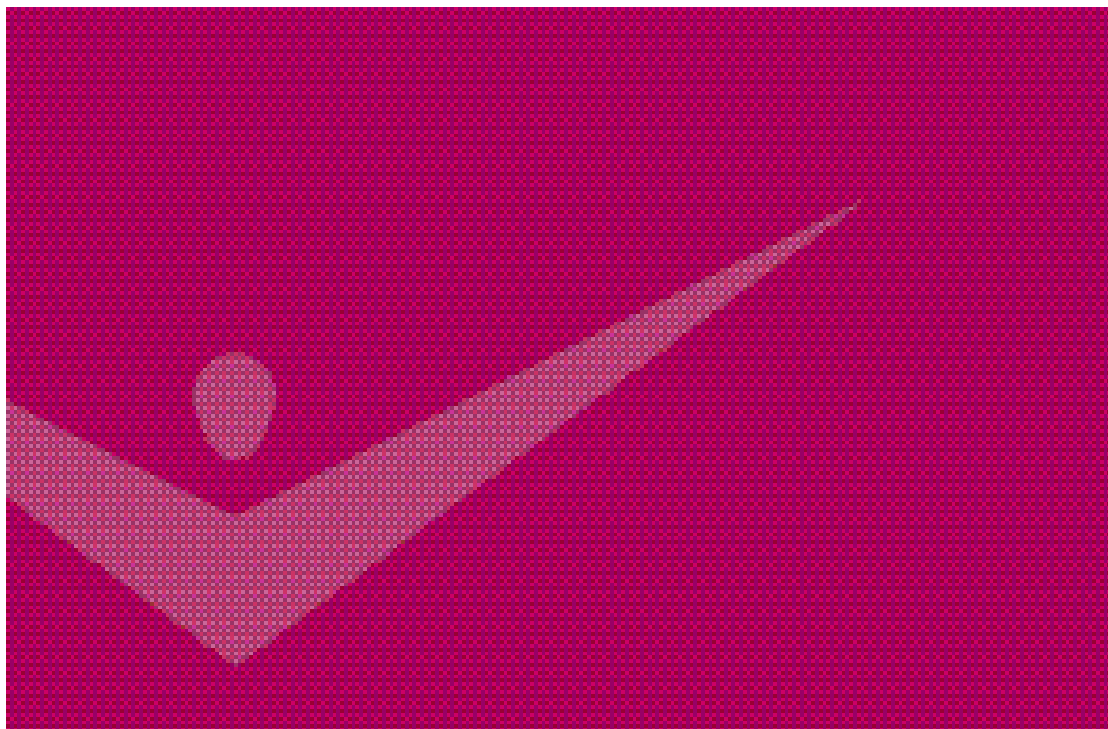


Commission
for the Support of
Victims of Crime

ANNUAL REPORT 2009



CONTENTS

	Executive Summary	2
1	The Commission: Membership and key functions	4
2	Overview of funding by the Commission in 2009	4
3	Funding decisions 2010	7
4	The Consultative Forum	8
5	Clerical and religious child sexual abuse	8
6	Research	9
7	Website	9
8	Training	9
9	Review of the Victims Charter	10
10	Victim Support Europe	10
11	Other Commission activities in 2009	10
	Appendix A: Successful applications for funding 2009	13
	Appendix B: Charts displaying distribution of funding	14
	Appendix C: Chart displaying funding paid to organisations in 2005 to 2009	15
	Appendix D: Chart displaying number of victims assisted and chart displaying number of volunteers	16
	Appendix E: 2010 Advertisement	17
	Appendix F: Press Statement on clerical and religious child sexual abuse	18

COMMISSION FOR THE SUPPORT OF VICTIMS OF CRIME

REPORT TO THE MINISTER FOR JUSTICE, EQUALITY AND LAW REFORM

2009

Executive Summary

- The Commission allocated €1,254,279 to 42 voluntary sector organisations providing front-line services to victims of crime in 2009. This represents almost a 19% increase over 2008 funding to the voluntary sector organisations. A total of 9,640 victims were assisted with this funding - an increase of 26% over 2008. (Paragraph 2.9)
- Funding decisions in relation to the applications received for 2010 from voluntary organisations supporting victims of crime were made in December, 2009. The organisations were notified immediately of these decisions, to enable them to plan their services for the full calendar year 2010. (Paragraph 2.2)
- The Consultative Forum, which was established to take account of the views of victims through those working and volunteering in the organisations, held its inaugural meeting in January. The meeting looked at the terms of reference, and methods of working of the Forum, as well as possible topics for future meetings. It also discussed the Minister's legislative proposals in relation to victims of crime in the Criminal Procedure Bill, 2009. (Paragraph 4)
- The Commission's website (www.csvc.ie) was launched by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform at the second meeting of the Consultative Forum in September. Included in the Commission's website is a listing of all funded voluntary organisations, by county and by category of victim assisted, to facilitate victims who are seeking information or support.
- At the second Forum meeting, there were further discussions on the Criminal Procedure Bill, 2009, on counselling and emotional support for victims and also on how to empower victims. (Paragraphs 4.4 and 7)
- Field research on behalf of the Commission, to explore the experience of victims of crime who had contact with victim support organisations, was completed and the drafting of a report commenced in 2009. (Paragraph 6)

