RAPE CRISIS
MIDWEST

Annual Report

2020

Rape Crisis Midwest is a member of Rape Crisis Network Ireland

RAPE CRISIS
NETWORK
IRELAND

The legend of the Phoenix speaks of its ability to heal itself if injured during its lifetime. Our logo of the Phoenix Rising symbolises our belief that people can and do heal from the trauma of sexual violence.

THE PHOENIX

On days we feel like scorched earth,
Like corroded rust or trampled dirt,
All we have to do is turn our faces,
Toward the gentle breeze,
And be sprinkled into the four directions,
Be swept away by the wind's tender breath.

We are made holy
Through this burning,
Like a phoenix rising from it ashes
To become more powerful
Than it ever thought possible.

The scorching does not destroy us,
Rather, it burns through the chaff
Until our greatness is revealed
And what's of real value remains.

This is our defining hour,
The moment we are made whole
By what has made through the burning.

So, let us be marked,
Not by sorrow or pain,
Not for false humility,
Or, for thinking we are less than we are.

Let us claim our brilliance within the debris,
Let us dance on the ashes of our previous lesser selves,
Let the stars be engraved into our bones,
And our divine **fearless** nebula return home.

Ashes to ashes,
Dust to dust,
From the rust,
OUR MASTERPIECE SHALL RISE.

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Rape Crisis Midwest is an active member of Rape Crisis Network of Ireland (RCNI), a network which supports and promotes the work of Rape Crisis Centres and provides a national voice for survivors of sexual violence. We abide by the RCNI code of ethics, framework and practice.

Rape Crisis Midwest was founded in 1980 as Limerick Rape Crisis Centre, by a group of women and men who were concerned about the lack of services for survivors of rape and sexual abuse. Since then it has worked to provide a quality professional, information, support and counselling service for survivors of sexual violence and abuse throughout the Midwest region.

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.

Our Ethos

- 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.

- We believe that perpetrators of sexual violence are responsible for their actions and should be held accountable.

- 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.

- We believe in a survivor-centered approach, which means that the survivor's right to control her/his life is recognised, validated and supported.
- We believe in a trauma-based approach, which recognises that a survivor's reactions are a normal response to trauma.

- We believe that by drawing on the knowledge, experience, wisdom and power of survivors of sexual violence we can make a difference.

- We believe in building collective and democratic structures and working relationships which model positive and accountable uses of power.

- We believe in a partnership and collaborative approach with other key agencies that works towards real and profound change.

- We believe in transparency and accountability in our governance, management and operations.

Our Aims

- To reduce the impact of the trauma experienced by survivors of sexual violence and abuse and help them to regain a sense of safety.

- 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.

- To support the recovery of survivors so that they are able to reconnect with family, friends and society.

- 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.

- To raise awareness among family members of the impact of sexual violence and abuse and ways of supporting the survivor.

- 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.

- 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.

Our Board of Directors 2020

Lucy Smith (Chairperson)

Brian Dunne

Fiona Quinn

Helen Fitzgerald (Chairperson)

Michael Howes

Mary Kelly

Yvonne Murphy

Board of directors Meetings 2020

3rd February 2020: Lucy Smith, Fiona Quinn, Helen Fitzgerald, Mary Kelly, Mike Howes, Brian Dunne.

6th April 2020: Lucy Smith, Fiona Quinn, Helen Fitzgerald, Mary Kelly, Mike Howes, Brian Dunne.

11th May 2020: Lucy Smith, Fiona Quinn, Helen Fitzgerald, Mary Kelly, Mike Howes, Brian Dunne, Yvonne Murphy

15th June 2020: Lucy Smith, Fiona Quinn, Helen Fitzgerald, Mary Kelly, Mike Howes, Brian Dunne. Yvonne Murphy

28th Sept 2020: Helen Fitzgerald, Brian Dunne. Yvonne Murphy

2nd Nov 2020: Helen Fitzgerald, Brian Dunne. Yvonne Murphy Lucy Smith, Fiona Quinn, Mary Kelly, Mike Howes,

14th Dec 2020: Helen Fitzgerald, Brian Dunne. Yvonne Murphy, Fiona Quinn, Mary Kelly, Mike Howes,

AGM 15h June 2020 Brian Dunne, Lucy Smith, Fiona Quinn, Helen Fitzgerald, Michael Howes, Mary Kelly, Yvonne Murphy and Miriam Duffy.

