

Crime
Victims
Helpline.ie



Freephone
116006

ANNUAL REPORT 2021

Listening.
Supporting.
Informing.

PATRON'S WELCOME

As Patron of the Crime Victims Helpline (CVH) for the past 14 years, I have had the pleasure of watching the organisation grow from strength to strength. 2021 was no exception to this positive trajectory, and I would like to sincerely thank the staff and volunteers for their admirable dedication and commitment to CVH. By answering calls, addressing queries, providing information, making referrals and offering much needed emotional support, you have offered light, hope and healing to victims of crime. I can give no higher praise.

Covid-19 posed significant challenges for the helpline, but CVH demonstrated a remarkable resilience and adaptability in the face of this global pandemic. Amid various lockdowns and travel restrictions, working from home became the new 'normal', but at no time did the quality of support offered to victims of crime suffer. I would like to pay tribute to Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber, in steering the organization skillfully through this period.

I would also like to extend my sincerest thanks to the Department of Justice and the Dormant Accounts Fund for their continued support.

GILLIAN HUSSEY

Retired District Court Judge
Crime Victims Helpline Patron



CHAIRPERSON'S STATEMENT

It gives me great pleasure to contribute to this Annual Report of Crime Victims Helpline.

While 2021 was in many ways a year of change - Covid-19 and Brexit being just two of the issues that dominated the headlines - crime, unfortunately, remained a staple of everyday life in Ireland. The impacts of crime are often far-reaching in physical, psychological, emotional and financial terms. While the legal system plays a necessary and valuable role in correcting the injustice caused by crime, it is equally important to ensure that victims are supported in dealing with the aftermath of crime. Our mission is to support, inform and empower our service users, and we are extremely proud to have assisted so many victims and others impacted by crime during 2021. We constantly strive to place victims, their friends and families, and all those affected by crime at the heart of what we do.

The large number of service users helped by Crime Victims Helpline during the year is a tribute to the dedicated and determined efforts of our wonderful staff and volunteers. I would particularly like to thank the Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber, for her outstanding management and leadership. We are extremely fortunate to have a pool of talented volunteers who, working with the staff, always demonstrate compassion and empathy in supporting victims of crime. The generosity of spirit in which they contribute to the Helpline is unparalleled, and they play a vital role in helping victims to weather the stormy conditions that crime often brings in its wake.

I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to two key stakeholders - the Department of Justice and the Charities Regulator. Without the funding and vital support of the former, we would be unable to deliver our services, and we are very grateful to Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee T.D., and to the officials in her Department, for the encouragement and goodwill extended to us. We look forward to continuing this positive and synergistic relationship in the years to come. The Charities Regulator, particularly through its Charities

Governance Code, outlines the highest standards of governance that are expected of organisations such as ours. We are proud to be fully compliant with this Governance Code and are committed to the ongoing delivery of a transparent, effective and efficient service.

I was honoured to be appointed as Chairperson of this wonderful organisation during 2021 and I would like to thank my predecessor, Brendan Lynott, for his leadership during his period in office. I also thank Tony Hickey and Paul Williams who both resigned as directors during 2021. I wish all three every success in their future endeavours. I am particularly grateful to the other three directors who served throughout the year. Their passion, determination and invaluable guidance has enabled the organisation to grow from strength to strength. I welcome two new directors, Clare Cresswell and Susan Leahy, who joined the Board in February 2022. I am confident that they will make a significant contribution to CVH in the years ahead.

Finally, I would like to thank our patron, retired Judge Gillian Hussey, whose commitment to the organisation and to justice over many years has been unstinting.

With the guidance of our patron and a strong team of dedicated staff, volunteers, stakeholders, and Directors, Crime Victims Helpline can look forward with confidence to continuing its support for victims of crime and to enhancing and expanding the services it provides.



MICHAEL TYNDALL

Chairperson



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION

Resilience is a term that has taken on new significance over the past few years. People, organisations, governments and communities were faced with unique and unexpected challenges as Covid swept across the globe. The fear, anxiety and uncertainty is not unlike the experience of becoming a victim of crime and having your world turned upside down.

Nobody expects a pandemic, just as no one expects to become a victim of crime. When someone is victimised, their sense of safety is shattered. They may suffer physical, financial, and/or psychological harm. The events that occur after the crime are largely out of their control. As they look to the future, they know things will never be the same but yearn for a return to "normal".

