RAPE CRISIS
MIDWEST

Annual Report 2024

Rape Crisis Midwest - Statement of Values

Rape Crisis Midwest (RCM) works for the protection of all people from all forms of sexual violence and abuse. RCM primarily supports survivors of sexual violence and abuse through free and confidential support, advocacy and counselling, working from an intersectional feminist framework. RCM is a non-judgemental inclusive organisation that welcomes the diversity and differences in our society and works with the intention of providing services to any person that may need support. The ethos of RCM is based on operating a recovery model which is fundamentally different in its approach to a clinical / medical model. The core of this difference is that the structure of service delivery, the models of support and counselling in place and the recruitment and training of staff and volunteers, are all informed by the understanding of the nature of power and the experience of sexual violence.

RCM responds to the needs of survivors of all forms of sexual violence – both recent and historical. Using a feminist analysis of violence, and bringing the voice, experience and expertise of individual survivors, RCM also works to inform changes in legislation, education, policy development and societal attitudes on a local, regional and national level, to benefit all society. RCM services utilise a survivor-centred and trauma-informed service delivery model, operating from the knowledge that survivors have the capacity to grow and heal and that they are the experts in what they need. Survivor identified indicators of recovery and healing inform the way in which the delivery model is shaped.

Delivering a trauma-informed model means services begin from the understanding that a survivor's reactions are a normal response to trauma. RCM believes that responding to sexual violence in our society and holding perpetrators to account starts with supporting survivors in ways that are respectful of their dignity, healing and choices. RCM works to hold perpetrators accountable for their behaviour and to counteract rape culture and victim blaming. The headquarters for Rape Crisis Midwest services is in Limerick with satellite services in both Ennis and Nenagh. Our service delivery includes crisis counselling; long term therapy; Garda and court accompaniment; advice, to both survivors, and their supporters; and sexual violence training to individuals and organisations. RCM works nationally in partnership with Rape Crisis Ireland (RCI) and are part funded by Cuan –the Domestic, Sexual & Gender Based Violence Agency.

Our Vision

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

Our Mission

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.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors held 10 meetings during 2024 where the below names Board Members attended. An additional number of sub-committee meetings were also held namely covering HR, Health & Safety and Finance.

Directors: Michael Howes (Chairperson), Mary Kelly, Yvonne Murphy, Marguerite O'Neill, Caroline Holmes

Services

Our services are delivered from our three centres, the Limerick office and our part time satellite centres in Ennis and Nenagh. 2024 once again seen an increase in numbers contacting Rape Crisis Midwest for support services.

- Our Limerick centre is open 6 days Mon – Sat and can offer some evening appointments (by appointment only).
- Our Ennis centre is open Tuesday and Wednesday (by appointment only).
- Our Nenagh centre is open Thursday and Friday (by appointment only).

All initial appointments take place in the Limerick centre.

Chairperson's Message

Executive Directors Message

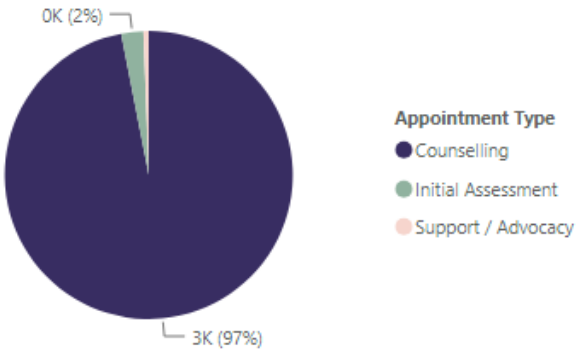
2024 Operating Highlights

- RCM services continue to be delivered from three centres, in Limerick, Ennis and Nenagh.
- A full transfer of core funding for services from Tusla to Cuan - the domestic sexual and gender based violence agency was finalised in 2024
- Karen O Donnell O Connor resigned from the role of Executive Director in March 2024, RCM would like to thank Karen for her time with the organisation
- Siobhán O Leary took up the role of Executive Director in March 2024.
- Two additional counselling roles became fully operational in 2024
- A property in Nenagh was identified as suitable for development of an RCM Nenagh centre, the purchase of which will be finalised in 2025
- Over 120 people participated in the 9th annual Kayak Fundraising event in August 2024
- Two fundraising days were held in Nenagh and Limerick in December 2024

