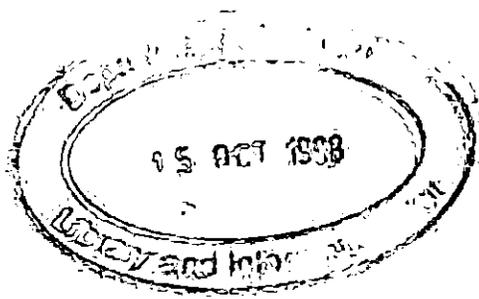


© RCC



Healing the trauma of rape and sexual abuse

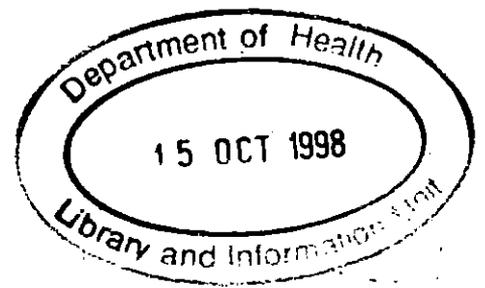


The hurt behind



“Women involved in cases of rape and sexual assault are to have their barrister and not just the State prosecutor to represent them. And it is also proposed to set up a ‘register of (convicted) sexual offenders’. The plan also promises to introduce ‘mandatory reporting of child abuse’ which will put a legal onus on teachers and other professionals to report even the slightest suspicion of abuse.”

Irish Independent, 20 June 1997



the headlines

It is now almost impossible to open any issue of a national newspaper without being confronted with reports of rape or sexual abuse, recording in detail the exposure of a trauma which may have remained hidden for decades. Most people would probably assent to the view that this widespread exposure of crimes which have for so long been hidden represents a significant social advance.

But there is a real danger that this new departure of publicising the previously unpublishable may induce an unspoken acceptance of rape and sexual crime as just another distasteful aspect of our society that we have to learn to live with. Rape is no longer a novelty, something of a front-page news value. There are the particularly notorious cases, of course, which are still singled out for such treatment, but from the situation of almost total secrecy and hypocrisy which existed when the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre (DRCC) first began its work almost 20 years ago the wheel has come full circle. And there is disquieting evidence that rape and sexual assaults by their very number and frequency are dulling the response of the public at large to a criminal act which strikes at the very roots of our society.



This is a development which impinges seriously upon the work of the DRCC. From our daily contact with victims young and old, male and female, we are only too well aware of the fact that no amount of public exposure of rape and sexual abuse can in any way diminish the hurt and trauma which each and every one of them must try to come to terms with.

And for that small percentage of victims who seek legal redress of their wrongs, there remains the added trauma of confrontation with a legal system which treats the victim in a manner more appropriate to the accused. We have consistently campaigned for nothing less than a root-and-branch reform of the manner in which rape cases are handled—and of the ingrained patriarchal attitudes that underlie such procedures—and are encouraged by the Government's announced commitment to introduce both separate legal representation for rape victims and mandatory reporting of child abuse. It is to be hoped that legislation to give effect to both these radical and necessary measures will not be long delayed.

If increased publicity has brought an awareness of such crimes to the general public, this awareness must be translated into positive action on the part of the Government, the legal and judicial bodies and the educational authorities if the phenomenon of sexual violence and its causes is to be effectively addressed. Otherwise public concern will inevitably be replaced by complacent acceptance of an evil which has ruined—and continues to ruin—the lives of so many.

“The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre ... has led the expressions of disappointment on mandatory reporting. The ... DRCC regrets that departmental advisers and senior health board management have effectively vetoed the single most important child care reform which is the sine qua non to give effect to any of the measures contained in the Child Care Act.”

The Irish Times, 24 December 1996.





Joseph Robins

The responsibi

The justification for the existence of the DRCC is amply demonstrated by the statistics given in this report of the extent and nature of the demands on our services. Sexual violence, particularly against women and children, is the great shame of contemporary society.

The main task that we have set for the centre is to provide immediate support and guidance for victims and to alleviate trauma as far as we can. The responsibility for wider policies and services aimed at preventing sexual violence and reducing its depredations is, of course, a matter for government and its agencies. However, as we identify specific issues, we shall continue to campaign forcefully for legislative, penal and other reforms likely to be beneficial in this area.