Victims of crime can be extraordinarily resilient. With time, support, justice and compensation most victims can incorporate their experience into a "new normal" and move forward with their lives. We must do everything we can to create laws, policies, procedures and supports that nurture this recovery. Ireland has come a long way in recent years in supporting victims' rights and moving them towards the centre of the criminal justice system. The passage of the Victims of Crime Act in 2017 enshrined in law many rights for victims of crime. However, there is more to do.

In 2021 CVH heard from victims who were treated without respect, who weren't provided needed translation services, who were kept in the dark about the status of the investigation, or who were retraumatized by the significant delays in the criminal justice system. It is not enough for rights to simply exist. Those responsible for actioning those rights must be actively engaged in the process.

The European Commission has begun a review of victims' rights and will be looking to expand upon the original EU Victims' Rights Directive in the coming years. If Ireland doesn't want to find itself behind, it must accelerate its compliance with the current Directive, not just to the letter of the law but to the spirit of it.

The EU Directive and the Victims of Crime Act 2017 give victims the right to support services, free of charge. Ireland has over 70 organisations who provide services to victims of crime and yet gaps still remain. People in County Dublin (who accounted for 39% of contacts with CVH in 2021) who are victims of "general" crime (including theft,

burglary, harassment, and assault) have been without in-person support for over a decade. There are many other pockets of the country without adequate supports for victims of general crime as well for domestic abuse and sexual violence.

All victims of crime deserve and have a right to high-quality, easily accessible support. CVH provides support and information to all victims of crime in Ireland through phone, email and text and on our website crimevictimshelpline.ie. I'm proud of the care, empathy and guidance provided by CVH volunteers and staff. When specialised and local in-person support services are available we provide that information to our service users. It is extremely difficult when there are no additional supports available to offer. As the pandemic has shown us, technology can be amazing for connecting with people from afar. However, it has also taught us that nothing can replace being with someone in real life—sitting with a cup of tea, connecting, and listening. We all need this, especially people who, like many victims, are vulnerable and traumatised.

I want to thank everyone who contributed their time, energy and expertise towards CVH's mission in 2021. Volunteers provide support on the helpline six days a week. They are a compassionate, generous and resilient team who I can't thank enough. The wisdom and guidance of the Board of Directors allows CVH to be in full compliance with Charities Regulator Governance Code. CVH's dedicated staff are passionate about securing the best possible outcomes for victims both through direct support of CVH service users and the support they provide to volunteers. I also want to extend special thanks to CVH patron, retired District Court judge Gillian Hussey, who is an outspoken advocate for both the organisation and for victims of crime.

The Department of Justice under the leadership of Minister McEntee has continued to generously support of the work of CVH. The Dormant Accounts Fund provided CVH with the means to improve our website in 2021. I am extremely grateful to both.



MICHELE PUCKHABER

Executive Director



ABOUT THE CRIME VICTIMS HELPLINE

The Crime Victims Helpline, established in 2005, is a confidential national helpline service providing information and support to victims of crime and others impacted by crime. Services are provided over our 116 006 helpline, text, and email.

Our volunteers and staff are trained to understand the effects of crime and provide emotional support to people struggling to cope and recover after being victimized. Helpline volunteers are well versed in Garda and court procedures and provide information to callers who are navigating the criminal justice system. We can also inform victims about their rights and explore options for compensation.

The Crime Victims Helpline serves as a gateway for victims to the large number of face-to-face and specialised services available to crime victims in Ireland.



**Crime Victims
Helpline.ie**

Freephone 116006

2021 OVERVIEW

In 2021, CVH activities were focused on responding to the changes brought about by the Covid pandemic both in the types of crimes affecting our service users and the evolving needs of victims.

Meeting with Minister McEntee

One of the highlights of 2021 was a meeting between Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber, then CVH Chairperson Brendan Lynott and the Minister for Justice, Helen McEntee and her team. The work of the Crime Victims Helpline and the state of victim support services across Ireland were discussed. Ms. Puckhaber highlighted the gaps that exist in face-to-face supports across Ireland and provided positive feedback about the Department of Justice's outreach to victims of domestic abuse.

CrimeVictimsHelpline.ie

CVH received special, designated funding from the Department of Justice and the Dormant Accounts Fund for a new website. It is imperative victims can find the information they need when they need it. Crimevictimshelpline.ie seeks to provide a one stop shop for anyone looking for information that is relevant to victims of crime.

