

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

As Chairperson of Rape Crisis Network Ireland I am pleased to be presenting 2017 Annual Activity Report. I would like to start by acknowledging the outstanding work accomplished by our Executive Director Clóna Saidléar, particularly at a time when we were encountering high levels of uncertainty and volatility. RCNI continues to operate to the highest of standards while on a shoe string budget, as our requests to Tusla to fund specific projects, in particular the National Database is repeatedly denied, thus again silencing the voices of survivors.

In 2017, it was announced that RCNI has now been fully established as EIGE best practice on data collection which is a huge reflection on the achievements accomplished by RCNI. And although we have been given this positive endorsement by the European Union Body, for Gender Equality our own government have been slow to step up to supporting survivors through the RCNI database.

2017 marked an incredible active year for RCNI; from the Me-too movement, the support from Simon Garr Solicitor protecting the privacy rights of our clients; to the successful bid in the EU Project to pilot an educational programme initiative in a number of secondary schools across the country, to the unfortunate break-up in partnership by Tusla for the EU funding.

Rape Crisis Network Ireland is the representing body for Rape Crisis Centres. Part of their role includes supporting Rape Crisis Centres to reach best practice standards and that was superbly achieved by the exceptional work carried out by both Cliona and her Network Administrator and financial Officer Claire Gledhill. As a result, Rape Crisis Centres who signed up to compliance with RCNI are now close to becoming fully GDPR compliant, thus meeting the requirements set out by the EU Law on data protection and privacy for all individuals within the European Union and the European Economic Area. The process of compliance commenced in 2017 with the development of the GDPR Mapping Template and ensuring a huge emphasis was placed on mapping our data and developing the necessary and relevant policies and standards. These are only some of the outstanding and excellent work carried out by the team of RCNI in 2017.

I would like to acknowledge and commend the important work carried out by RCNI's Legal Policy Director (LPD) Caroline Counihan who convened a diverse group of experts into the Vulnerable Witness inter-agency group. This group of experts met 4 times during 2017 to discuss issues faced by vulnerable witnesses in criminal proceedings. This group was informed by the ongoing work of the LPD role and our intern Elveera Lacina, supporting the group in reaching shared conclusion and recommendations in the best interest of all vulnerable witnesses.



Grace McArdle, RCNI Chairperson

The RCNI are also proud members of the Victims' Rights Alliance, and were pleased to inform and collaborate on proposed amendments to the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Bill 2016, some of which were accepted. Other RCNI legal policy work included submissions on cyber-harrassment, the Courts Service Strategic Plan and suspended sentences and multi-layered supports for ourselves and other stakeholders to understand and advocate for survivor rights under the new law.

There is no doubt that 2017 has been a challenging year for RCNI and looking ahead, it is more than likely that RCNI will unfortunately see these challenges continue into the future. But we will continue our quest to progress with our strategic ambition where 'we strive for the creation of a society that accepts responsibility for the eradication of all forms of sexual violence and violence against women. We seek to bring about social change which will end all forms of sexual violence'.



Rape Crisis Network Ireland

2017 Annual Report

CHAIRPERSON'S REPORT

I would like to thank my fellow board members for the privilege of working with them. For their insight, integrity, time, expertise and patience...It is a pleasure to be part of such a committed and dedicated team.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish Claire Gledhill the very best in her future endeavours as she moves on to a new job and to thank Claire for her exceptional role as Network Administrator and Finance Officer at RCNI. At the same time I'd like to welcome Claire's replacement, Lorraine Quigley and wish her the very best in her new post.

Finally, I would like to thank our Executive Director Cliona Saidléar, Legal Director Caroline Counihan BL, and Elaine Mears, Database Consultant, for all your hard work and commitment in growing RCNI to what it is today. Your leadership Cliona has led to innovative ideas, creative and strategic thinking resulting in increased credibility and visibility of RCNI which is hugely important to Survivors of Sexual Violence.

Grace McArdle
RCNI Chairperson

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

2017 was the year the international **#metoo** movement began, indeed Ireland was ahead of the hashtag with a growing awareness and activism around issues of misogyny and sexual harassment before the hashtag became popularised. In many ways the activism around repealing the 8th amendment of the Constitution had given Irish society a feminist focus that set us ahead of the international movement. RCNI are proud to have been a member of the Coalition to repeal the 8th for some years and set about following up and engaging in supporting this movement throughout 2017 following our formal submission to the Citizen's Assembly in 2016.

As **#metoo** controversies and conversations concerning sexual violence emerged in 2017 RCNI sought to engage and understand the impact on support and policy that the movement was having as it developed.

Much of 2017 was characterised by cultural change. While the landscape of **#metoo** was making significant changes to the climate within which survivors disclosed, the RCNI sought to support the sector in the formal cultural changes being set out in increased victims' and privacy rights through new legislative frameworks.