It is our unwavering view that the reporting of instances, or suspected instances, of child sexual abuse must be made mandatory. We were disappointed during the last year at the decision of the previous government not to pursue such a course of action. Another issue of concern to us is the absence of provision for separate legal representation for rape victims during subsequent court proceedings. This is an established feature of other jurisdictions. We have developed a research project in this area which we expect will provide us with valuable information as to how arrangements of this sort might be introduced. We welcome the present government's commitment to action in both these areas.

We are grateful for the continuing financial support of the Eastern Health Board and we would like to acknowledge the help and co-operation that we receive from its officials. Once again our voluntary benefactors on whom we are so dependent have been very generous and we are extremely thankful to them. The Friends of the Centre have had a very successful year in their fund-raising activities and have been unselfish in their efforts.

Pictured left

The Board of Directors

Back row left to right:

Osmond J. Kilkenny

Olive Braiden

Barbara Egan

Brion Sweeney

Front row left to right:

Neil McIvor

Hilary Pratt

Joseph Robins (Chair)

Valerie Bresnihan

Missing from the group

Breda Allen (Vice Chair)

Cathal MacCoille

lity of our society

Our Director and her staff have, as always, been committed and loyal and with them we look forward to continuing to serve those who need our help.

Joseph Robins *Chairman of the Board of Directors.*



Campaign Success

We in the DRCC are greatly encouraged by the undertakings given in the newly announced Programme for Government to address many of the issues on which we have campaigned for many years. Separate legal representation for rape and sexual assault victims, mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse, the compiling of a register and the implementation of treatment for sex offenders are all measures which we urged upon successive administrations, and we now look forward to consulting with the relevant ministers to ensure their implementation as a matter of urgency.

In the meantime, we intend to continue our campaign to ensure the introduction of mandatory reporting as a means of convincing those who still remain doubtful of its necessity. Similarly, we will continue to demand the expansion of programmes for sex offenders in prisons and their statutory monitoring on release. We are seriously concerned that out of some 300 sex offenders in Arbour Hill fewer than a dozen are at the time of writing taking part in the programme—the majority remain uncommitted to change, do not admit guilt or see nothing wrong in their behaviour.

We are very heartened by the Government's commitment (as outlined in its Programme for Government) to full implementation of the recommendations of the Kilkenny Incest, the Kelly Fitzgerald and the Madonna House Enquiry reports, which again we have continued to demand. All these important initiatives will require the allocation of major extra resources which we hope to see in place without undue delay. Additional funding for Rape Crisis Centres has already been announced and is greatly welcomed.



Olive Braiden



“The new government was yesterday called on to set up a system of monitoring released sex offenders, after it emerged the man jailed in the ‘X’ case had been freed after just three years in jail. The Dublin Rape Crisis Centre reacted angrily to the release of the 44 year old Dubliner who made pregnant the 14 year old girl at the centre of the case.”

Irish Independent.

This will materially assist us in our plans to extend our Outreach Service, now operating very successfully in central Dublin, to communities where women who need to avail of our services encounter problems with public transport, child minding and other domestic ties when arranging appointments. It will also enable us to extend our Crisis Line service which is subject to an ever increasing demand.

We have been successful in our application for funds under the Grotius Programme of the EU to enable us to initiate a research project in partnership with the Law School of Trinity College Dublin. Entitled ‘The Legal Process and Victims of Rape’ it will take the form of a comparative research study of the legal procedures which provide assistance, representation or support for adults and children who are victims of rape and sexual abuse. The project will involve an in-depth examination of the procedures in five EU Member-States and an overview of the laws and procedures relating to rape, and the reporting and conviction rates for the crime of rape, in each of the fifteen Member States. The research will be of benefit, not only to practitioners and academics in Ireland, but throughout the Community.

In this wider context, our work in assisting with the training of counsellors and other workers in the field in the former Yugoslavia continues against the background of total lack of faith in a procedure which has seen too few indicted war criminals arrested to stand trial for the appalling atrocities they are alleged to have committed. The demand for counselling in Bosnia and Croatia continues to increase as refugees return to their home towns and villages which hold for them ineradicable memories of horror, pain and sadness. We shall continue to offer our assistance to the maximum of our ability.