Through a competitive tendering process, Point Blank was chosen for the project due to their understanding of the need to bring the three elements of CVH's services—emotional support; information about the criminal justice system, crime victims rights and compensation; and victim support services across Ireland—into a user friendly and accessible website.

Research conducted by Point Blank revealed that 75% of people accessing crimevictimshelpline.ie were doing so on a mobile device so the new site was optimized for mobile viewing. The Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) defines requirements for designers and developers to improve accessibility for people with disabilities. The new Crime Victims Helpline website achieves a WCAG 2.0 level AA.

A key feature of the new site is a searchable database of services. Ireland has over 70 organisations who have a role in supporting victims of crime and it isn't always easy to find the right one. The searchable database offers an uncomplicated way for people to find the services and supports that are available to them. People are of course still always welcome to contact us over email, text or phone for guidance and information on victim support services.

Training

Ongoing and relevant training is a key component of providing top quality services to victims of crime.

LGBT Ireland provided a two-part training for volunteers and staff on how to best meet the needs of service users from the LGBTQ community. The training focused on general awareness and issues uniquely impacting victims of crime from the LGBTQ community -both general crime as well as hate crime.

CVH saw a significant increase in 2020 and 2021 in the number of people contacting us about cybercrime. The types of crimes committed online were broad including fraud, extortion, theft and harassment. In response, CVH created an internal training with the aim of educating volunteers and staff about the wide variety of cybercrimes we hear about the helpline. The training covered the basics of cybercrime including cryptocurrency, romance scams, sextortion, sales fraud and included the resources and supports that are available for victims.

Advancing the rights of victims

CVH is a member of the Victims Rights Alliance, a loose coalition of Irish victim support and civil rights organisations working to ensure the full implementation of the EU Victims' Rights Directive and the Victims of Crime Act (2017). On the EU level, CVH is an active member of Victim Support Europe, a membership organisation devoted to strengthening the rights and services for all victims of crime in Europe.

116 006 Centre of Excellence

The phone number 116 006 is an EU-wide number for victims of crime. In thirteen* member states, if you dial 116 006, you will be connected to the victim support service for that country. CVH runs the 116 006 number in Ireland.

Victim Support Europe organise an EU-funded annual meeting of 116 006 helpline operators. The meetings moved online during the pandemic but returned in person with a meeting in Brussels at the end of 2021. The countries with 116 006 helplines are diverse and unique, but the challenges posed by the Covid pandemic were remarkably similar. It was inspiring to hear of the innovative ways that we all came up with to maintain services to continue to meet the needs of victims of crime.

*Austria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Netherlands, Portugal, and Sweden

Restorative Justice

CVH believes that victims of crime deserve as much choice and empowerment as possible. To achieve this aim, CVH is active in the sphere of restorative justice and working to centre victims and their voices in restorative practice in Ireland.

Executive Director, Michele Puckhaber is a member of the steering committee for Le Chéile Restorative Justice Project Limerick. CVH Director and volunteer, Eileen Brady, works closely with Restorative Justice Services Dublin and contributes the victim's perspective on the Board of Directors and as part of restorative practices with offenders.

Ms. Puckhaber was invited to contribute to a panel organised by Probation Services as part of Restorative Justice Week. Following an online viewing of the play "Stronger" whose story is loosely based on real events, webinar participants heard from those involved in the writing and production, as well as experts in the field of victim support and restorative practice.

An Garda Síochana Training and Outreach

An Garda Síochana is an important partner and stakeholder in CVH's work. Information about the Crime Victims Helpline is provided to all victims of crime by the Gardaí both through the Garda "calling cards" as well as in letters that are sent by Garda Victim Service Offices to injured parties in reported incidents. Despite this, not every Garda member or staff are aware of the services provides by CVH.

In partnership with the national Garda Victim Liaison Unit, packets of information about CVH were sent to every Garda station in the country. The packets included CVH posters, pens and other information about our services.