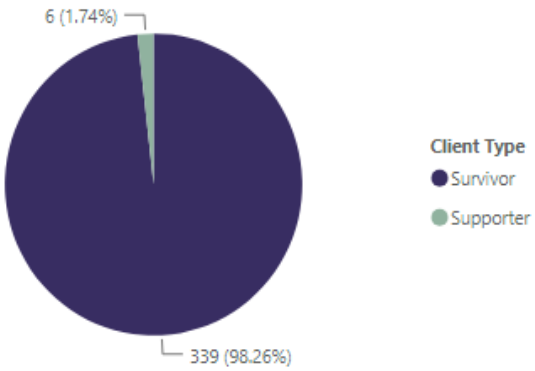
Counselling Service

Rape Crisis Midwest offers specialised crisis counselling and long term therapy sessions to adult survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse. RCM also provide an Adolescent Counsellor services for those aged between 16 -25 years old. All our counsellors are professionally qualified and accredited via a nationally recognised accrediting body. RCM unfortunately operate a waiting list for on-going long-term counselling, however, endeavour to offer support sessions to people while they are on the waiting list.

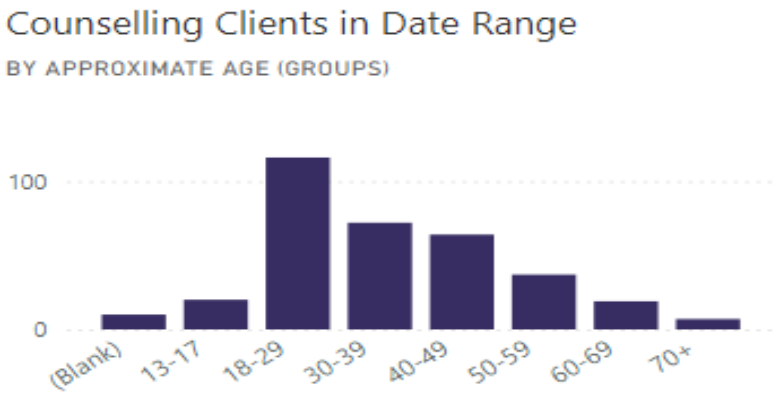
- In 2024, RCM provided **3,029 counselling appointments** to survivors of sexual violence. Of these appointment 2936 were appointments for counselling or therapy, 75 were for an initial assessment and 18 were support and advocacy appointments.



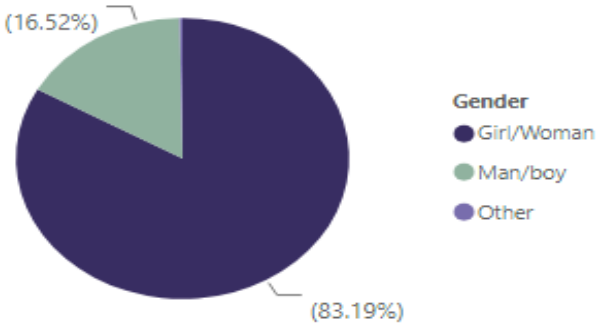
- In 2024, RCM supported 345 individual people with ongoing counselling services – 339 of these individuals were survivors, while 6 were supporters.



- The below graph illustrates the breakdown in age profile of those attending for counselling services in 2024, with 18-29 being the most common age profile



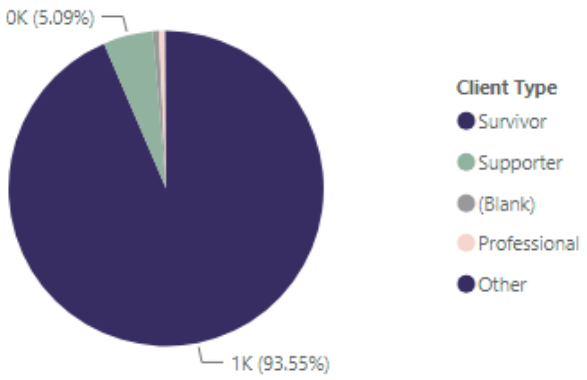
- The below graph illustrates the breakdown in gender of those attending for counselling supports – the majority of clients remains those that identify as female. 16.5% of counselling clients in 2024 identify as male – this represents an increase from 12% in 2023.



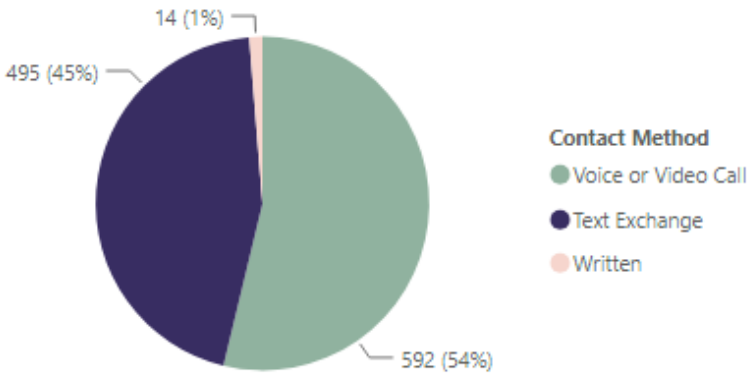
Free Helpline

Rape Crisis Midwest operates a free helpline service 1800 311 511. This service is generally available Mon – Sat 9am -5 pm. This is a confidential, non-directive service and is available to survivors, supporters, families, friends, other professionals and other services. We can also be reached at info@rapecrisis.ie

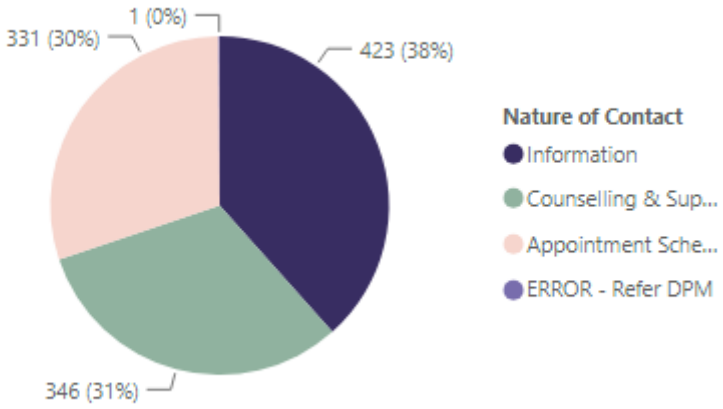
- In 2024, **1,101 helpline queries were answered** – these calls related to various queries from survivors of sexual violence and their supporters. Information, support and guidance in terms of the services RCM provides is given in these calls.
- Of these calls, 1030 were survivors, 56 were supporters with the remained being professionals and others



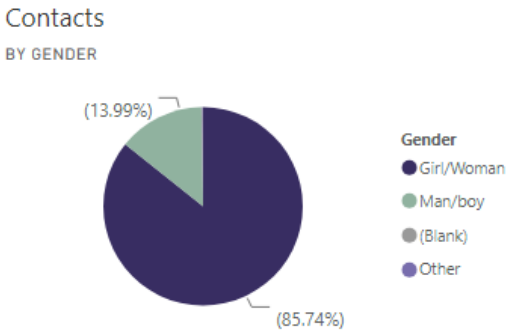
- In terms of contact method of callers to the helpline, RCM seen a marked increase in the use of text messaging – this would be via SMS, social media DM or email.

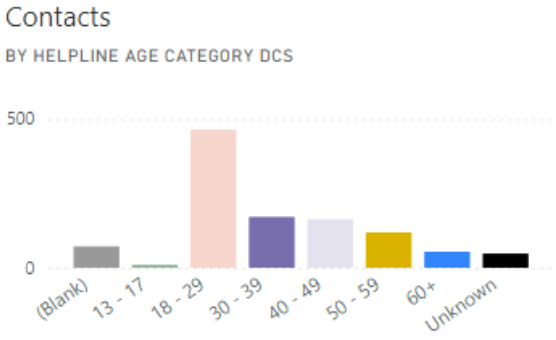


- In relation to the nature of the call to the helpline, 423 calls were information seeking, 346 calls were in relation to counselling and support and 331 were in relations to scheduling appointments.



- The breakdown of gender and age profile of callers to the helpline is illustrated below. The majority of callers identifying as female and the most common age profile being 18-29





Midwest Forensic Medical Examination Service Support:

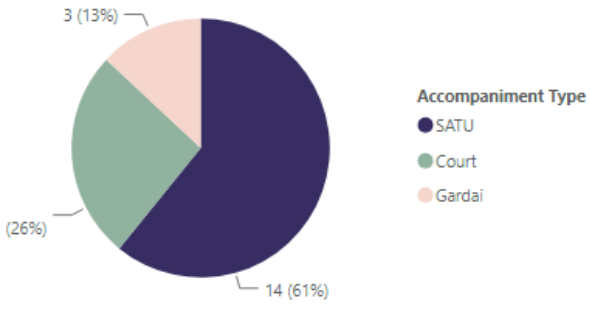
This service in the Midwest operates when a report of Rape or Sexual Assault is reported to An Garda Síochana. The service is out of hours operating from 7pm to 7am. The service operates 24 hours at weekends and Bank Holidays. Rape Crisis Midwest provide psychological support volunteers to attend to support the survivor and their family/friends. Crisis counselling and support is also offered and referral to STI screening can be arranged.

- In 2024, **14 people** were supported by this service

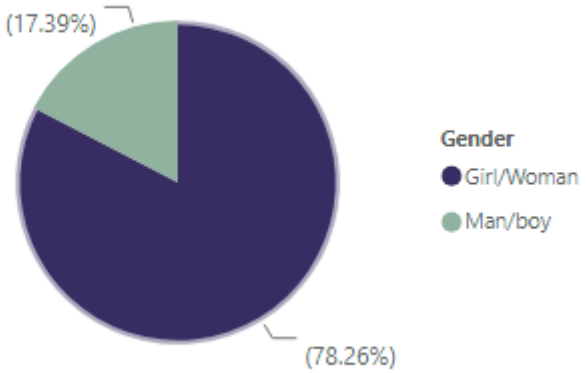
Court & Garda Accompaniment Service

Rape Crisis Midwest will provide a support person to accompany survivors who wish to make a statement. The support person will attend the Garda station with the survivor or if it is the survivor's preference, RCM can make a room in the centre available. When a court case is heard in the Midwest, RCM can provide a support person to accompany the survivor or if the case is heard elsewhere in the country, RCM will link with the local Rape Crisis Centre to access this service locally

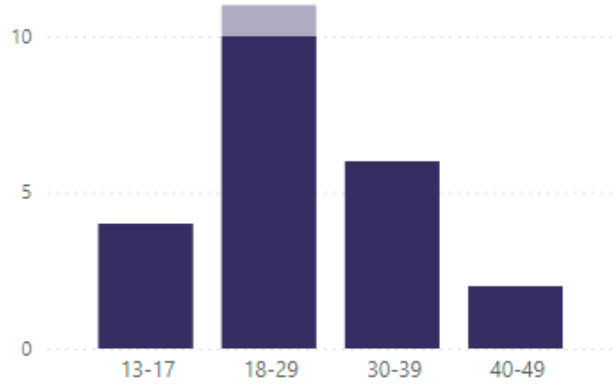
- In 2024, **9 individuals** were supported with court or Garda accompaniments
- In total, **158 hours of Court & Garda accompaniment** were provided to these 6 survivors, this represents 22.5 days supporting survivors through court cases and/or Garda appointments. RCM staff and volunteers provided psychological support to survivors during these appointments and court proceedings.



- Of those 9 individuals supported with accompaniments support the gender breakdown is illustrated in the graph below – 18 individuals identified as female, while 4 identified as male



- The age profile of accompaniment clients is illustrated in the graph below – we see that the majority of clients are between the ages of 18-29, with 30-39 being the next largest age profile



Summary

Service demand continues to be high with those reaching out for support services outweighing the service level. There was an increase in those identifying as male reach out for RCM service in 2024, this is viewed as positive and RCM will continue to work toward highlight that their services are for any person that needs them, regardless of gender.

The change in method of contact toward text based communications from survivors is an interesting finding, suggesting that there appears to be more of a lean toward text type support, this may be a service area that will need developing going into 2025.

The primary age profile of those using RCM services is 18-29, with 30-39 and 40-49 being the next highest in 2024 – this is in line with national statistics. The availability of the Adolescent Counsellor service here in RCM is vital to the continuing provision of services to the 18-29 age profile.

The establishment of Cuan – the Domestic Sexual & Gender Based Violence agency is viewed as wholly positive development in the DSGBV sector and RCM is working closely with Cuan for the growth and development of sexual violence services in the Midwest.