- Rape Crisis Midwest CLG is registered in the CRA's Register of Charities (No. 20024970)

- CHY Tax Exemption - Our Charity Tax Exemption Number is CHY9931

- Governance Code - we confirm that our Organisation complies with the Governance Code we have adopted the Governance Code for the community, Voluntary and Charitable Organisations

- Commitments to Standards in Fundraising Practice - we confirm that we comply with the Statement of Guiding principles as set out in the ICTR website.

Executive Director

Miriam Duffy

2020

2020 will be remembered globally as the year we had to rethink our way of being in our world. During the weeks of social distancing and "staying home" our contact with our clients was by phone and video calling.

Our network -Rape Crisis Network Ireland (RCNI) and it's member Rape Crisis Centres were invaluable in their support as we developed new ways of working and all of the new policies which were needed to support our work. The centre closed to "in person" work with clients and staff began working remotely. This was challenging as the team here are so supportive of each other in this work and not being able to meet each other except online was difficult.

In July 2020 when the restrictions lifted we began slowly to resume in person work, while at the same time working remotely with clients who were not able to attend in person. The valuable lesson this has taught us is that a model of blended service works well and we will continue to offer this into the future.

As an essential service we stayed open though the 2nd lock down in Oct/Nov, but as cases of Covid 10 rose again over the Christmas period we did not reopen to in person work in Jan 2021.

Our FME(SATU) support service continued though the year, thanks to our SATU manager Deirdre Curtin who was the emergency contact person and attended all callouts.

Our Court accompaniment service also continued, thanks to our wonderful team of volunteers.

Also, our teams of fundraisers worked tirelessly to run online events for us.

I would like to thank the Board, Staff and all of our Volunteers and Supporters for their continued work on our behalf.

Thank you also to the people who have come to us for help for their trust us. We will continue to provide the best service we can. Be safe.

2020 in Numbers

- **293 people were seen face to face or accompanied**
- **123 new clents began counselling with us**
- **3,807 counselling appointments were offered**

  (Limerick 2896, Clare 406, North Tipperary 505)
- **27 people were accompanied to FME/ Court /Garda**

Our Limerick centre is open 6 days Mon – Sat and can offer some evening appointments.

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 are in the Limerick centre.

Services provided by Rape Crisis Midwest

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.

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 Siochana. The service is out of hours operating from 6.30 each weekday until approx. 5am. The service operates 24 hours at weekends and Bank Holidays. Rape Crisis Midwest, RCNI trained, psychological support volunteers attend and provide vital support to the victim and their family/friends. Crisis counselling and support is offered and referral to STI screening can be arranged.

Garda/Court Accompaniment Service: Rape Crisis Midwest will provide a support person to accompany victims who wish to make a statement. The support person will attend the Garda station with the victim or if it is the victim's preference we can make a room in the centre available. In the event of a vase proceeding to court we will provide a court support person for any cases being heard in the Midwest. If the case is to be heard in Dublin we will refer the victim to the support services available there.

Counselling Service: Rape Crisis Midwest offers specialised counselling /therapy sessions to adult survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse. All our counsellors are professionally qualified and have had additional Sexual Violence Training. All of our counsellors are RCNI registered. We unfortunately need to operate a waiting list for on-going long term counselling, but we endeavor to offer support sessions to people while they are on the waiting list.

Training and Education: Rape Crisis Midwest delivered training /awareness to a number of groups across the Midwest including input to the HSE FME training day, UL student Midwives, AGS, Mary Immaculate Students and the staff of the UL International office. As part of our commitment to ongoing learning board, staff and volunteers attended training on FME (Regional & National), Data collection, Data protection GDPR, Court Accompaniment, Garda Accompaniment, EU funding, Legal updates following the Sexual offences bill, Organisational Development, Complex Trauma, The Safe Ireland summit and perinatal Mental Health conference were attended. RCM also completed training of another cohort of SATU/FME volunteers.

TRAINING

Most of the training in 2020 was online

16 people attended RCNI Garda Accompaniment training on Oct.

8 people attended RCNI Court Acc training in Nov

SATU Info day UHL was cancelled

Caroline Counihan RCNI delivered a number of legal updates training

A workshop on disclosure and referral pathways was held on line with Feile Na Greinne who are a group who organize events

The only work with schools was with Glenstal in early March before the first lockdown

Counsellor training: Our counsellor training course held its first weekend in Sept but unfortunately it was not possible to continue. Plans to restart in Jan 2021 came to nothing with the 2nd lockdown. The course is scheduled to re start in Sept 2021 and all original participants are engaged.