- The Commission organised four training days for the voluntary sector organisations that it funds. The first day dealt with court accompaniment skills in a criminal court setting. The second day dealt with court accompaniment skills for those supporting victims of domestic violence. The third training day consisted of a workshop on supporting/supervising volunteers and staff while the fourth day covered the topic of finding, recruiting and integrating volunteers into organisations. (Paragraph 8)
- In consultation with the criminal justice agencies and others concerned, the Commission continued its work of reviewing the *Victims Charter and Guide to the Criminal Justice System*, with a view to preparing a revised and updated document. (Paragraph 9)
- The Commission continued to engage with the criminal justice agencies and the voluntary sector organisations it funds, in order to promote co-ordination and co-operation between these bodies and to improve the services they provide to victims of crime. (Paragraph 11.3)
- The Commission held ten formal meetings in plenary session, in addition to three meetings involving two sub-groups, in 2009. It was also represented at meetings of a range of related organisations. (Paragraph 11.1)

1. THE COMMISSION: MEMBERSHIP AND KEY FUNCTIONS

1.1 The members of the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime are:

Mr. Ray McAndrew, Chair (former Assistant Commissioner of An Garda Síochána)

Mr. P.J. Fitzpatrick (former Chief Executive of the Courts Service)

Mr. Sean Lowry (former Head of the Probation Service)

Ms Nora Owen (former Minister for Justice)

Mr. Michael Whelan (Gemini Consulting)

Mr Greg Heylin, *ex officio* (Director of the Victims of Crime Office)

1.2 The key functions of the Commission are:

- To assist, with the Victims of Crime Office, in the development of strategies and policies to support victims of crime, with a view to improving the cohesion and consistency of services and information available to victims of crime
- To provide financial assistance to voluntary sector organisations which support victims of crime
- To take account of the views of victims of crime in the formulation of strategies and policies, through the Victims of Crime Consultative Forum
- To develop links with Government Departments and agencies of the criminal justice system, in the interests of victims
- To co-operate with Cosc, (The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence) and the Anti Human Trafficking Unit in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform
- To keep itself informed of international developments in relation to victims of crime
- To review the Victims Charter.

1.3 The Victims of Crime Office provides a full-time secretariat to the Commission. The Commission also has the services of a co-ordinator, who visits the organisations funded by the Commission, monitors the services available from them and assists in local problem-solving.

2. OVERVIEW OF FUNDING BY THE COMMISSION IN 2009

2.1 A total budget of €1,283,000 was made available to the Commission in 2009.

2.2 A public advertisement was placed in national newspapers on 17th October, 2008, inviting applications for funding for 2009. Most of the 46 applications

received were from organisations that had applied for and had received funding in previous years from the Commission.

2.3 The Commission is independent in its decision-making process and assesses each application on its own merits. The 42 successful organisations had been notified of the Commission's decision that they were to be funded, by the end of December 2008. This was to facilitate continuity of services to victims and to enable organisations plan their services for the full calendar year 2009. The majority of initial payments were made in the first quarter of 2009, as soon as organisations had submitted the necessary reports on 2008 funding and expenditure profiles for 2009.

2.4 The Commission granted funding to the following eight organisations providing **services to victims of crime generally**:

- *Crime Victims Helpline [1850 211 407]*

The Commission supports and promotes the national Crime Victims Helpline as a central point of contact for all victims of crime. The Helpline provides the opportunity for people who are victims of crime to find emotional support on the phone. It also provides information on the criminal justice system and on services available locally to victims of crime.

- *Court Support Service* provides court accompaniment to prosecution witnesses, their families and friends in the Central Criminal Court and the Dublin Circuit Criminal Court.

- *The Federation for Victim Assistance* offers emotional and practical support to victims of crime, through its branch network.

- *The Irish Tourist Assistance Service* provides a support service to tourists who are victims of crime.

- *MISS (Missing in Ireland Support Service)* provides information and support to families and friends of missing persons, through a phone helpline.

- *Support after Crime* provides emotional support and practical information to persons affected by crime.

- *Support after Homicide* provides emotional and practical support for those bereaved by homicide.

- *AdVIC* advocates for changes that will bring about a re-balancing of the criminal justice system and increased recognition of the status of families of homicide victims within the system. It also provides access to subsidised counselling for families of homicide victims.

Funding to these organisations amounted to €427,279 and accounted for 34% of the total allocated by the Commission. 5,949 victims were supported by these services, of whom 2,412 called the Crime Victims Helpline.

2.5 Services to victims of **domestic violence**

The Commission approved 24 applications for funding from organisations providing services to victims of domestic violence, mainly for the provision of a court accompaniment service. It allocated €459,500 to this sector, which accounted for 37% of the total funding allocated by the Commission. 2,231 victims of domestic violence were assisted.