RCNI started the year with the nomination of a new Chairperson Grace McArdle and our warmest thanks go to Anne Scully, our outgoing Chair. I'd like to thank the board, the subcommittees and the company secretary Claire Gledhill for their work and support into maintaining a **standard of excellence in our governance** from the commitment to the code of governance, financial oversight and updating and developing standards across a range of good governance and transparency matters. Most of this work is supported through our Pobal funding under SSNO. Garda vetting, and also training and supports to national Court and Garda Accompaniment programmes funded under the **Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime**, continued in 2017.

Critical legal policy work dominated 2017 with the **Criminal Law (Sexual Offences) Act 2017** (CLSO) and the **Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act 2017** which both completed their passage through the

legislative process. These substantial and significant laws were core to our long held ambition to transform the justice experience for survivors of sexual violence. The ongoing collaboration with the Dept. of Justice and the Cosc National Office as well as funding support is a

cornerstone of the success of this work. We worked extensively in a collaborative manner

with the **Victims' Rights Alliance (VRA)** on the Victims of Crime (then) Bill and contributed to a victim centred online training programme for lawyers, in a ICCL project, hosted by the Bar Council and led by Maria McDonald also of the VRA.

We rolled out extensive **training nationally** on the CLSO and the new rights and responsibilities in this law, through targeted briefing documents and regional workshops, aimed at upskilling rape crisis personal and also some local stakeholders, and thereby creating networking opportunities for best practice local collaboration in the interest of victims.

In May 2017 RCNI held the first Rape Crisis **Data Protection training day** with centres looking to review and update our data protection standards in preparation for GDPR. Much of the focus of this meeting was on upskilling and teasing out the 'customer journey' in particular around how we ensure transparency and consent where appropriate. We set out from this point to standardise our consent protocol across Centres and issued briefings and guidance to all centres as our thinking developed.

We also took the decision to invest in formulating the best possible solutions and reforms for vulnerable witnesses and to do so in collaboration with a range of interagency actors both within and outside the justice infrastructure and practicing on both sides of the justice system. The aim was to ensure a broadened and deepened appreciation and approach for victim rights advocacy to improve evidence and to reduce trauma.



Dr Cliona Saidléar, Executive Director

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

To that end RCNIs' legal Director, Caroline Counihan, BL convened the **Vulnerable Witnesses inter-agency group**. We are deeply reassured and hopeful given the range of participation, attention and indeed the commitment to progress through discussion towards shared recommendations of the members of this group. This work involved field trips to examine best practice and desk research, in particular augmented by our intern Elveera Lacina. This group worked throughout 2017.

We entered 2017 excited to be planning a partnership with Tusla where **our ambition for a secondary level safe-to-learn initiative** could, for the first time, have dedicated resources and create the sustainable change we have envisaged. We were deeply disappointed that Tusla took the view that our advocacy for survivors' privacy rights made it impossible for them to work with us on this education focused project. The funding that we had successfully drawn down from the EU might well have been lost altogether if we had not resolved to step back and to facilitate the distribution of our funding to four rape crisis centres with the hope that some sort of central role could be put in place to achieve sustainable change from this programme. This funding is now distributed across Dublin, Galway, Kerry and Wexford Rape Crisis Centres as well as Tusla having absorbed some of it.

It was ironic that at the start of 2017 the independent academic review of the **RCNI data knowledge and information system** as a **European Institute of Gender Equality (EIGE)** recognised best practice data collection system, went live on the EIGE website even as funding support for the project remained absent. The Status as EIGE best practice is a good reflection of our achievements, one of which we are justly proud. We requested again that the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs reschedule her promised meeting with us regarding this matter.

Despite ongoing interaction no funding was secured by the RCNI or the participating centres, for the **RCNI data system** from Tusla although Tusla continued to request data availability and sharing. In the interest of survivor safety and advocacy RCNI maintained database support, and ran training for Rape Crisis

Centre (RCC) Data Collection Officers (DCO) as well as providing the policy and legal guidance to managers throughout 2017, supported from reserves and good will. I would especially like to thank Elaine Mears who, having been let go as data and information manager when Tusla ceased that funding to the RCNI, remained on an hourly contract basis with us to support the ongoing functionality of the system and support the RCCs' DCOs.

Throughout 2017 we also benefited from the excellent support of Solicitor Simon McGarr and Castlebridge's Daragh O'Brien and Katherine O'Keeffe. Without them our ongoing **advocacy for survivors of sexual violence's privacy rights** in Rape Crisis Centres would have been rendered near impossible. They have given of their considerable expertise generously.

Our focus in 2017, with limited resources, was on the safety of survivors using Rape Crisis Centres and our preparation work into GDPR. Therefore, we had no resources for data cleaning in order to bring the data to the high standard we have established that allows us to say that these statistics and analysis is the truth as survivors have told us.

We therefore choose not to produce 2016 statistical analysis. Giving an accurate and credible platform to the voice of survivors is the standard we have always sought to uphold in rape crisis and indeed it is the basis upon which survivors consent to our collection of their data, we could do no less.

