



Freephone **116006**

# ANNUAL REPORT 2018

**Listening. Supporting. Informing.**

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## Patron's Welcome

Volunteers are the life blood of most charitable organisations and Crime Victims Helpline (CVH) is no exception.

In 2007, I was asked to serve as Patron of CVH by its founder, Maeve Ryan. I was very privileged to be asked but, as people who know me know, I like to work at the coalface. I agreed to serve as Patron, but at the same time began to volunteer on the Helpline.

When people are feeling low and have nobody to turn to (or want to talk to someone outside their circle of family and friends) it is invaluable to have someone at the end of a telephone. It is a privilege to be present for people in need, and it has been a rewarding and enriching experience.

I have recently stepped away from volunteering on the helpline after nearly twelve years of service. Luckily, the organisation has a flow of new recruits that refresh the organisation and compliment the roster of experienced volunteers.

We have volunteers of all ages. I am so pleased to see young people volunteering because it shows a caring personality that I believe will remain with them throughout their lives. We also have more mature volunteers who bring wisdom that comes with life experience. Both are essential to the team and very much appreciated.

Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber, has steered the Helpline so marvellously, including the way she has gathered and trained the volunteers.

If you feel like volunteering, why not give it a try?

Gillian Hussey  
Retired Judge of the District Court  
Patron

## Message from the Chairperson

I am honoured to have been appointed to the Chair of the Crime Victims Helpline in May 2019.

At the outset, I would thank outgoing Chairman, Steven R Drew, for his service and guidance to the Board, and I wish him every success into the future.

This report outlines the work carried out in 2018 to support the victims of crime. Whilst we can see significant increases in activity in terms of the provision of support and guidance, it is worth noting that this activity is the result of more victims of crime finding their way to our services. Crime continues to exist, and every day people become victims and suffer a range of consequences. Crime Victims Helpline offers support to all victims of crime in Ireland and we will continue to support, inform and empower victims and all those impacted by crime.

We are supported in our efforts by the Victims of Crime Office in the Department of Justice and we are grateful for the advice and guidance that is always forthcoming. We will continue to reach out and engage with all stakeholders in our efforts to support the victims of crime.

This report reflects a year of tremendous achievement and the staff and volunteers deserve enormous credit. Under the leadership of our Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber, supported by Marie Murray and Sam Burke, our team continues to deliver wonderful support, (at times when victims are in great need and feeling extremely vulnerable), through a combination of expertise and personal touch. The commitment, effort and hard work of every member of the

team is noteworthy and I thank them all most sincerely on behalf of the Board.

The Board recognises our obligations to ensure that the Crime Victims Helpline operates to the highest standards of governance; we are fully committed to complying with the Charities Governance Code published by the Charities Regulator. We will continue to operate in a transparent and responsible manner and provide appropriate guidance and strategic input to help enhance and develop the Crime Victims Helpline into the future. I thank the Board members for their support and commitment throughout the year. I also thank them for the honour of appointing me Chairman and very much look forward to working with them in the coming years.

The continued guidance of our Patron Gillian Hussey is very much appreciated. Gillian has been a wonderful and active supporter of the Crime Victims Helpline for many years and we very much look forward to the continuance of her patronage.

To the victims, their families and friends I offer assurances that the Crime Victims Helpline will continue to provide you with the support you have come to know and trust. We will strive to place you at the heart of everything we do.

Brendan Lynott  
Chairperson

## Executive Director's Introduction

The Crime Victims Helpline 2018 annual report is an illustration of the massive impact crime has on individuals, communities and society as a whole. It is rare for anyone to be left untouched by crime and the fear, despair, anger and sadness it can leave in its wake.

2018 saw a continued increase in the number of people supported by our service. **CVH handled 3,581 calls, 600 emails and 151 text messages from victims; family and friends of victims; and others looking for support and information.**

People share with us their fears after experiencing a burglary or an assault; they express their frustration at the slowness of the criminal justice system; and they look to us to provide guidance; a listening ear; and hope that they will feel “normal” again.

The volunteers and staff of CVH are not here to judge or blame and we aren't here to tell victims what to do or how to do it. We listen; we support; and we inform.

### Crime Victims' Rights

On the 5th November 2017, the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act was signed into law. This act provides victims of crime with comprehensive statutory rights for the first time. This was a huge step forward for victims who have long been marginalised in the criminal justice system.

For CVH, much of 2018 was devoted to creating tools and resources to help victims understand their new rights. A leaflet; website; and video were created to help explain victims' rights in simple, easily understood language. If victims do not know what their rights are, it can be

difficult to avail of them. We were delighted to have the resources launched by Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan in June 2018.

### Our People

The Crime Victims Helpline was established in 2005 by a small group of people who cared deeply for the needs, wants and rights of victims of crimes. The organisation has grown throughout the years because we continue to place victims at the heart of everything that we do.

Thank you to everyone—volunteers, staff, Patron, Directors, and community partners—who contributed to CVH in 2018. Thank you as well to the Department of Justice Victims of Crime Office and the Dormant Accounts Fund for their on-going financial support that makes our work possible.