2.6 Services to victims of **sexual violence and human trafficking**

The Commission approved four applications for funding from organisations providing these services. Funding was provided to the *Rape Crisis Network Ireland*, *One in Four* and *Sexual Violence Centre Cork*, for training of staff and volunteers and accompaniment services to victims of sexual violence. *Ruhama* received funding towards the provision of some services for women trafficked into Ireland for the purpose of sexual exploitation. The Commission allocated €230,000 to this sector, which accounted for 18% of the total funding allocated by the Commission. 944 victims of sexual violence were assisted.

- 2.7 Following publication of the Ryan Report on 20th May, 2009 and the Murphy Report on 26th November, 2009, the number of people seeking advocacy or psychotherapy services from *One in Four* rose dramatically. An additional amount of €45,000 was allocated to *One in Four* for immediate measures to deal with the upsurge. (This €45,000 is included in the total of €230,000)

2.8 Services to **children who are victims of crime**

The Commission funded *CARI* and *Barnardos* in 2009. *CARI*, which provides support to children who are victims of sexual abuse and their non-abusing parents, received funding towards the development of its court accompaniment support service for children, who have to attend court as a witness. *Barnardos* provides counselling to children who are bereaved because of homicide. The €91,000 of funding to this sector accounted for 7% of the Commission's total allocation. 35 child victims were supported by these organisations.

2.9 Counselling services

€46,500 was allocated by the Commission to four organisations which provided counselling services to 481 victims of crime in 2009. This accounted for 4% of the Commission's overall budget.

2.10 In summary, a total of 9,645 victims were assisted by 42 organisations, which received a total of €1,254,279. Appendix A gives the list of organisations that were allocated funding by the Commission in 2009. Appendix D displays the number of victims assisted in each category. From its inception in 2005 to the end of 2009, the Commission has allocated €4.8 million to voluntary sector organisations supporting victims of crime.

2.11 Most of the funded voluntary sector organisations had contact with An Garda Síochána and the Courts Service during 2009 when delivering their services. Some of the funded organisations had contact with the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the Legal Aid Board and the Probation Service. Other bodies that were contacted by the organisations included COSC, (The National Office for the Prevention of Domestic, Sexual and Gender-based Violence), the Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABS), the Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Family Support Agency. There was also some co-operation between organisations funded by the Commission. Many of the organisations work with local community groups when delivering their services. Building a network of supports and links enables groups to become more well-known and visible in their communities, so that their services can be accessed by victims.

2.12 A total of 400 volunteers work in organisations funded by the Commission, although some sectors rely more on paid employees to provide services to victims. Of the 400 volunteers, 213 worked in assisting general victims of crime, 102 worked in the area of sexual violence, 75 provided support to victims of domestic violence and 10 worked in the area of counselling. (A chart showing the number of volunteers is at Appendix D)

3 Funding Decisions for 2010

3.1 To ensure that the voluntary bodies funded by the Commission would receive their payment as early as possible in 2010, the Commission placed an advertisement in the national newspapers on 14th October, 2009, inviting applications for funding for 2010 (Appendix E). The closing date for receipt of applications was 25th November, 2009. The Commission received 47 applications and made decisions in principle regarding these applications at its meeting in December 2009, following which the applicants were notified of the decisions made.

4. The Consultative Forum

- 4.1 The *Framework Document: Recommendations for Future Structures and Services for Victims of Crime* was prepared by the Commission and presented to the Minister in April, 2008. The Minister accepted the recommendations of the Commission in full. One of the recommendations of the document was that the Commission would be required to meet with voluntary sector organisations twice yearly for consultation and briefing in a **Victims of Crime Consultative Forum**.
- 4.2 The Consultative Forum, which is attended by one representative of each of the voluntary organisations funded by the Commission, was established to take account of the views of victims through those working and volunteering in the groups. The Forum allows the organisations funded by the Commission to have an input into strategy and policies developed to assist and support victims of crime. It also facilitates the exchange of good practice between the funded organisations.
- 4.3 The Consultative Forum held its inaugural meeting in January and a second meeting took place in September, 2009. The first meeting looked at the terms of reference, possible future topics and methods of working of the Forum. It also discussed the Minister's legislative proposals in relation to victims of crime.
- 4.4 The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D., launched the Commission's website and the Victims of Crime Office website before the second meeting of the Forum in September. Included in the Commission's website is a listing of all funded voluntary organisations, by county and by category of victim assisted, to facilitate victims who are seeking information or support. At the Forum, there were further discussions on the Criminal Procedure Bill, 2009. Discussion also took place on counselling and emotional support and on how to empower victims.

5. CLERICAL AND RELIGIOUS CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE

- 5.1 The Report of the Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (The Ryan Report) was published on 20th May 2009. The Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime was very conscious of the pain and confusion experienced by children abused by priests of the Dublin Archdiocese and by victims of institutional abuse. It was also conscious of the ongoing suffering and turmoil in the lives of those victims. The Commission discussed this topic on a number of occasions in 2009. It issued a press statement on 10th November, a number of days after the publication of the Report of the Dublin Archdiocese Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the Murphy Report). A copy of the press release is attached at Appendix F.

