

**Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) Press release**  
**24<sup>th</sup> October 2019**

## **RCNI welcomes the Joint Oireachtas Committee on Justice and Equality report on the Reform of the Family Law System**

**Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI)** wants to commend the Committee and its Chair Caoimhghin O Caolain for the attention it has given the question of the Reform of the Family Law System.

The Report strongly recommends the establishment of a dedicated family court, a recommendation RCNI wholeheartedly supports this. It is clear from the submissions and the conversations sparked by the Committee's examination, that our Family Law System is woefully inadequate to the task at hand and reform is urgently required.

**Clíona Saidléar RCNI executive director said**, 'for the RCNI our attention is particularly drawn to the children experiencing child abuse within the family who having fallen through the Criminal Justice net, with its 2% conviction rate from reported cases on child sexual abuse, and who do not meet Tusla's threshold or criteria for Child Care orders, who may then find their care and safety being adjudicated through the Family Law system which is already challenged in delivering on its duties to children.

'RCNI welcome the emphasis the Report puts on measures to ensure every actor, from Judges to social workers, to independent private assessors and mediators are specialised. The recommendations on the accountable and regulation of the professionals are also critical. This is a vital to build a system that has the skills to put children's welfare & protection at the centre of the family law system.

'Our Family Law system and the various agencies and professionals informing the courts, must have an adequate understanding of the criminal matters of domestic and sexual violence if children are to be effectively protected in their decision making.

'RCNI also welcomes the considerable emphasis placed on bringing transparency to the activities of the family law courts which have long been shrouded in secrecy. The public's trust in the system must be secured through evidence rather than anecdote informed policy and practice. We particularly commend them for their attention to data gathering, especially around child and domestic abuse aspects of family law and 'confidentiality orders' placed on children as to their disclosures.'

**For further information**  
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### **Notes**

The report is here <https://www.oireachtas.ie/en/press-centre/press-releases/20191024-joint-committee-on-justice-and-equality-recommends-overhaul-of-family-law-system/>

The 2% conviction rate was established by the Garda Inspectorate and published in its Dec. 2017 report

<http://www.gsinsp.ie/en/GSINSP/Responding%20to%20Child%20Sexual%20Abuse%20-%20A%20follow%20up%20review%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf/Files/Responding%20to%20Child%20Sexual%20Abuse%20-%20A%20follow%20up%20review%20-%20Full%20Report.pdf>