



Freephone **116006**

ANNUAL REPORT 2019

Listening. Supporting. Informing.

Contents

	Page
Patron's Welcome	1
Message from Chairperson	2
Executive Director's Introduction	3
About Crime Victims Helpline	4
Highlights of 2019	4
2019 Statistics	5-7
Board of Directors and Staff	8
Charity and Company Information	9

Patron's Welcome

2019 marked my thirteenth year serving as Patron of the Crime Victims Helpline. My commitment to the organisation has only grown over the years as I have witnessed the excellent work done by staff and volunteers to meet the needs of vulnerable and distressed victims.

I would like to express gratitude to all the volunteers who dedicate time to supporting victims of crime on the helpline. Their care, empathy and professionalism make a huge difference in the lives of our callers. I would like to thank the Department of Justice and the Dormant Accounts Fund for their continued support. I would like to also acknowledge the tireless work of our staff—Michele, Marie and Stephen.

And finally, I think it important to note that Maeve Ryan, founder of the Crime Victims Helpline, stepped down from the Board of Directors in 2019. I would like to extend my admiration and thanks to her for all she has done for the organisation and for victims of crime during her time with CVH.

Gillian Hussey
Retired Judge of the District Court
Patron of Crime Victims Helpline

Message from the Chairperson

This report outlines the work carried out in 2019 to support the victims of crime. Crime continues to exist, and as a result, every day people suffer a range of consequences. Crime Victims Helpline offers support to all victims of crime in Ireland by supporting, informing, and empowering them, and all those impacted by crime.

We are supported in our work by many stakeholders such as the Department of Justice, the Charities Regulator, An Garda Síochána, as well as the other providers of support to victims of crime, 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 anyone impacted by crime.

This report reflects another year of tremendous achievement and the staff and volunteers deserve enormous credit. Our Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber, supported by her team of staff and volunteers continues to deliver a 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 compliant 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 volunteer Board Directors for their continuing support and commitment throughout the year.

The Board appreciates the ongoing support in terms of funding from the Department of Justice and, on behalf of the victims of crime that we provide a service for, I offer our thanks to the Minister and the Department for this vital support.

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.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention the challenges that the Covid19 pandemic has presented to the victims of crime, their families, and friends. On behalf of the Board, Management, Staff and Volunteers, I offer assurances that the Crime Victims Helpline will continue to provide you with the support you have come to know and trust.

Brendan Lynott
Chairperson

Executive Director's Introduction

Although this report is highlighting the work of the Crime Victims Helpline (CVH) in 2019, I am writing this introduction in the midst of the 2020 Covid-19 crisis. During this time of uncertainty and fear, I am again reminded of the importance of the work of support services, especially those of helplines. We are being kept apart but the need for connection is more important than ever.

There are many advantages to providing support and information “at a distance” even in the absence of the need for social distancing. By contacting CVH over phone, email and text, people can remain anonymous and share as much or as little information as they would like. Our support is not dependent on geography and someone in the furthest corner of Donegal can get the same support as someone in Cork city centre. There are, of course, times when people want and need face-to-face support and that is why we are so grateful for the amazing organisations in Ireland who provide this support to victims of crime.

Many of our callers will only speak to us a few times. People who are victims of crime sometimes just need a little extra bit of support or a query answered. Some people, once provided with information about face-to-face or specialist services, will contact those organisations for ongoing support and advocacy. A small number will continue to ring the helpline. For some, becoming a victim of crime is a temporary inconvenience or frustration. For others, becoming a victim of crime begins a journey of healing or a search for justice that can last for years or even decades. The Crime Victims Helpline is here for everyone.

CVH founder, long-time co-ordinator and Director, Maeve Ryan, stepped away from involvement with the organisation in 2019. Maeve's contribution to the development of CVH and the empathy and care at its foundation can't be overstated. CVH Chairperson Steven Drew also stepped down in 2019. I am very appreciative of Steven's hard work on behalf of CVH and especially grateful for the wisdom and guidance he provided me during his tenure.

Thank you to all the volunteers, staff, directors and community partners who contributed to CVH in 2019. Thank you as well to the Department of Justice 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).

Highlights of 2019

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 2019, CVH undertook many projects and initiatives 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 in September. It was a special year for CVH as we co-exhibited with Victim Support at Court. Volunteers had the opportunity to chat with thousands of people who were interested in learning more about CVH.

Due to the support of the Dormant Accounts Fund, CVH was able to run cinema and radio campaigns in 2019. The advertisements were seen and heard by over a million people across the country and resulted in an increase in contacts with the Helpline.

In May, the staff and volunteers of CVH attended a reception at the Mansion House at the invitation of Lord Mayor Nial Ring. It meant so much to have the work of the Helpline acknowledged and appreciated in this way.

Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber, was delighted to get an invitation to speak about the Crime Victims Helpline at the 2019 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 training for Garda Detectives and Sergeants from Divisional Protective Services Units across the country; Probation Services; Restorative Justice Services; and Trinity College FLAC. We developed our own knowledge by participating in the “116 006 Workshop” in Mainz, Germany; the Victim Support Europe Annual Conference and a one-day training on the new crime of coercive control.

The media play a very important role in assisting CVH in raising national awareness of victims of crime and services available to them. CVH received radio coverage on media outlets throughout the country including Newstalk, LMFM, K FM, CRY 104, Galway Bay FM, Tipperary MidWest Radio, Ocean FM, Community Radio Castlebar, Near FM and Radio Kerry.

2019 Statistics

2019 was another busy year for the Crime Victims Helpline. Overall, there were 4,561 contacts with service users over phone, email, text and post. CVH handled 3,526 calls, 647 emails and 274 text messages and posted information to 114 people.

Most of the contacts, 85%, came directly from victims or witnesses with the remaining coming from friends and family (7%); Gardaí (5%); and other service providers such as social workers, counsellors and GPs (2%). CVH welcomes contact from anyone looking for emotional support, information about the criminal justice system and/or referrals to other victim support services.

34% of contacts were with people whose primary reason for contacting CVH was for emotional support, 25% were seeking information about the Criminal Justice System, and 9% 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. 17% of contacts in 2019 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 reason for* the contact as determined by the CVH volunteer or staff member.

The helpline provides supports to people in every county in Ireland. In 2019, 43% of contacts were from Dublin. The remaining contacts were roughly proportionate to the populations of each county with the exception of Cork which is underrepresented. Cork City has long established, well known victim support organisations and it is likely many victims are making contact with them directly.

Providing information about support services is a vital function of the helpline. Due to the decentralised 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 2339 referrals to other organisations and services in 2019. By far the most frequent referral was to Garda Victim Service Offices¹. 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 2019. Of all the crimes, 6% were related to domestic violence including harassment, assault, stalking, criminal damage, threats to kill and theft.²

¹ 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.

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

Resource	Number of Referrals
Garda Victim Service Office	760
Gardaí (Crime Prevention and Community Liaison Officers)	473
Counselling (including Counselling in Primary Care Scheme)	213
Free Legal Advice Centres (FLAC)	180
General Victim Support Services (Support After Crime and Victim Assistance)	116
Domestic Violence Support Services	75
GSOC (Garda Ombudsman)	70
Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal (CICT)	66
Rape and Sexual Assault Support Services	46
Victim Support at Court (VSAC)	22
DPP Victim Liaison Unit	22
Seniors Alert Scheme	16
Care After Prison	13
Homicide Support Services (AdVic and Support after Homicide)	12
Children's Victim Support Services	8
Other	247
Total	2339

Crime	Percentage of Contacts
Assault	28%
Harassment	27%
Burglary/Robbery	8%
Theft	5%
Rape/Sexual Assault	4%
Child Abuse (Historical)	3%
Criminal Damage	4%
Fraud	3%
Anti-social Behaviour	2%
Threats to Kill	3%
Road Traffic Accident	1%
Homicide	1%
Child Abuse (recent)	1%
Blackmail/Extortion	1%
Stalking	1%
Abduction	1%
Arson	1%
All Other Crimes	6%

County	Percentage of CVH Contacts	Percentage of ROI Population
Dublin	43%	28%
Louth	6%	5%
Cork	5%	11.5%
Galway	5%	5.5%
Wicklow	4%	3%
Tipperary	4%	3%
Donegal	3%	3%
Limerick	3%	3%
Kildare	3%	4%
Wexford	3%	2.5%
Meath	3%	4%
Kerry	3%	2%
Waterford	2%	1%
Laois	2%	3%
Mayo	2%	2%
Offaly	2%	2%
Sligo	1%	2.5%
Cavan	1%	2%
Clare	1%	3%
Westmeath	1%	3%
Kilkenny	1%	1%
Longford	1%	1%
Carlow	<1%	2%
Leitrim	<1%	1%
Monaghan	<1%	1%
Roscommon	<1%	1%

Board of Directors

Brendan Lynott, Chairperson

Eileen Brady, Company Secretary

Michael Tyndall, Treasurer

Steven Drew (resigned 2019)

Tony Hickey

Naoise Kelly

Maeve Ryan (resigned 2019)

Simon Treanor

Paul Williams

Staff

Michele Puckhaber – Executive Director

Marie Murray – Helpline Support Worker

Stephen Clare – Helpline and Social Media Assistant

Crime Victims Helpline is funded by the Department of Justice and Equality and the Dormant Accounts Fund. CVH audited financial accounts for 2019 are available on our [website](#).



**An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
agus Comhionannais**
Department of Justice
and Equality



ciste na
gcuntas díomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund

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

Company Limited by Guarantee 409235

Registered office 6-7 Hanover Street East, Dublin 2