6. Research

- 6.1** The Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime commissioned research, which was completed by a team of researchers from Trinity College, Dublin, in 2007. This research outlined the current Irish legal provisions in relation to victims. It also brought together material from a number of other jurisdictions in relation to victims. Finally, this research sought the views of the voluntary sector organisations which supported victims of crime in relation to recommendations for change.
- 6.2** Following on from this research, the Commission, after a tender process, asked a group of researchers from University College Cork to carry out research on:
- the needs of victims of crime and their families
 - the extent to which victims of crime seek support from the services available
 - the extent to which those needs are met by organisations which provide support to victims of crime and by the criminal justice agencies.
- 6.3** Field research with victims, who had engaged with voluntary sector support organisations funded by the Commission, was completed in 2009. This work presented a number of logistical and ethical issues. Work on writing up the research commenced in 2009 and was near completion by the end of the year.

7. Website

- 7.1** The Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D., launched the Commission's website (www.csvc.ie) in September, 2009. The website gives access in one place to the different organisations funded by the Commission, to facilitate victims and others who are interested in the area. The website also provides much information on the work of the Commission. Each page of the website has a simple graphic giving the phone number of the Crime Victims Helpline, a phone helpline for victims of crime. The Commission's website also has a prominent link on each page to the new Victims of Crime Office website (www.victimsofcrimeoffice.ie). That website reciprocates with a link on each of its pages to the Commission's website. This is a striking example of the close working relations between the two distinct bodies.

8. Training

- 8.1** In response to requests for training at the Consultative Forum, the Commission organised four training days for the organisations it funds in 2009. The first day

dealt with court accompaniment skills in a criminal court setting. The Commission was pleased to be able to use the courtrooms of the Circuit Court and High Court in Cork city, during the legal vacation. The second day's training covered court accompaniment skills for those supporting victims of domestic violence. The third training day consisted of a workshop on supporting/supervising volunteers and staff, while the fourth day covered the topic of finding, recruiting and integrating volunteers into the organisation. The Commission is grateful to the Probation Service for the use of its training rooms at its offices in Dublin, for the last three training days.

- 8.2** Those attending the training days found them very useful and informative. The training days also gave those working to assist and support victims further opportunities to meet each other, to share good practice and experiences.

9. REVIEW OF THE VICTIMS CHARTER

- 9.1** In consultation with the criminal justice agencies and others concerned, the Commission continued its work of reviewing the *Victims Charter and Guide to the Criminal Justice System*. The Charter was last updated and significantly expanded in 1999. The Commission is committed to making the Charter even more accessible. To this end, it has striven to get each organisation to express its chapter in plain English. The extra work involved will prove worthwhile in providing a more-easily understood Charter, for victims and professionals alike.

10. Victim Support Europe

- 10.1** The Commission was granted associate membership of Victim Support Europe and was represented at its annual conference in 2009. Victim Support Europe is a network of 26 non-governmental victim support organisations in 21 European countries, which provide assistance and information to victims of crime. Victim Support Europe promotes the establishment and development of victim rights and victim services throughout Europe. Given the fragmented nature of the Irish voluntary sector assisting and supporting victims, it is important that a single, central organisation with an oversight role in this area, such as the Commission, should be an associate member of Victim Support Europe.

11. OTHER COMMISSION ACTIVITIES IN 2009

- 11.1** The Commission met ten times in formal, plenary session in 2009. Members of the Commission also met three times in two sub-groups during the year.
- 11.2** The Commission met with a number of the voluntary organisations supporting victims of crime, to address specific issues in its work for victims.

- 11.3** The Commission also met with a number of the criminal justice agencies throughout the year, including the Courts Service senior management team and its new chief executive, the Director of the Probation Service, the Irish Prison Service, the Legal Aid Board and the Coroners Service Implementation Team. Because of their interest and input into the management of the victims suites, Commission members were given a tour of the new Criminal Court Complex in December, 2009
- 11.4** The Commission visited Northern Ireland in June, 2009. During this visit it met with staff of the Probation Service, the Police Service, the Courts Service and Victim Support Northern Ireland. The Commission delegation was given a tour of Laganside Courthouse and saw the facilities available to vulnerable and intimidated witnesses and to victims of crime.
- 11.5** Mr. Ray McAndrew, Chair of the Commission spoke at a conference held under the auspices of the Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs in the Mater Dei Institute, Dublin in September, 2009. The Conference was held in response to a document entitled *Violence in Irish Society: Towards an Ecology of Peace* which was produced by the Irish Commission for Justice and Social Affairs. The aim of the conference was to move from the framework and analysis contained in the document towards action which will help to bring about a society with far-less violence.
- 11.6** The Chair, Mr. McAndrew, the Director of the Victims of Crime Office, Mr. Greg Heylin, and the Secretary to the Commission, Ms. Anne O'Shea, attended a conference organised by the Federation for Victim Assistance in the Green Isle Hotel in February, 2009.
- 11.7** Mr. McAndrew and Mr. Greg Heylin attended the annual conference of Victim Support Europe, which was held in Lisbon in 2009.
- 11.8** Ms Nora Owen, Mr. Sean Lowry, Mr. Michael Whelan and Mr. Greg Heylin attended the launch by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, Mr. Dermot Ahern, T.D., of Cosc research entitled *Attitudes to Domestic Violence in Ireland*. The launch took place in Dublin Castle in February.
- 11.9** Mr. Greg Heylin represented the Commission at the Italian Embassy, Dublin, on the presentation, on behalf of the President of the Republic of Italy, Giorgio Napolitano, by the Italian Ambassador, His Excellency, Dr. Lucio Alberto Savoia, of the honour *Cavaliere dell'Ordine della Stella della Solidarieta Italiana* (Knight of the Order of the Star of Italian Solidarity) on Mr. Bernard Lavelle of the Irish Tourist Assistance Service (ITAS). The honour was awarded for services to Italian tourists.