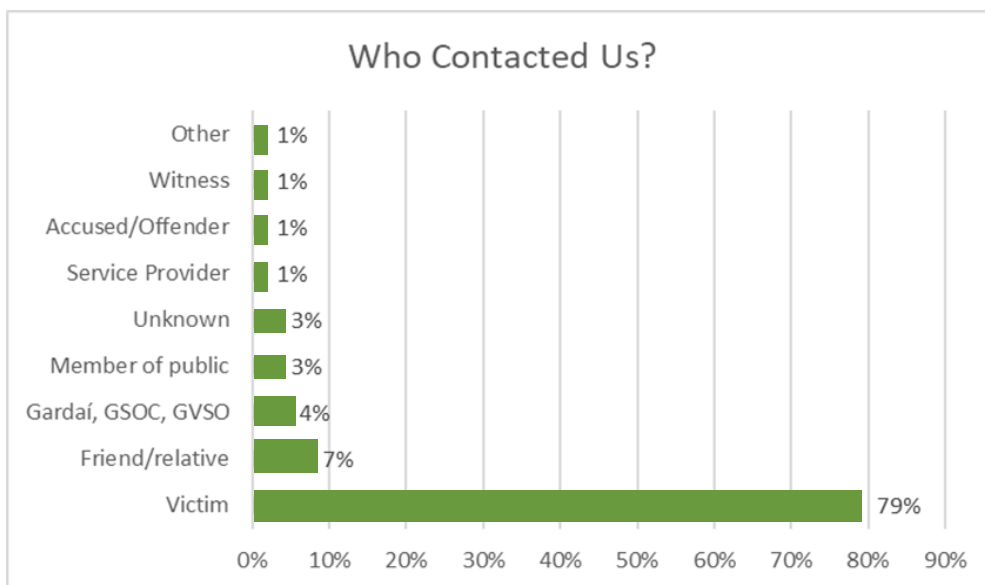
CVH visited the Garda Training College at Templemore to record a segment about our services for an upcoming online Garda training module on victims. Creating awareness amongst Gardaí about the rights of victims is a crucial step in ensuring access to those rights. CVH looks forward to the release of the training module as it is imperative for Gardaí to be fully trained on the rights and needs of victims.

"The first time we fail victims is when the crime happens; our primary duty therefore is to prevent the crime from taking place. But once we fail in that, we need to empower and support victims and make sure that they feel heard and believed. This does not mean that each crime needs to end in placing the offender behind bars, but each victim must receive the respect and recognition they deserve, and the support they need."
Aleksandra Ivankovich, Victim Support Europe

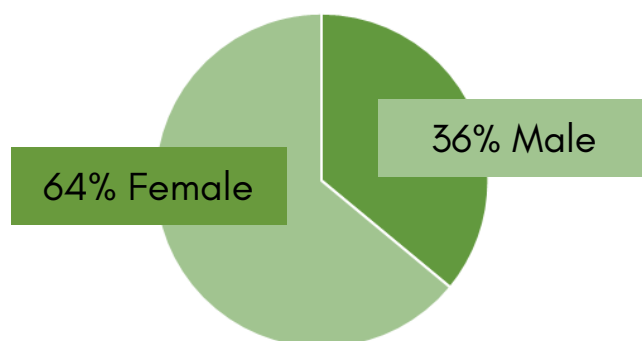
HOW WE HELPED

In 2021, CVH recorded 4,967 contacts with service users, similar to figures from 2020. Between 2016 and 2021, the number of contacts to CVH increased by 21%, which reflects the continued strong demand for CVH services.

The majority of contacts (79%) came directly from victims of crime, with a further 7% coming from friends/relatives of victims. 4% of contacts came from Gardaí, GSOC or Garda Victim Service Offices, while members of the public comprised 3% of contacts. CVH welcomes contact from anyone who is seeking emotional support, information about the criminal justice system, and/or referrals to local or specialist support services.



CVH records the gender of the person contacting us if they self-identify but we do not generally ask for this information or make assumptions about the gender of a service user. An exception to this is in relation to domestic violence where separate services exist for men and women. In 2021, 64% of service users identified as female while 36% identified as male.



The vast majority of service users (80%) contacted CVH via phone. This represents a 4% increase compared to 2020, which perhaps indicates growing awareness of the 116 006 freephone number. Emails (including those sent through the CVH website) were the second most popular means of contact at 13%, followed by texts at 5%. In line with 2020 statistics, post remained the least frequent means of contact at 2%. Post was usually used by CVH to send leaflets to service users at their request. We sent post on 75 occasions.

While service users usually contact CVH in relation to a number of issues, the CVH team member records just one primary purpose of contact. There are nine categories to choose from as captured in the table below. In 2021, 34% of contacts pertained to Emotional Support, 26% pertained to Follow-up (namely further contacts made to service users who request them) while 22% of contacts sought information regarding the Criminal Justice System. This contrasts to 2020 where information regarding the Criminal Justice System ranked as the most frequent primary purpose of contact. (Note: due to rounding of decimal places, the figures in the table below do not fully add to 100%).

