

# RCNI Best Practice Standard

## Direct Services Standard

*While every care is taken to ensure that this standard accurately reflects current legal obligations, please note that it does not and cannot guarantee to any Centre, and/or any Centre staff member or volunteer, immunity from suit and/or legal liability in civil courts, criminal courts or other tribunal.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Direct services are those with which Rape Crisis Centres are most commonly associated. These are the services provided to aid individual survivors in their own personal recovery. They are offered utilising the shared ideological framework of feminism, human rights and equality.

The purpose of this standard is to outline the range of services that our Centre offers, and the norms to which we adhere when providing the services.

### 2. REQUIREMENTS

#### 2.1 Services Offered

The Direct Services our Centre offers include:

- Telephone/text helpline
- Face-to-face counselling
- Face-to-face advocacy
  - Accompaniment – includes at least the following
    - SATU (if closest Centre)
    - Other forensic
    - Other medical
    - Garda
    - Criminal Court
    - Civil Court
    - Refugee Hearings
    - Media
  - Practical support, information and referral
  - Access to/referral to legal advice and advocacy
- Crisis intervention

The Advocacy Standard contains additional information

#### 2.2 Service Provision Norms

These services are provided in accordance with the following:

- **Approach**
  - All services are provided using a survivor-centred and trauma-based approach.

## RCNI Direct Services Standard

Survivor-centred means that the survivor's right to control her/his life is recognised, validated and supported. Survivor needs inform service planning, forming relationships with other agencies and advocacy. Trauma based means that services are offered in the knowledge that a survivor's responses are a normal reaction to trauma.

- **Accessibility**

- Opening hours are clear
- Information is provided about access to services outside of our opening hours.
  - Anytime the Centre is not open or we are not available by telephone detailed after hours contact information is provided on our answering machine.
  - Any messages left on the answering machine will be returned the following business day.
- Financial cost: All of our services are provided free of charge. If we accept donations, services will not be withheld if someone chooses not to donate or is not in a position to donate. The Donations Standard details this information
- Pace: Survivors are free to use services at their own pace. That means a survivor may choose to finish counselling and restart counselling several months or several years later.
- Literacy: All new documents for survivors will be literacy-proofed by NALA (National Adult Literacy Association) or an equivalent organisation or person.
- Languages other than English
  - All new documents for survivors will be produced in a variety of languages.
  - If an interpreter is used in the delivery of any services, we will debrief the interpreter afterwards.
  - We will not regularly use the partner or child(ren) of a survivor to interpret for the survivor.
  - Physical access: Any new building, facility or construction will accessible for those with physical, auditory, visual and learning disabilities – in the interim we have alternative access arrangements in place.

- **Complaints**

- We will explain to survivors and supporters, in ways that they can understand, how to make a complaint against our Centre and if they choose to make a complaint, we will follow the appropriate processes.
- We will support any survivor or supporter who chooses to make a complaint against any government department or agency.

The Client Complaints Standard describes the appropriate processes and the Comments, Compliments and Complaints Poster and Lodgement Form contain suggested methods of informing clients of their rights and how to exercise them.

## RCNI Best Practice Standard

- **Confidentiality**

- What confidentiality means and any exceptions to confidentiality are explained to the survivor or supporter at the first available and appropriate opportunity.

The Confidentiality Standard provides further information

- **Consent**

- Informed consent is given by survivor or supporter prior to participation in any service, or any action taken on their behalf.

The Provision of Direct Services to Teenagers Standard contains information about the consent necessary to provide services to teenagers

- When accompanying a survivor to a SATU or another medical appointment, we will ensure that consent is explained in a way she or he can understand. If she/he does not consent, we will ensure that her/his wishes are respected.

- **Decision making**

- Staff, volunteers, survivors and supporters have opportunities to participate and ensure that male dominance is not replaced by institutional and organisational dominance in the survivor's decision making process.
- Every survivor and supporter will have sufficient time and space to reflect on information in order to make an informed decision.

- **Privacy**

- All services on our premises (main centre or outreach) will be provided in a comfortable, safe and private environment.
- Services on other premises (Garda, SATU, medical, legal) will be provided in as private and safe an environment as we can advocate for.

- **Records**

- Every survivor or supporter using our services can access her/his own records, can make comments on the records and can request amendment of the records.

The Confidentiality Standard and the Data Protection Standard both contain additional information

- **Reports**

- When relevant, we will inform survivors of the possibility for a Victim Impact Statement/Report and/or an Asylum Seeker Report.

The Reports Standard contains information about compiling and writing a report

## RCNI Direct Services Standard

- If she/he chooses, we will support a survivor to write their own Victim Impact Statement.
  - **Research**
    - We will inform survivors of any current, well-designed and properly conducted relevant research for which they may be eligible to participate.
    - We will support any survivor who chooses to participate in any current, well-designed and properly conducted relevant research.
  - **Rights**
    - We will inform survivors of their rights – what services they are entitled to receive and what their legal and human rights are.
    - Survivors and supporters right to receive information from our Centre is not conditional upon making a formal report/complaint, or agreeing to attend any specific group, programme or service.
  - **Safety**
    - Physical and psycho-social safety of survivors, supporters, staff and volunteers is of paramount consideration.
    - In the case of on-going violence, we will support a survivor to create her/his own safety plan
  - **Staff/Volunteer qualifications**
    - All services are provided by a staff member or a volunteer who the appropriate training and experience for their role.
- The Training Standard contains information about the required training for each role
- **Staff/Volunteer gender**
    - The first point of contact for any survivor or supporter who makes contact with our Centre is a woman.
    - The option of a male counsellor/therapist is available to any survivor who so chooses. If we do not have a current male staff or volunteer counsellor/therapist, or if for some reason working with the particular male counsellor/therapist is not appropriate, we will refer the survivor to a male counsellor/therapist.

The Therapeutic Referral Standard contains the criteria necessary to made a good referral

## RCNI Best Practice Standard

### 2.3 Regional and National Coordination

- We engage with regional and national planning to ensure:
  - Best possible access for survivors, regardless of where in the country they live,
  - Best possible access for survivors, regardless of whether or not they are members of any minority, underserved or differently vulnerable group,
  - Best possible use of limited resources, and
  - Best and most accurate possible research outcomes.

### 2.4 Evaluation

- Survivors and supporters who use our services will have opportunities to participate in evaluations in order for us to both evaluate current service provision and plan for future service delivery.

The Advocacy Standard contains specific information about how survivors can evaluate accompaniment services

- Any feedback from survivors will be communicated effectively and sensitively by the Centre Manager or by the line supervisor to the relevant staff member or volunteer.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Review Date \_\_\_\_\_