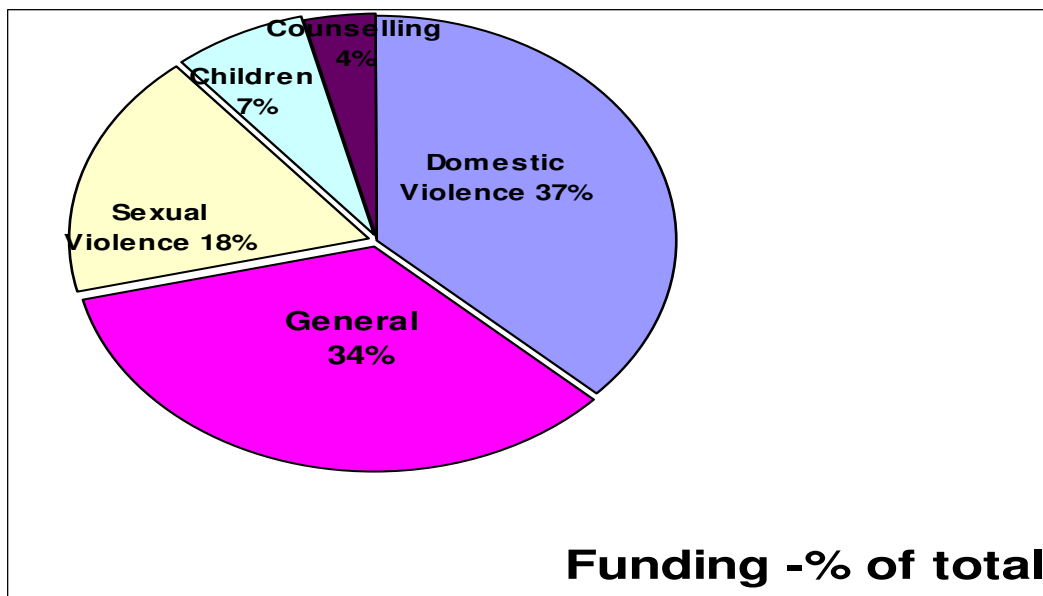
- 11.10** Mr. Greg Heylin spoke on behalf of the Commission at the launch of its new website by MISS in April.
- 11.11** Mr. Michael Whelan, Mr. Greg Heylin and Ms Anne O'Shea attended the launch of the annual report of Ruhama in All Hallows, Dublin in August.
- 11.12** Ms Nora Owen and Ms Anne O'Shea attended the function organised by ITAS to mark its 15th anniversary. The function was hosted by the Lord Mayor and was held in the Mansion House. Guido Nasi, an Italian tourist who was assisted by ITAS following an assault in 1999 that left him a quadriplegic, was the special guest of honour.