Primary Purpose of Contact	Percentage of Contacts
Emotional Support	34%
Follow-up	26%
Info re: Criminal Justice System	22%
Other	7%
Referrals to Other Services	6%
Info re: Compensation	2%
Ongoing Safety Concerns	2%
Requesting CVH Materials	<1%

Similar to previous years, assault and harassment were the main types of crime that CVH was contacted about. These crimes constituted a smaller percentage of total contacts in 2021 compared to the previous year. 535 contacts pertained to assault (11% of total contacts) in 2021 compared to 655 (13% of total contacts) in 2020. 456 contacts (9% of total contacts) related to harassment in 2021 compared to 676 in 2020 (13% of total contacts).

2021 witnessed an increase in contacts relating to cybercrime. In 2021, there were 86 contacts pertaining to fraud committed online, while 54 contacts related to online harassment. This reflects the rising prevalence (and sophistication) of crime in the digital era, in addition to the displacement of crime from the real to virtual world during the global pandemic.

People do not always disclose the crime they have been impacted by and we also receive contacts from people who are not victims of crime such as those looking for support or advice around civil or family law matters. We assist these service users by making referrals to the appropriate resources.

LGBTQ Hate Crime and Racist Hate Crime recorded percentage increases of 29% and 23% respectively (albeit from low base figures). Crimes related to domestic violence decreased dramatically, but this most likely reflects the large spike in domestic abuse related contacts in 2020 rather than a large decrease in the crime itself.

Type of crime	Number of contacts
Assault	535
Harassment	456
Criminal Damage	133
Rape/Sexual Assault	111
Theft	110
Fraud - ONLINE	86
Fraud	82
Child Abuse (Historic)	80
Burglary	78
Antisocial Behaviour	56
Harassment - ONLINE	54
Road Traffic Accident	49
Coercive Control	39
Threats to Harm/Kill	39
Stalking	30
Non-Consensual Sharing Intimate Photos	29
Robbery	29
Extortion	24
Blackmail	14
Homicide	13
Arson	11
Car Theft	11
Possession/Sharing of Child Abuse Images	11
Child Abuse (Recent)	10
Human Trafficking	4
Abduction	2

Motivation	Number of contacts in 2020	Number of contacts in 2021	Percentage increase/decrease
Domestic abuse	326	205	(37%)
LGBTQ Hate Crime	7	9	29%
Racist Hate Crime	22	27	23%

CVH is a national helpline and it is a priority that we are known and accessible to service users all across the Republic of Ireland. Not all service users disclose their location to us – in 2021, just 36% of contacts disclosed the county in which they were living. Confidentiality and anonymity are a priority for many of our service users so this number is not unexpected. While the figures are therefore not fully representative, they are nevertheless useful in identifying the geographical distribution of our contacts.

In line with previous years, the percentage of CVH contacts was mostly proportionate to the population distribution across Ireland. However, Dublin, Cork, Meath and Wicklow were overrepresented in our statistics while Galway was slightly underrepresented. In relation to Cork in particular, whereas contacts from this county were underrepresented by 5.5% last year, they were overrepresented by 10% this year.

County	Percentage of CVH Contacts	Percentage of ROI Population
Dublin	39%	28%
Cork	21%	11.5%
Meath	8%	4%
Wicklow	8%	3%
Galway	3%	5.5%
Kildare	3%	4%
Clare	2%	3%
Donegal	2%	3%
Kerry	2%	2%
Limerick	2%	3%
Louth	2%	5%
Mayo	2%	2%
Waterford	2%	1%
Wexford	2%	2.5%
Carlow	1%	2%
Cavan	1%	2%
Kilkenny	1%	1%
Laois	1%	3%
Leitrim	1%	1%
Monaghan	1%	1%
Offaly	1%	2%
Roscommon	1%	1%
Sligo	1%	2.5%
Tipperary	1%	3%
Westmeath	1%	3%
Longford	<1%	1%

It is also worth noting that 3% of CVH contacts came from international locations. A portion of international contacts are from people who were victims of crime in Ireland (often historical abuse) and are now living elsewhere (often the UK). We are also contacted by international victims with no connection to Ireland and in those situations we do our best to connect them with the appropriate services in their country. Due to the strong connections between victim support organisations within the EU, we are able to identify services for most EU-based victims.