New funding - New post

In late 2019 the 10% increase in core funding awarded by Minister Zappone before she left office was paid. This funding was allowed the recruitment of a 3 day counselling post and we welcome Sarah Jane Lusk to the staff team.

I'll never forget that party
Young teenagers
Innocent laughter
Here you are
Have a drink
Something wrong
Everything blurry and weird
Legs giving way
Friends trying to help
Carried me to that bed
Don't worry
I'll look after him
Go back to the party
I heard him lock the door
Click....click
Shoes belt trousers pants
Rolled onto my front
Something's very wrong
The pain
Too young
Too scared
Too embarrassed
Too confused
Too blurry and weird
To cry out for help

Hours later
At dawn
I cycled home
Standing up
Too much pain
To sit on the saddle

And now years later
A half-life lifetime later
But never too late
I've finally found the courage
To cry out for help
I've opened that door
And thanks to Rape Crisis
I've told my story
I've been heard
I was still a child
Just a boy
I was groomed drugged and raped
I know now that it wasn't my fault
How the trauma kept me silent
How the blame lies only with the rapist
The shame I've carried is lifting
I now have a future
But I'll never forget that party

Fundraising and Events

2020 brought an unprecedented challenge with the arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic. Our usual planning of annual events suddenly was left in doubt as the country faced lockdown.

In March, with ever increasing uncertainty, our centre began to make plans for an 'alternative' type of fundraising strategy involving many online and virtual events.

Facebook Fundraiser

In March 2020, we began the process of being approved by Facebook for donation/fundraiser page purposes. This was approved in May and we began a campaign of encouraging our supporters to donate or set up fundraising pages. In 2020, the amount raised through Facebook/Instagram was approximately €10,000 which far exceeded our expectations. Thank you to all those who contributed. Our just Giving page was equally busy and volunteers like Tracy Costello Crawford made a huge impact in fundraising on this page in 2020.

10k Kayaking Paddle

The date set in August for our annual kayaking event was well timed as outdoor events were permitted with limitations. The priority of the team was safety of those taking part and huge credit to Martina, Colm and Garry at Limerick Kayaking Club who worked around the clock ensuring compliance with Covid-19 regulations. We received permission from Shannon Rowing Club to use their base as the starting point and Cleeves Carpark as the get-off point. Both venues resulted in us being able to have a large open space allowing required social distancing.

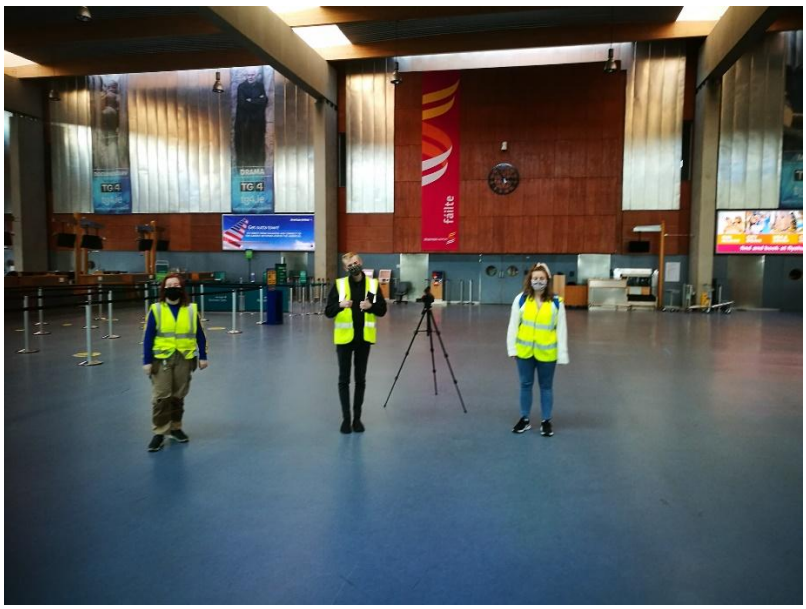
Over 140 kayakers took part in safe and controlled event which provided many with a welcome relief from the constraints of previous months. Thanks also to all the volunteers who spent days planning the set up and to organisations like Limerick Suicide Watch for providing bank support.