Michele Puckhaber  
Executive Director

## About Crime Victims Helpline

The national Crime Victims Helpline, Freephone 116 006, is a listening and support service for victims of crime in Ireland. Our aim is to support, inform and listen to victims and all those impacted by crime. We provide time and space for people to talk about their experiences and provide information about the criminal justice system and referrals to other resources.

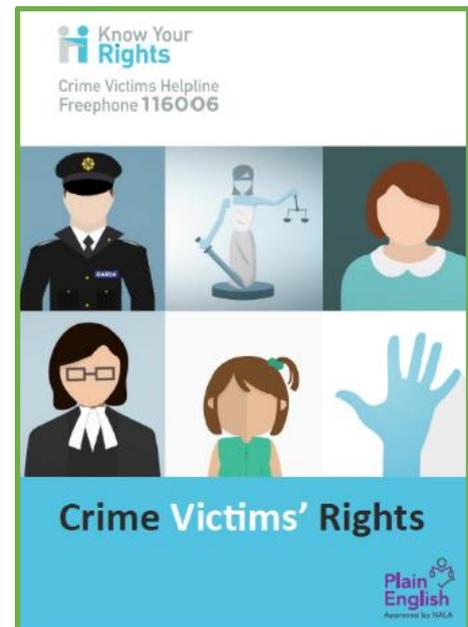
Crimevictimshelpline.ie contains extensive information regarding the impact of crime on victims as well as information about the criminal justice system and other services that assist victims of crime. We are active on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter (@CrimeVictimLine).

## Crime Victims' Rights Awareness Campaign

November 2017 brought the long-awaited transposition of the EU Victims' Rights Directive into Irish law. The commencement of the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime) Act for the first time placed the rights of victims on a statutory basis. Prior to this, victims would often ring the Helpline wanting to know what their "rights" were within the criminal justice system. The answer was almost always the same—none. Thus the new legislation is a massive positive change for victims of crime.

The new rights will have the most impact if victims know about them; if people providing support to victims can confidently explain them; and if the gatekeepers to these rights understand their responsibilities. With this in mind, the Crime Victims Helpline embarked on a project to create tools and resources to explain these new rights.

In June 2018 the Minister for Justice Charlie Flanagan launched CVH's Know Your Rights resources—a [Know Your Rights](#) booklet; [crimevictimsrights.ie](http://crimevictimsrights.ie) website; and a [video](#) designed to explain the new rights as they relate to each aspect of the criminal justice system. We had a huge turnout for the event and the resources were very well received.



## Highlights of 2018

One of the biggest challenges faced by CVH is creating an awareness of the services we provide. Nobody expects to become a victim of crime and it can be difficult for people to know where to find support when they need it. In 2018, CVH worked hard to raise awareness of our services and to build strong relationships with the Gardaí; victim support organisations; social service providers; and the general public.

CVH exhibited in the Health & Wellness tent at the **National Ploughing Championships** from 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> September. The annual outdoor agricultural event drew roughly 240,000 visitors over its three-day run. Despite treacherous weather brought by Storm Ali, volunteers had the opportunity to chat with thousands of people who were interested in learning more about CVH.

An awareness raising campaign in **cinemas across the country** began in September 2018 and concluded in January 2019. The advertisement was viewed by over 1 million cinema goers. CVH saw a significant increase in contacts coinciding with the campaign and in October 2018, we experienced our busiest month on record with 480 contacts.

CVH undertook a focused effort in 2018 to raise awareness of our services with older people. While older people are less likely to become victims of crime than other demographics, the impact can often be more severe. Older callers on the helpline report increased isolation, fear and reduced sense of confidence and self-efficacy after becoming a victim of crime. CVH wrote a column in Senior Times Magazine highlighting crime prevention, elder abuse, and other topics of interest. We also exhibited at the **Active Retirement Trade and Tourism Show** in Dublin and the **Over 50s Expos** in Athlone and Galway.

Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber, was delighted by the invitation to speak about the Crime Victims Helpline at the 2018 **Victims of Crime Office Consultative Forum**. The forum is an annual event that gathers representatives from all the victim support organisations who receive funding from the Department of Justice Victims of Crime Office.

CVH conducted trainings for the Gardaí; Probation Services; YouthReach and Seniorline. We developed our own knowledge by participating in the “116 006 Workshop” in Mainz, Germany; the Victim Support Europe Annual Conference in Stockholm, Sweden and the Victim Support Europe Annual Meeting in Brussels, Belgium.

CVH was appointed a “Trusted Partner” with Facebook. This means that when we are informed of threats; harassment; or bullying (in the case of a minor) that is taking place via Facebook or Instagram, we can report it through a special email address that will flag the concerning posts for immediate attention. As part of this initiative, staff and volunteers were invited into the Facebook Headquarters for a training on online safety.

We participated in the Google and Facebook third annual Child Safety Summit. Joined by representatives from NGOs from around Europe, the Middle East and Africa, the summit focused on empowering parents and children with the tools and skills they need to safely navigate the online world.