In 2021, CVH made a total of 2,213 referrals to over 52 different organisations, supports and resources. This illustrates the wide-ranging and diverse needs of those affected by crime. Similar to 2020, the most frequent referral was to the Garda Victim Service Offices. Since their establishment in 2015, these offices have become hugely valuable to victims of crime. It is notable that whereas 96 referrals were made to counselling services in 2020, we made 194 such referrals in 2021 (a 102% increase).

CVH provides ongoing training, education and updates to staff members and volunteers to ensure that we are always fully aware of the various resources and supports available to our service users.

Resource	Number of referrals
GVSO	720
Gardaí	412
Free Legal Advice Centre (FLAC)	193
Counselling General	123
Garda Ombudsman (GSOC)	80
Counselling In Primary Care	71
GP	68
Domestic Violence Services/National Helpline	67
Other	51
Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal (CICT)	43
Rape Crisis/National Helpline	31
Homeless/Housing Services	31
Support After Crime	29
Victim Assistance	29
Samaritans	26
Victim Support at Court (VSAC)	24
Local Representative/Local Authority/County Council	23
Director Public Prosecutions, Victim Liaison Unit	20
iReport/Immigrant Council/INAR/Migrant Rights Centre	17
One in Four	17
DEASP/Intreo	13
Men's Aid/Male Advice Line	15
Citizens Information	11
Sage Advocacy	10
Connect Counselling	10
Pieta House	8
Irish Prison Service/Irish Probation Service	8
International Victim Support Organisations	7
Crisis Textline	7
Parentline	7
Seniorline	6
CARI	5
Advic/Support After Homicide	6
Care After Prison	3
Patient Advocacy Service	3
National Advocacy Service for People with Disabilities	3
Workplace Relations Commission	3
LGBT Ireland	6
St Vincent DePaul	3
IRVA	3
ITAS	1
TOTAL	2,213

2021 FINANCES

CRIME VICTIMS HELPLINE (A Company Limited by Guarantee)

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021 €	2020 €
Current assets		
Debtors: amounts falling due within one year	806	799
Cash at bank and in hand	37,979	45,009
	-----	-----
	38,785	45,808
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	(8,867)	(7,901)
	-----	-----
Net current assets	29,918	37,907
	-----	-----
Total assets less current liabilities	29,918	37,907
Deferred Income	(9,853)	(20,037)
	-----	-----
Net assets	20,065	17,870
	=====	=====
Reserves		
Income & expenditure account	20,065	17,870
	-----	-----
Members' funds	20,065	17,870
	=====	=====

2021 FINANCES

CRIME VICTIMS HELPLINE
(A Company Limited by Guarantee)
Statement of Comprehensive Income

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2021

	2021 €	2020 €
Income		
Grant Income	121,000	141,000
Donations & other	867	1,348
Deferred income	10,184	(14,709)
	<u>132,051</u>	<u>127,639</u>
GROSS INCOME		
	2021 €	2020 €
Administration expenses		
Staff salaries	80,623	77,411
Employer's social insurance contributions	8,080	7,865
Employer's contributions to staff pensions	1,802	-
Awareness Raising	6,041	799
Bank charges	172	308
Computer costs	4,239	2,589
Conference & meetings	-	60
General office expenses	2,695	1,948
Insurances	1,389	1,117
Interpretation & Translation	260	172
Legal and professional	307	160
Postage	346	400
Sundry expenses	200	25
Telephone	10,050	12,853
Training and memberships	1,422	559
Travel and subsistence	201	279
Auditors' remuneration	1,845	1,815
Dormant Fund Project	10,184	10,291
	<u>129,856</u>	<u>118,651</u>
Surplus for the financial year	€2,195	€8,988

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Michael Tyndall, Chairperson
Eileen Brady, Company Secretary
Clare Cresswell (joined 2022)
Tony Hickey (resigned 2021)
Susan Leahy (joined 2022)
Brendan Lynott (resigned 2021)
Naoise Kelly
Simon Treanor

Crime Victims Helpline is committed to having the highest standards of good governance. Directors are independently elected and no Director receives any remuneration whatsoever for their service.

The trust and support of the community are not something that we take for granted. Any queries in relation to the governance of Crime Victims Helpline can be directed to info@crimevictimshelpline.ie.

STAFF

Michele Puckhaber
Executive Director

Ciara Molloy
Service Coordinator

Marie Murray
Volunteer Coordinator

CHARITY & COMPANY INFORMATION

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

Company Limited by Guarantee 409235

Registered Office
6/7 Hanover Street East, D02 W320

The Crime Victims Helpline is supported by



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Department of Justice



ciste na
gcuntas díomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund