



RAPE CRISIS
M I D W E S T

For all who experience sexual violence or abuse

Strategic Plan
2017 – 2019

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A Introduction and Methodology

This strategic plan was finalised in November 2016 and sets out the key outcomes and objectives for the work of Rape Crisis Midwest (RCM) for the period from 2017 to 2019. It was produced in consultation with the board, staff and volunteers of RCM and external stakeholders, including a small number of ex-clients.

An independent consultant met with the manager to agree the scope of the planning process. This was followed by three consultation sessions with the board, staff and volunteers of RCM. Phone interviews were carried out with three ex-clients and external stakeholders from: TUSLA, Rape Crisis Network Ireland, Forensic Medical Examination advisory committee, Forensic Medical Examiner service, Garda Siochana and the Local Area Network. A synopsis of the interviews with ex-clients and external stakeholders is included as an appendix.

A draft plan was prepared, based on the results of the consultation, and discussed with the manager. The plan was then presented to the board in draft form for amendment and agreement.

B Background

The previous strategic plan had run from 2006 to 2010, a period which straddled the economic crash and the resulting reduction in funding for the community and voluntary sector as a whole. RCM experienced significant cutbacks during this period and therefore focused on the milestones within the 2006-10 plan that were not dependent on financial resources. By 2008, all key milestones not requiring financial resources had been met.

There are a number of outstanding actions from the previous strategic plan that would still be considered important to the development of the work of RCM:

- Full-time counsellor post for adolescents

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- Third outreach centre in West Clare
- Extension of hours in Nenagh and Ennis
- Another counselling post to support the extension of outreach.

After the lifetime of the last strategic plan the focus for RCM became the significant building work, which was completed in 2013. After a period of consolidation it was decided in early 2016 that the time was right to review the vision, ethos and mission of the Centre and to establish strategic priorities for the coming years.

C Vision

The vision of Rape Crisis Midwest is of a society where all adults and children live free from sexual violence.

D Ethos

1. We believe in a feminist analysis that recognises that all forms of sexual violence, whether committed against adults or children, women or men, involve the abuse of power and control by the perpetrator and the experience of powerlessness by the victim.
2. We believe that perpetrators of sexual violence are responsible for their actions and should be held accountable.
3. We believe that sexual violence is under-pinned and sustained by inequalities, including gender inequality. While sexual violence impacts on people within all sectors of society, those experiencing multiple disadvantages may be especially vulnerable.
4. We believe in a survivor-centred approach, which means that the survivor's right to control her/his life is recognised, validated and supported.
5. We believe in a trauma-based approach, which recognises that a survivor's reactions are a normal response to trauma.
6. We believe that by drawing on the knowledge, experience, wisdom and power of survivors of sexual violence we can make a difference.
7. We believe in building collective and democratic structures and working relationships which model positive and accountable uses of power.
8. We believe in a partnership and collaborative approach with other key agencies that works towards real and profound change.
9. We believe in transparency and accountability in our governance, management and operations.

E Mission statement

The mission of Rape Crisis Midwest is to improve the lives of those who experience sexual violence or abuse and to work towards the elimination of sexual violence and abuse in our society.

F Aims

1. To reduce the impact of the trauma experienced by survivors of sexual violence and abuse and help them to regain a sense of safety.
2. To enable the healing of survivors, this includes them regaining a sense of power and control over their lives and a positive regard for self.
3. To support the recovery of survivors so that they are able to reconnect with family, friends and society.
4. To raise awareness among other relevant front-line service providers of the impact of sexual violence so that trauma is reduced and the recovery of survivors is supported.
5. To raise awareness among family members of the impact of sexual violence and abuse and ways of supporting the survivor.
6. To raise awareness among policy makers of the prevalence and impact of sexual violence and abuse in order to ensure that all relevant areas of policy and service provision better serve the needs of survivors.

7. To raise awareness in society as a whole of the prevalence and impact of sexual violence and abuse and our collective responsible to challenge the attitudes that underpin it.

G Objectives

In order to achieve these aims, Rape Crisis Midwest will do the following:

1. To provide a crisis response service to survivors of sexual violence and abuse throughout the Mid-West region.
2. To provide a professional, confidential and accountable counselling service to survivors of sexual violence and abuse and their family and friends.
3. To provide support to survivors in the form of Garda, Forensic Medical Examination and Court accompaniment where appropriate.
4. To provide information to survivors and their family and friends about the impact of sexual violence and abuse, sexual health and the legal process.
5. To make referrals for survivors and provide advocacy in relation to accessing other services as necessary.
6. To provide education and training on sexual violence and abuse for relevant service providers, particularly those working with marginalised groups, as well as the wider community.
7. To work with statutory bodies and other agencies to ensure a co-ordinated and informed response to the needs of survivors.

8. To inform policy development and legal reform through the collation and dissemination of statistics, the identification of trends in relation to sexual violence and participation in research where appropriate.
9. To run awareness campaigns in print and social media.
10. To ensure best practice in governance by adhering to the Governance Code for Community, Voluntary and Charitable organisations in Ireland.

H Strategic priorities

A number of key issues for RCM were identified in the consultation process:

- the length of the waiting list
- the need to reduce travel times to counselling
- access for people facing discrimination
- the need to provide a service for those who choose not to engage in counselling.

It is proposed to address these issues in the following ways:

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1. The new one year counselling course, which it is hoped to begin in September 2018, will alleviate the waiting list in the medium term. New counsellors will come on-stream in May 2018 and each successive year. However, without any additional resource it is estimated that it would take up to five / six years for the waiting list to be reduced to an acceptable level using volunteer counsellors.
2. Funding should be sought for two part-time counselling positions, one to be based in Limerick and one to be shared between the outreach centres. These posts would reduce waiting times for ongoing counselling to an average of 2 – 3 weeks.
3. Access for people facing discrimination is to be taken into account in planning services and by working with relevant organisations to up-skill their own staff and volunteers. RCM will provide training in dealing with disclosure and assessing needs.
4. RCM will work with RCNI to develop a clearer picture of the supports that might be needed by people who choose not to engage in counselling. This may involve the provision of support groups for a) clients coming to the end of their need for counselling, b) supporters of survivors, c) adolescents and d) men.
5. Due to the cutbacks in funding across the sector fundraising has become increasingly important. The budget deficit has increased from €60,000 in 2008 to €120,000 in 2016. The agreed fundraising target for 2016 was €90,000. This target will be increased by €10,000 per year to end of this plan bringing the target for 2019 to €120,000.
6. Rape Crisis Midwest will continue to work with all statutory and other agencies to deliver best practise services which meet the needs of people who experience Rape and Sexual Abuse.

These priorities will be taken into account when developing operational plans based on this strategic plan.