## 2018 Statistics

2018 was another busy year for the Crime Victims Helpline. Overall, there were 4,463 contacts with service users over phone, email, text and post. CVH handled 3,581 calls, 600 emails and 151 text messages and posted information to 131 people. CVH has experienced a massive 52% increase in the number of incoming calls since 2015.

Most of the contacts (77%) came directly from victims of crime with the remaining coming from friends and family (9%), Gardaí and other service providers such as social workers, counsellors and GPs (14%). CVH welcomes contact from anyone looking for emotional support, information about the criminal justice system and/or referrals to other victim support services.

30% of contacts were with people whose primary purpose for contacting CVH was for emotional support, 24% were seeking information about the Criminal Justice System, and 20% were looking for information about and/or referrals to specialised or local support services. One of the services provided by CVH is a follow-up contact to people who would like to hear back from us to see how they are doing. 13% of contacts in 2018 were follow-up calls. The remaining service users were looking for information about compensation; had on-going safety concerns; or wanted guidance on how to help children who were victims or witnesses to crime. Most interactions with victims touch upon multiple areas and these statistics only capture the *primary* purpose of the contact as determined by the CVH volunteer or staff member.

The helpline receives contacts from every county in Ireland. In 2018, 41% of contacts were from Dublin. The remaining contacts were roughly proportionate to the populations of each county with the exceptions of Wicklow being overrepresented and Cork being underrepresented.

Providing information about other support services is a vital function of the helpline. Due to the de-centralised structure of victim support services in Ireland, it can be difficult for people to find their way to the resources that will best meet their needs. We made 2376 referrals to other organisations and services in 2018. By far the most frequent referral is to Garda Victim Service Offices<sup>1</sup>. This highlights what a vital resource these offices have become for victims since their inception in 2015.

Assault and harassment were the most common crimes impacting service users with over half of all contacts relating to one or the other in 2018. Of all the crimes, 5% were related to domestic violence including harassment, assault, stalking, threats to kill and theft.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> There are 28 Victim Service Offices – one for each operational Garda Division. The Victim Service Offices staff are responsible for communicating with victims of crime and prioritising their needs.

<sup>2</sup> Contacts are recorded for statistical purposes according to crime and then it is indicated if the crime was related to domestic violence.

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Number of Referrals</b>
Garda Victim Service Office	804
Gardaí (Crime Prevention and Community Liaison Officers)	493
Counselling	223
Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)	162
General Practitioner or other Healthcare Professional	92
General Victim Support Services (Support After Crime and Victim Assistance)	78
Domestic Violence Support Services	68
Rape/Sexual Assault Support Services	61
Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal (CICT)	61
GSOC (Garda Ombudsman)	45
Victim Support at Court (VSAC)	26
DPP Victim Liaison Unit	26
Seniors Alert Scheme	16
Homicide Support Services (AdVic and Support after Homicide)	16
Children's Victim Support Services	7
Other	198
<b>Total</b>	<b>2376</b>

Crime	Percentage of Contacts
Assault	27%
Harassment	24%
Burglary	9%
Theft/Robbery	5%
Rape/Sexual Assault	5%
Child Abuse (Historical)	4%
Criminal Damage	4%
Fraud	3%
Anti-social Behaviour	2%
Threats to Kill	2%
Road Traffic Accident	2%
Homicide	2%
All Other Crimes	11%

County	Percentage of CVH Contacts	Percentage of ROI Population
Dublin	41%	28%
Wicklow	10%	3%
Cork	6%	11.5%
Galway	4%	5.5%
Louth	3%	5%
Donegal	3%	3%
Limerick	3%	3%
Kildare	3%	4%
Meath	3%	4%
Sligo	2%	2.5%
Wexford	2%	2.5%
Waterford	2%	1%
Laois	2%	3%
Kerry	2%	2%
Cavan	2%	2%
Clare	2%	3%
Tipperary	2%	3%
Mayo	1%	2%
Westmeath	1%	3%
Offaly	1%	2%
Carlow	1%	2%
Monaghan	1%	1%
Kilkenny	1%	1%
Longford	1%	1%
Roscommon	<1%	1%
Leitrim	<1%	1%

## **Board of Directors**

Brendan Lynott, Chairperson (Appointed 2019)

Steven Drew, Chairperson (Resigned 2019)

Eileen Brady, Company Secretary

Michael Tyndall, Treasurer

Tony Hickey

Naoise Kelly

Maeve Ryan (Resigned 2019)

Simon Treanor

Paul Williams

## **Staff**

Michele Puckhaber – Executive Director

Marie Murray – Helpline Support Worker

Sam Burke – Helpline and Social Media Assistant

Crime Victims Helpline is funded by the Department of Justice and Equality Victims of Crime Office and the Dormant Accounts Fund. CVH audited financial accounts for 2018 are available on our website at [crimevictimshelpline.ie](http://crimevictimshelpline.ie).



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gcuntas díomhaoin  
the dormant  
accounts fund

The Crime Victims Helpline is registered charity number 16894 (CRO) 20061890 (Charities Regulator)

Company Limited by Guarantee 409235

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