Virtual Quiz

Our *Ultimate Quiz* night went virtual for 2020. A special thanks to our dynamic team of volunteers who sourced an App and created a memorable evening with hundreds of entries and a fun, enjoyable raffle. We had 8 rounds with various topics including a children's round. This event has become a mainstay every year – this is down to the volunteers who organise it and rally their friends/family and supporters to take part. We are impressed by how the same supporters have come on board every year to register for this event and continue to remain loyal to us. Special thanks to Audrey and Emma for their work.

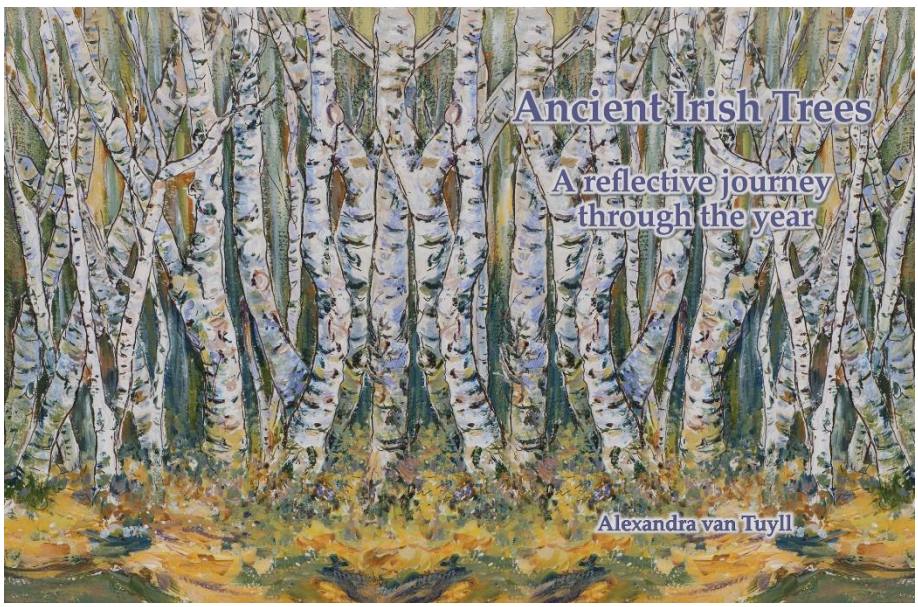
Ennis Event

Covid-19 was not going to stop our team in Ennis from planning a fundraiser, however, it was clear that we could not host an event with 300-400 people in a hotel like in previous years. Instead the team of Sharon, Marie, Olive, Tony and May set about filming a promotional video at Shannon Airport involving a group of wonderful men from across County Clare. The venue was perfect allowing a safe an controlled environment for filming. The result was a memorable video which attracted over 50,000 views on our facebook, coverage at local, regional and national level and raising approx. €13,000



Ancient Irish Trees Book

We were fortunate to become acquainted with a wonderful Achill based artist in 2020, Alexandra van Tuyll. Alexandra set about a task of getting a book designed, printed and launched during a pandemic. “Ancient Irish Trees – a reflective journey through the year” takes us on a journey through the life cycle of thirteen native Irish trees, each tree being depicted in spring, summer, autumn and winter. We would like to record our gratitude for Alexandra’s kindness in funding the entire project. The book went on sale through our website at the start of December and we exceeded our target of 100 book sales just in time for Christmas! Thank you to all those who purchased the book.



Nenagh collection

The people of Tipperary were not swayed by Covid restrictions and the team of volunteers made the decision to go ahead with their annual collection in Nenagh in December. Thank you so much to the volunteers in Nenagh for coming on board and helping our local centre every year

Awareness Raising

A special thanks to the local and national media who raised awareness of our work during 2020. We featured regularly in all the local/ regional papers and radio in 2020. A thanks to Clare FM, Clare Champion/Echo, Live 95fm, Limerick Post and Limerick Leader, Nenagh Guardian and Tipp FM.

We would also like to thank the national media such as RTE Drivetime, Cathy Halloran and Irish Farmer's Journal who gave us significant coverage during 2020.

IRISH FARMERS JOURNAL
IRISH COUNTRY LIVING
7 NOVEMBER 2020

Rape crisis support services are now more vital than ever

The number of calls to the Rape Crisis Midwest more than doubled during the pandemic, proving that it's as important as ever to people in need, writes Hannah Quinn Mulligan

RAPE CRISIS NETWORK IRELAND

RAPE CRISIS MIDWEST