We also sought throughout to support all parties to reach an understanding of the undertakings towards ensuring acceptable and legal standards of data governance and advocacy from data, in accordance with survivors' rights.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

To move matters along in ensuring the voice of survivors could be heard, we sought to engage with the Tusla DPO on matters of data governance, ethics and sharing in upholding survivors' rights in the relationship between Tusla and Rape Crisis Centres. When we learnt that there was no Tusla DPO in post in 2017, we deferred our engagement until a DPO was appointed in February 2018 .

In the summer we were delighted to be invited into a **European partnership** as the NGO data partner of a consortium of universities, companies and the Catalan Data Protection Commissioner to be part of an EU Commission, Horizon **2020** research and innovation funding bid. This was a significant endorsement again of our capacity and skills in this highly complex and new area. In the absence of Irish government support for the maintenance of the RCNI system and GDPR supports to the charity sector, this was an opportunity to secure best practice capacity for the RCNI programmes in the short term and free and transferable tools for the wider charity sector across Europe in the long term.

The second group RCNI convened this year was the **Charities Data Protection Working Group**. This group was convened, given the gap that exists in supports for the Charity sector on GDPR. The group consists of charities that collect personal data from their vulnerable service users and advocate for them. The charities in the group operate across a range of areas of activity from housing, domestic and sexual violence, mental health, youth and elder advocacy. As we created a space to share and learn we also sought to make our experience available to the wider sector. The Charities working group sought to open up our work to existing umbrella charities support bodies to ensure dissemination of learning.

In 2017 RCNI received a commitment from the Minister for State for Data Protection to include Charity representatives on the government GDPR forum in recognition of the impact of GDPR on the Charity sector and our potentially unique challenges. . A cabinet reshuffle shortly thereafter meant this was never followed through. As yet no NGO representative sits on the government Data Protection forum.

Overall the appetite to transform knowledge, attitudes and practice across the sector, partner agencies, such as An Garda Síochána to name but one, the justice professionals and amongst the public, made 2017 a year characterised by collaboration and change. We are grateful to everyone who shared that journey with us, inspired us and gave of their time and energy in 2017 to improve responses and safety for survivors and to work towards prevention.

Dr Cliona Saidléar

RCNI Executive Director 19th September 2018

ACCOUNTS SUMMARY

INCOME and EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2017

	2017	2016
	€	€
INCOME	170,669	181,570
Administrative Expenses	204,853	(209,936)
OPERATING (DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR THE YEAR	<u>(34,184)</u>	<u>(28,365)</u>
DEFERRED (EXPENDITURE)/INCOME FOR THE YEAR	<u>(34,184)</u>	<u>(28,365)</u>

The income and excess of income over expenditure relate to continuing operations as no businesses were acquired or disposed of in 2017 or 2016.

A separate Statement of Total Recognised Gains and Losses is not required, as all gains or losses have been reflected above.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st DECEMBER 2017

	2017	2016
	€	€
FIXED ASSETS		
Property, plant and equipment	1,429	2,029
CURRENT ASSETS		
Cash and cash equivalents	71,346	97,202
Trade and other receivables	-	-
	<u>71,346</u>	<u>97,202</u>
CREDITORS DUE WITHIN ONE YEAR	<u>18,035</u>	<u>10,306</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS	<u>53,312</u>	<u>86,896</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES	<u>54,741</u>	<u>88,925</u>
REPRESENTED BY:		
Unrestricted funds	52,407	88,572
Restricted funds	2,333	353
TOTAL FUNDS	<u>54,741</u>	<u>88,925</u>

ACCOUNTS SUMMARY

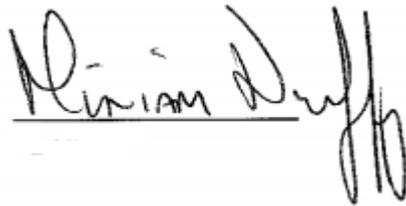
CASH FLOW STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER 2017

	2017	2016
	€	€
CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES		
Cash generated from operations	(25,856)	(32,317)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM OPERATING ACTIVITIES	(25,856)	(32,317)
CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES		
Payments to acquire fixed assets	-	(384)
NET CASH FLOWS FROM INVESTING ACTIVITIES	-	(384)
CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES		
Interest paid	-	-
NET CASH FLOWS FROM FINANCING ACTIVITIES	-	-
NET (DECREASE)/INCREASE IN CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS	(25,856)	(32,701)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year	97,202	129,903
CASH AND CASH EQUIVALENTS AT THE END OF THE YEAR	71,346	97,202

On behalf of the Board:

Director

Miriam Duffy



Director

Vera O'Leary



BOARD MEETINGS 2017

Convened on:

BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2017

- Grace McArdle, Chair, Attended 7 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Anne Scully, Attended 8 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Vera O’Leary, Attended 6 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Miriam Duffy, Attended 8 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Marina Porter, Attended 4 out of 8 Board Meetings
- Anne Kirwan-Finn, Attended 1 out of 8 Board Meetings—nominated December 2017
- Margaret Barry , Independent Consultant to the Board



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Government of Ireland