Olive Braiden *Director*

Increased incidence



“New legislation should be introduced to compel the DPP to give a reason why criminal prosecutions are not brought in some sex offence cases, the Rape Crisis Centre urged yesterday. The call came from centre director Olive Braiden as Garda figures showed a huge rise in the number of reported sexual assault offences.”

Irish Independent, 1 August 1996.

of rape in August

Each month the DRCC receives an average of 50 calls reporting rape, but the numbers increase significantly in August (64 in August '96, 74 in August '97). To help cope with this increased demand the DRCC instigated a training course for new members to its innovative outreach programme, The Sexual Assault Volunteer Group.

The Outreach Programme

This service was set up in 1996 as a means of improving our crisis service. Female volunteers accompany victims of rape and sexual assault to the Rotunda Hospital where they undergo medical and forensic tests. It is a mould breaking new service, the first of its kind in Ireland and provides vital support for traumatised victims. Our work in this area increasingly informs us of the growing numbers of male rape victims seeking such help and also of the very real danger of infections such as Hepatitis and HIV.

Increase in numbers seeking our services

While crime generally fell in the State over the 18 months to June 1997 the level of reported rapes continued to rise. Again this year we have seen an overall increase in the numbers seeking to avail of our services. Over the past five years more and more people have been contacting us in relation to issues of adult sexual violence, in direct contrast to previous years where the large majority were adult victims of child sexual abuse.

advice

This trend may reflect the wider availability of services to the latter group. We welcome this development and hope that we have played a part both in highlighting this issue and in providing training to professionals working in the area. This year has seen a marked increase in calls originating from outside Dublin. This may reflect the dearth of appropriate services in rural areas particularly outside normal office hours.

Pictured right

Some of the telephone

volunteers of the

Rape Crisis Centre

Back row left to right:

Maria O'Loughlin

Caroline Kennedy

Deirdre Ni Chinneide (staff)

Anne Webb

Mary Conaty

Paula O'Connor

Martine Lavery

Front row left to right:

Nuala Brady

Carol Anne Henry

Mary Byrne

Joanne Ryall

Jackie Allison

24 Hour Crisis Line

In response to the increased demand, we have been developing our crisis service.

The 24 Hour Crisis Line remains the first point of contact for most of our clients, and we offer immediate appointments to victims of recent rape. Such people may simply want to come in and talk to someone once, or may need ongoing counselling. For some it will be the first time they have disclosed their pain to anyone. We find that the majority seek intensive short term crisis counselling in order to help them cope with the trauma of rape and its impact on their daily lives. Often there is a need for information on such matters as medical attention, sexually transmitted diseases, how to report a crime and the judicial system. We provide such information and help clients to access other agencies as necessary.

Frequently the family or partner seeks help in coping with the trauma, particularly in relation to caring for the victim. Our Crisis Line offers such information and support and this year we initiated a support group for concerned others to facilitate the demand. A rape group operates to enable clients to meet those who have been through a similar experience and has proved an enormously supportive and educational forum for survivors of rape.



information.

“The DRCC has been granted £80,000 from EU funds to study how victims of the crime are treated by the legal process throughout Europe. The project, to be carried out with the Law School at Trinity College in Dublin, will focus on rape victims who are given their own legal representation in other EU States.”

The Irish Times, 17 June 1997.

reassurance



The Crisis Line remains primarily a listening service for people who simply want the opportunity to talk about their experience to someone who understands what they are saying without their feeling judged. It remains one of the very few such services operating round the clock and is staffed by trained counsellors who offer support, information and counselling by phone. We operate a Minicom system for callers with hearing difficulties. While a large majority of callers are seeking help for themselves we also deal with calls from other counsellors, from family and friends, and from professionals such as teachers, guidance counsellors and nurses.

Pictured left

Some of the Outreach

volunteers of the

Rape Crisis Centre

Back row left to right:

Niamh Durney

Mary Gallagher

Dara McClatchie

Patricia O'Reilly

Carol Galavan

Sheila Power

Elaine Malone

Pai Connell

Front row left to right:

Muriel Moran

Joan Tannian (staff)

Diane Sadler

Breda Lilburn

Catherine Daly

Mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse

The publicity surrounding the issue of mandatory reporting has increased the number of requests for information on what to do when a child may be at risk, and our own experience in operating a mandatory reporting policy has been overwhelmingly positive. We facilitate clients to report or we report on their behalf, and feel that their readiness to do this is motivated by a strong need to ensure that no other child must suffer as they did; by a need to acknowledge that they themselves required help as children and did not get it; and by a sense of social responsibility. We report our concerns to the Director of Community Care and responses to such reports vary widely; we hope that putting the current Reporting Guidelines on a legislative basis will improve this fragmented response.

The re-victimisation phenomenon

Increasingly we note the phenomenon of re-victimisation: clients are not just abused, raped or assaulted once but repeatedly. About 15 per cent of our clients suffer in this way, many victims of child sexual abuse are later raped as adults. Such people are seeking a different service from those who have been raped or assaulted once, and we try to respond by offering ongoing counselling and therapy. We also run a Child Sexual Abuse Group which is availed of by women who have been abused as children.

Crisis counselling

Pictured right

Some of the counsellors of

the Rape Crisis Centre

Back row left to right:

Jenny Mooney

Grace O'Malley

Maria Dowling

Middle row left to right:

Joan Tannian

Ann Kirwan

Anne Marie Homan

Aideen Kílgaheen

Front row left to right:

Deirdre Ní Chinneide

Carolyn Carpenter

Fíodhna Callanan

The trauma of reporting

Where victims have faced the trauma of reporting to the Gardai and are anticipating a court trial the counselling team have to help them when, as frequently occurs, a file is sent back from the DPP marked for no further action.

It is at such times that the concept of justice is hard to grasp, and for some victims it will tragically be the last time that they seek it. As part of our work we also accompany clients to court when a trial is proceeding. Despite legislative change and public outcry, we continue to be appalled by the court experience. Separate legal representation for victims is the only just solution to this problem.

Round the clock service

The DRCC employs 10 fully qualified counsellors whose training is supported by an internal programme aimed to ensure that the skills and expertise required for this work are provided and regularly reviewed within a best practice framework.

Two teams supply a service six days a week, offering early morning and evening appointments as well as the daytime service, which has been extended. It is now available from 8.30am to 7.00pm and these longer hours probably account for the fact that calls to our volunteer telephone counsellors have continued to decrease while the number of clients seen by the RCC has increased overall by 15 percent. The DRCC also employs three staff telephone counsellors who offer support, information and hope to the hundreds of people who contact us monthly.



Helping others to

Rape—a weapon of war

The DRCC is helping the people of former Yugoslavia.

*Pictured right
Deirdre Ní Chinnéide
and Angela McCarthy,
staff from the DRCC, with
a group of trainees in
Travnik, Bosnia.*

A comprehensive range of training programmes both for professionals and specific groups has been put in place by the DRCC Training and Education Department which has, since 1993 been conducting a series of courses in Counselling Skills in Bosnia and Croatia. These courses, supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs, were proposed by the DRCC in response to public awareness of the widescale use of rape as a weapon of war in the former Yugoslavia.

Courses run by the Education Team in conjunction with HMD (Humanitarian Aid Medical Development) were held in Tuzla and Travnik (Bosnia). Residential courses were held in Tucepi, Croatia. These courses in Crisis Counselling and Group Facilitation were intended to equip the participants with the basic listening and counselling skills necessary to establish initial contact with traumatised women in the Travnik area. Participants wished to acquire such skills, to learn to recognise the signs of trauma, and to know how to build up a trustful and respectful relationship with clients. They wanted to be able to recognise when someone needed referral for psychiatric help. It was also of vital importance that they learned for themselves how to deal with the emotional impact of their work.

help



“The total number of returned refugees is 100,000 according to UN figures, out of a total of 800,000 people displaced internally and 700,000 abroad.”

The Irish Times, 6 August 1997.





The Bosnian and Croatian programmes have broadened and deepened the experience of the DRCC in relation to its domestic education training, which may be summarised as follows:

In-house training days

- Four day workshops exploring the therapeutic issues in abuse, expanding awareness and developing skills to facilitate the healing process in relation to survivors of sexual abuse. This programme is aimed at professionals—counsellors, psychologists, doctors, psychiatric nurses—involved in longer term work in the area. One day reappraisal workshops for those who have attended this course are offered to explore particular difficulties which have arisen.