SUCCESSFUL APPLICANTS FOR FUNDING IN 2009

Organisation	Funding granted	Category
Adapt (Kerry)	27,000	Domestic Violence
Adapt (Limerick)	45,000	Domestic Violence
AdVIC	21,000	General
Amen	43,000	Domestic Violence
Ascend (North Tipperary)	15,000	Domestic Violence
Barnados	27,000	Children
Beacon of Light Counselling Centre	18,000	Counselling
CARI	64,000	Children
Carlow Women's Aid	12,000	Domestic Violence
Clare Haven Services	15,000	Domestic Violence
Cope Galway	3,000	Domestic Violence
Court Support Service	63,000	General
Crime Victims Helpline	87,000	General
Cuan Saor Women's Refuge Ltd.	18,000	Domestic Violence
Domestic Violence (Advocacy Service)(Sligo)	8,000	Domestic Violence
Domestic Violence Response (Galway)	12,000	Domestic Violence
Donegal Domestic Violence Service	14,500	Domestic Violence
Dundalk Counselling Service	17,500	Counselling
Family Life Centre (Violence against women)(Boyle)	20,000	Domestic Violence
Federation for Victim Assistance	60,000	General
Innishowen Womens Refuge	5,000	Domestic Violence
Irish Tourist Assistance Service	55,000	General
Laois Support against domestic abuse	20,000	Domestic Violence
Letterkenny Women's Centre (Counselling)	4,000	Counselling
Living Life Voluntary Counselling Centre (Wicklow)	7,000	Counselling
Longford Women's Link	25,000	Domestic Violence
Mayo Women's Support Service	17,000	Domestic Violence
Meath Women's Refuge	20,000	Domestic Violence
Missing in Ireland Support Services	5,141	General
Mná Feasa	25,500	Domestic Violence
Offaly Women in Crisis	9,000	Domestic Violence
One in Four	78,000	Sexual violence
Open Door Network	10,000	Domestic Violence
Ruhama	62,000	Sexual violence
Rape Crisis Network	60,000	Sexual violence
Saoirse Housing Association (Tallaght)	8,500	Domestic Violence
Sexual Violence Centre	30,000	Sexual violence
Support After Crime	96,138	General
Support After Homicide	40,000	General
Tearmann Housing Association (Monaghan)	16,000	Domestic Violence
Women's Aid Dublin	56,000	Domestic Violence
Women's Aid Dundalk	15,000	Domestic Violence
Total	1,254,279	

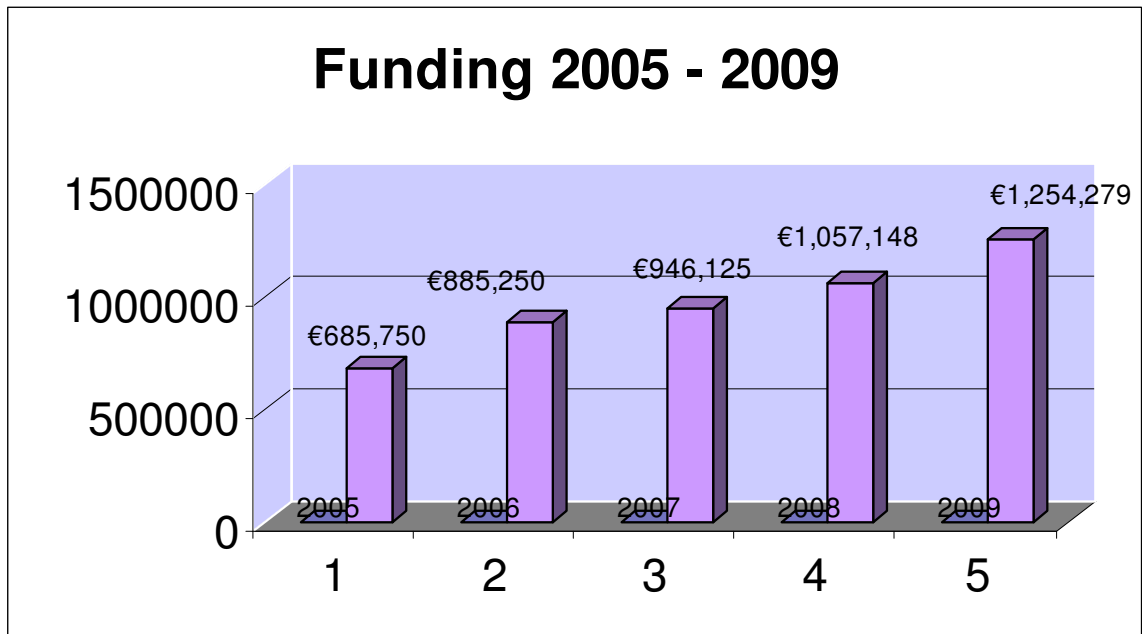
Charts Displaying Distribution of Funding Funding 2009

Sector	Amounted Funded	% of total	No. of projects
Domestic Violence	€459,500	37%	24
General Crime	€427,279	34%	8
Sexual Violence	€230,000	18%	4
Children	€91,000	7%	2
Counselling	€46,500	4%	4
Total	€1,254,279	100%	42

