this specialisation upon which the Government depends so heavily. This is unsustainable.

Recommendation: Foster and resource sustainable independent specialisation on sexual violence by establishing multiannual funding streams in each relevant Department to support sexual violence specialists in non-statutory locations.

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