- Two day courses for guidance counsellors–level 1 and level 2 focus on particular issues involved in handling problems of sexual abuse within the school setting, with level 2 concentrating in more depth on the ongoing strategies appropriate to working with adolescent survivors.
- One day seminars for people who may have to handle a disclosure of sexual abuse. The focus is on sensitive handling of disclosure, crisis management and reporting issues. These seminars are attended by a range of professionals including teachers, Gardaí, nurses and those working in a community or pastoral role.
- One week courses for teachers, sanctioned by the Department of Education. Held in the first week of July and the last week of August, these concentrate on active listening and basic counselling skills together with issues of loss, abuse and behavioural problems and skills development by teachers in these areas.

Training for specific groups

These programmes range from half day seminars to four day workshops. The content and emphasis of this type of training is agreed in consultation with the client group and all training is delivered using participative and experiential methods. Groups availing of this service have included psychiatric hospitals; psychology, psychotherapy and counselling training programmes; the Gardaí; the Conference of Religious in Ireland; women's refuges; childcare workers, third level residential colleges; professionals working in the area of learning disability; marriage guidance services and kindred bodies.



Pictured right

*Some of the staff of the
Rape Crisis Centre*

*Left to right:
Geraldine Connolly*

Maria Byrne

Naomi Patton

Frances Foley

Dorothy Cogan

Grace Corrigan

Annie Gallagher

Missing from group

Emer Neligan

Sexual harassment prevention training

This work, directed at companies and institutions, involves training at management level and assistance in the development of sexual harassment prevention policies within companies, followed as required by inputs to staff making them aware of company policy, the legal position and their rights and responsibilities. All training is participative and involves exploring the attitudes of participants to the subject with the object of revealing their fears and concerns.

We have also developed a comprehensive training pack containing all the necessary materials for personnel officers to enable them to take responsibility for the dissemination of information on sexual harassment within the company or organisation. The pack includes speaker notes, overhead transparencies, handouts for participants, role plays, questionnaire, case studies, a training manual and video. It also includes one day's complimentary training.

“Rape is a ‘profoundly unreported’ crime in Ireland and only a tiny minority of the reported cases end in conviction, according to a report to be presented to the Minister for Justice today.”

Irish Independent, 1 November 1996.



understanding

Building on



our resources

While we are very grateful for the announced increase in the statutory contribution, the steady increase in demands upon our services means that the gap between our outgoings and our available resources will remain for the foreseeable future. The community at large has over the years been very generous in its response to our regular fund-raising activities. These follow an annual pattern and have been extremely successful thanks to the work of the specific committees who organise each event.

Corporate Quiz Challenge (February)

This event, mainly supported by bankers, building societies, solicitors, finance houses and insurance companies involves up to 40 teams with RTE's Pat Kenny as quiz master.

Step Marathon (March)

The fit and energetic join in a day of gymnastics, each entrant raising a minimum of £20 in sponsorship.

Golf Classic (May)

Forty teams of four drawn from Dublin businesses and institutions each pay a fee of £650 to participate.

Sponsored Walk (June)

20 people participated in walking Sheep's Head Way in West Cork, each raising £1,000 sponsorship.

Women's Mini Marathon (June)

The proceeds to DRCC this year amounted to £10,000

Flag Days (October)

Held over three days, this event offers everyone the opportunity to support our work. The 1996 appeal ran from 10 to 12 October and was backed by a striking poster campaign on Dublin buses and the DART, the result of a national competition open to art college students. The winner was 20 year old Marie Vahey from Athlone RTC.



Graham Crisp

The Friends of the Rape Crisis Centre, under the chairmanship of Graham Crisp, is a group of committed people dedicated to raising funds to cover our deficit. We all continue to enlist your help in confronting the serious social evil represented by the alarming incidence of rape and sexual violence at all levels of our society.

We would like to acknowledge the practical support of the following in the production of this report:

The Department of Health, The Eastern Health Board, Bernard Share, Susan Kennedy, Joy's Flowers, The Identity Business and Wood PrintCraft.



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