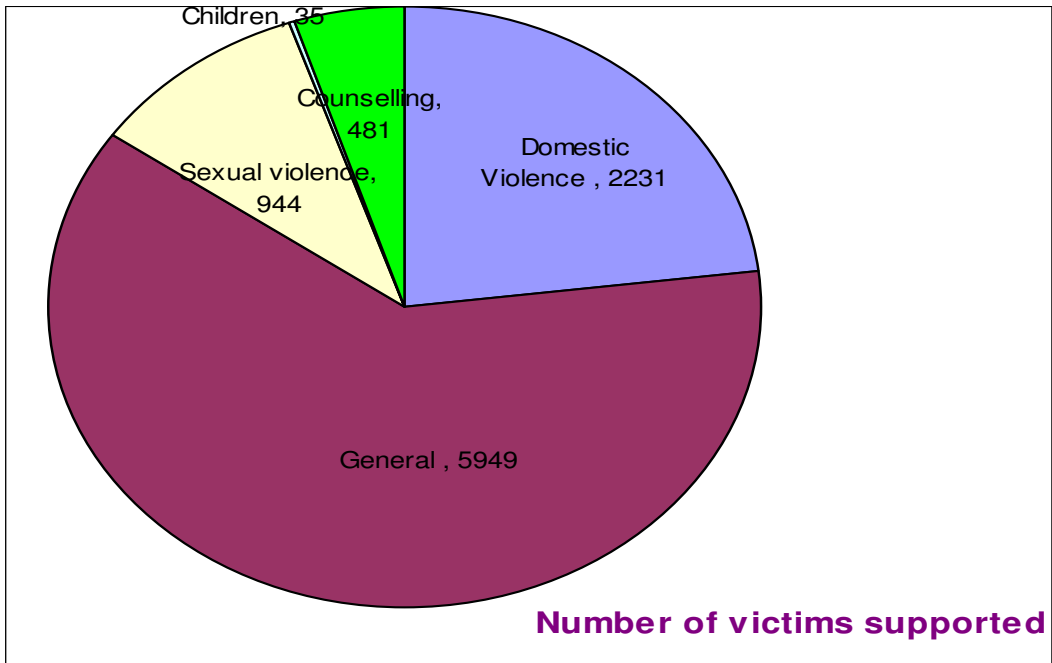


Funding paid to Organisations 2005 to 2009

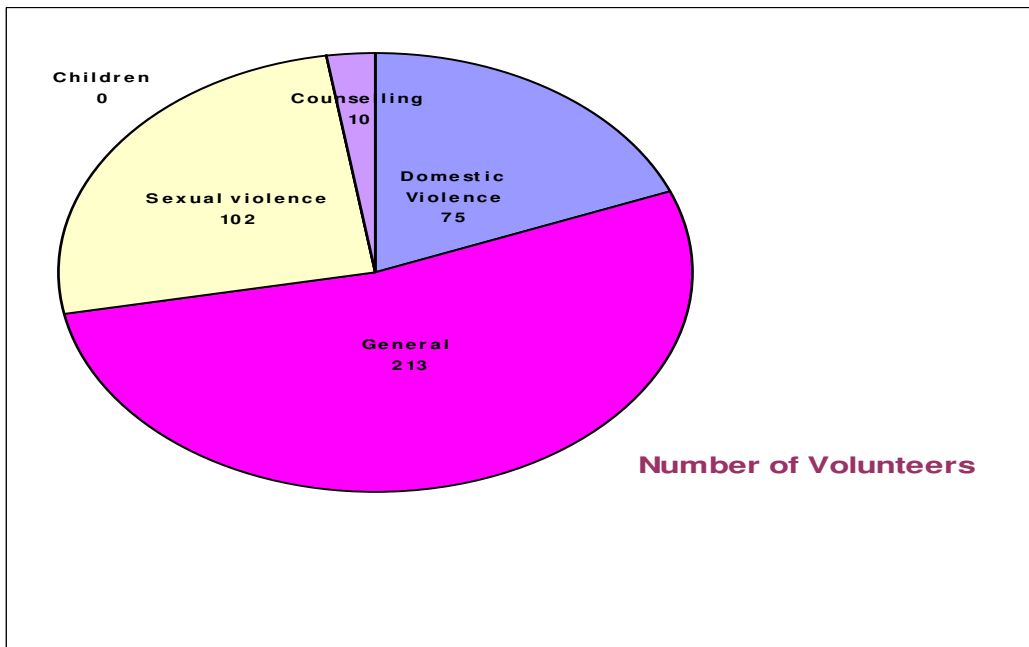
2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
€685,750	€885,250	€946,125	€1,057,148	€1,254,279



Numbers of victims supported in each sector



Number of Volunteers in each sector





PUBLIC NOTICE

Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime

2010 funding for provision of Services to Victims of Crime

The Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime was reconstituted by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform in September 2008 to –

- disburse funding to organisations who provide support and assistance to victims of crime
- assist in the development of strategies and policies to support victims of crime with a view to improving cohesion and consistency of service and information available to victims of crime.

The Commission is inviting applications for funding for 2010 from registered charities, voluntary/community groups and other bodies who provide or who have proposals for the provision of victim services/assistance. Applicants for funding must be either a registered charity or a limited company. Enquiries about joint applications between two or more groups would be welcome.

Application forms can be downloaded from www.csvc.ie or can be obtained from Anne O'Shea, Secretary to the Commission at the address below.

Application forms must be returned by Friday, 27th November, 2009

Contact details:

**Ms Anne O'Shea
Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime,
c/o Department of Justice,
Equality and Law Reform,
Pinebrook House,
71 – 74 Harcourt Street,
Dublin 2**

Tel: 01-6028681. e-mail: csvc@justice.ie

**Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime
Press Statement on**

The Report of the Dublin Archdiocese Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the Murphy Report)

The Dublin Archdiocese Commission Report

The Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime acknowledges the pain and confusion experienced by children abused by priests of the Dublin Archdiocese and the ongoing suffering and turmoil in the lives of those victims. The impact of this crime is comparable with that experienced by victims of the most serious crimes of violence against the person. This is aggravated by the fact that the crimes were perpetrated before the victims had reached adulthood and the way Church authorities dealt with complaints. The abuse is all the more appalling given that it was perpetrated by men in positions of great trust and publicly committed to high Christian standards, but sadly betraying both trust and standards.

The Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime welcomes the publication of the Report of the Dublin Archdiocese Commission to Inquire into Child Abuse (the Murphy Report). It knows that the publicity attendant on this publication has again touched into the pain of victims of child abuse. It hopes that the publication can also assist victims in their long journeys towards wholeness and peace. It acknowledges that some victims may spend the rest of their lives seeking healing.

The Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime would in particular acknowledge the many victims who have bravely come forward and engaged with the Dublin Archdiocese Commission, the Ryan Commission, the Redress Board and the criminal justice agencies with a view to highlighting terrible wrongs and securing justice and societal changes and support. The Commission would urge other victims who may not yet have sought help to make contact with one of the support organisations, whose contact details appear at the end of this press release, or to report any crimes committed against them to the Garda Síochána.

The Commission notes the recent words of Archbishop Diarmuid Martin, where he called on the church to renew itself. He said that this renewal must go deeper than structures. The Commission would hope that the church's renewal will include proactive support for identified victims, adoption and full adherence to best practices and procedures, including the deployment of voluntary lay expertise and proper, prompt and decisive action where suspicions of abuse come to notice. The Commission calls for vigorous efforts by all concerned to ensure that the implementation plan which followed the Ryan report can help support better lives for victims of institutional abuse, prevent further abuse, and lead to prompt action where abuse is suspected in the future.

Child abuse in families and communities

The Commission welcomes the justifiable public attention on clerical and institutional abuse. It also urges people to remember that the majority of cases of abuse coming to attention occur within families. A renewed focus is required to further improve State and voluntary sector responses to child abuse within the family. As a wider society we need to remain alert so that we can respond appropriately to suspected cases of sexual abuse in a timely fashion. In particular, there should be a renewed emphasis, including appropriate publicity, on empowering children to report any inappropriate activities to a trusted adult.

Individual responses

It is only right that there has been much questioning about the effectiveness of our current and past systems. This will need to continue as we face into the future to ensure that robust systems are in place. Child abuse appears to be more pervasive than many of us expected. As a result members of the public may be left with a more jaundiced view of human nature, of church organisations and of the State. There is a danger that members of the public will be overwhelmed by the nature and the extent of the abuse being made public. The Commission would encourage people to report cases of abuse coming to their notice so that they may be investigated.

The Commission wishes to draw attention to a wide range of individuals who, on all our behalves, are engaging or have engaged with the pernicious problem of child abuse and

especially those who have endeavoured to make a difference in the lives of victims of abuse, in whatever ways were open to them. Not all of these people found the support they should have taken for granted in their own organisations, but persisted in helping victims or seeking justice on their behalf. Of necessity most of these people will continue to remain anonymous in the eyes of the general public. In recognising the positive contributions of individuals and organisations the Commission would further encourage the continuing improvement of practices and procedures in relation to detecting and preventing child abuse.

Above all in our discussions it is important to keep the focus on

- empowering existing victims,
- preventing as far as is humanly possible further child abuse, and
- having in place fair and robust systems for dealing with suspicions of abuse in the future.

Sources of support for victims of abuse

HSE National Counselling Service Help Desk - 1 800 670 700

Dublin Rape Crisis Centre National 24 Hour Helpline - 1 800 77 88 88

Faoiseamh - 1 800 331 234 (UK and NI) 00 8000 973 272

Connect - 1 800 477 477 (UK and NI) 00 8000 477 477 77

Samaritans - 1 850 60 90 90

One in Four - (01) 662 4070

Rape Crisis Network Ireland: www.rcni.ie click on "help - information" and then on "find help" for a map of rape crisis centres all over the country, click on map for contact details.

www.csvc.ie click on "victim services" and then "sexual violence services"

www.cosc.ie click on "local and national support services" and then "sexual violence services"

Note for Editors

The Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime was established as an independent body in 2005 by the then Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform to provide funding to voluntary sector organisations supporting victims of crime. Since that date the Commission has allocated €5m to more than fifty organisations. In particular the Commission has provided grant aid over the years to One in Four and Rape Crisis Network Ireland. The Commission also assists in the development of strategies and policies to support victims of crime with a view to improving cohesion, consistency of service and information available to victims of crime. Its website is www.csvc.ie.

The organisations funded by the Commission for the Support of Victims of Crime support victims of domestic abuse, sexual violence, victims of human trafficking, tourist victims of crime, child victims, families of victims of homicide as well as victims of general crime. The organisations funded by the Commission provide a number of services to victims of crime which include court accompaniment, information, help lines, emotional support and counselling.

Media Queries

Mr. Greg Heylin
Director, Victims of Crime Office
Phone: (01) 602 8450
Mobile: 087 99 22 483

Date of issue: 10/11/09

END