



VICTIM ASSISTANCE NEWS

A welcome message from our Chairperson



It is with great pleasure that we introduce our first [Victim Assistance](#) newsletter since moving to our new and expanded Head Office at Kiltimagh, Co. Mayo.

Over the coming months, our newsletters will give an outline of our strategy and will map out our plans for [Victim Assistance](#), while acknowledging the long tradition of our core values to all our victims, providing practical and emotional support.

Covid-19 has changed the way we all have to think and in [Victim Assistance](#) we will continue to challenge ourselves to provide even greater support to victims and organisations in the months ahead.

Our function is to advocate on behalf of all victims of crime irrespective of race, colour, religion, sexuality or ethnic background, and we will continue to do so to the best of our ability.

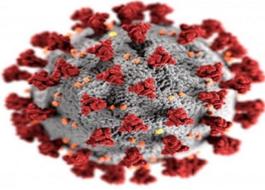
I wish to express gratitude to my fellow volunteers in [Victim Assistance](#), and to our national office team for their continued support, encouragement and dedicated work on behalf of all victims of crime.

For information on our support services, please visit our [website](#).

Is mise le meas,

TOMÁS Ó BRÓDIE
Cathaoirleach

FREephone 1800 277 477



COVID-19 - we are available

As a national charity that offers “**emotional**” and “**practical**” support to all victims of crime and those and their families that have experienced a “**traumatic**” incident, we want to reassure all concerned that we are committed to continuing our services to those that need us. All through the Government “lockdown”, **our office remained open** and our volunteers **were always** available to meet victims that needed our support.

As we are coming out of the “lockdown” and are slowly re-opening Business and Society, it’s important that everyone keeps to the return-to-work guidelines. For a list of these guidelines, please visit the following websites:

Government:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/a5af3-daily-briefing-on-the-governments-response-to-covid-19-thursday-11-june-2020/>

H.S.E

<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/returning-to-work-safely.html>



OFFICE/Drop-in-Centre at Kiltimagh Co Mayo

Originally, our Head Office was situated in Tralee, Co. Kerry. In November 2018, we closed Tralee and moved to a new Head Office located in the Enterprise Centre, Kiltimagh, Co Mayo.

Patrick (Pa) McNicholas was appointed as our new Administrator along with Michael O’Connor as National Coordinator. In January of 2020, Mary McNicholas joined the office administration team.

Our new office incorporates an adequate working area for our staff along with a meeting area where **confidential** meetings can be held with victims in total **privacy**.

For anyone in need of our services, please note the following contact details:

Victim Assistance

Enterprise House, Aiden Street Kiltimagh Co Mayo F12 A7P1

T: 094 9000251 E: support@victimassistance.ie W: www.victimassistance.ie

FREEPHONE 1800 277 477



European Victims of Crime Day 22nd February at Knock

Every year across the EU, approx. 1 in 7 people fall victim to crime and to remember those victims, February 22nd has been designated European Victim of Crime Day across the EU.

To commemorate this special day, on Sunday, February 23rd, we held a special Mass in the Basilica at Knock, celebrated by Fr. Richard Gibbons, P.P. Over 2500 people joined with us including representatives of the Gardai, Prison Service, Medical Response, Politicians, County Counsellors, Legal Services and other NGO's making it a memorable occasion which was followed by light refreshments afterwards in the Rest and Care Centre at Knock.



Membership and Partners

To enable our organisation, offer a comprehensive and professional service to our victims, we are continually reaching out and educating ourselves.

We are now affiliated with [Victim Support Europe](#) and [Victim Support Northern Ireland](#) and can now offer a European perspective to all victims. We also work with organisations such as [LGBT Ireland](#), [Migrants Rights Centre Ireland](#), and [Irish Network Against Racism](#) to ensure we are up to date on all issues concerning victims of crime or those that experienced a traumatic incident as a result. To ensure we maintain a high standard of governance and professionalism, we recently joined as members of [Charities Institute Ireland](#).



We are looking for fundraisers

We would love to talk to anyone that would be interested in taking part in a fundraiser on our behalf. It could be anything - a sponsored Coffee morning, Sky-dive, Cycle, Cake sale etc. If you are interested in discussing your fundraising idea with us, please go to our fundraiser page at <https://victimassistance.ie/fundraising/>



Domestic Violence incidents increased by 25%

Garda statistics recently indicated that the number of calls for help relating to domestic violence **increased 25% this year** while more than 100 people were charged in the last two weeks of May as part of a new crackdown on violence in the home.

As an organisation dedicated to supporting “victims of crime”, we have seen a surge in the number of victims of “domestic violence” contacting our helpline. With Covid-19, restrictions in movement forced people to spend more time at home leading to a surge in domestic abuse cases, not just in Ireland but in countries around the world. Such is the surge that the [UNITED NATIONS](#) has called on Governments to take urgent action to combat the worldwide surge in domestic violence.

Thankfully, our Government has heeded the call and The Minister for Social Protection, Regina Doherty, revealed changes to make rent supplement available more easily to victims of domestic violence. Under these new rules, victims of domestic violence can get immediate access to rent supplement for a three month period to ensure they are not prevented from leaving their home because of financial concerns.

The usual means test will not apply for this three month period. The process will work based on referrals from [Tusla](#)-funded services; [An Garda Síochána](#) and the [HSE](#). After the three-month period, a further three-month extension may be provided, subject to the usual rent supplement means assessment. After six months, if the tenant has a long term housing need, they can apply to their local housing authority for social housing supports and, if eligible, will be able to access HAP.



Midlands Regional Launch

We held a very successful launch of our Midland Region Unit, in the Bridge House Hotel, Tullamore, on the 01st July 2019 where we were joined by representatives of the Gardai, County Counsellors, Legal services, members of the media along with new and existing volunteers from the region.

Our Chairperson, Tom Brophy, addressed the attendees and outlined our strategy going forward and our plans for support services in the Midlands area.



VA Volunteer Training Workshop

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our organisation and we are always looking for more to join with us. You do not need any special qualifications as we will train you – all you need to be is a good listener!

To ensure our new and existing volunteers have the most up-to-date training when dealing with victims of crime, as part of our affiliation in Europe, we joined with [Victim Support Northern Ireland](#) to combine our training programme with theirs to ensure we had the most up to date training and support structure to deal with all victims of crime across the island.

Our first volunteer training session of 2020 was held in the Great Northern Hotel, Bundoran, Co Donegal on the 20th of January and we were delighted to have had **Jolena Flett**, Head of Services at [Victim Support Northern Ireland](#) to conduct the training on our behalf. We had planned additional volunteer training days in February, March, and April at locations in New Ross, Tullamore, Cavan, Galway and Kerry but with Covid-19, we have had to defer until later in the year. We will be notifying all those that applied to become volunteers with us of the new dates and locations in due course.



LGBT Ireland Training

As part of our charities drive to ensure our new and existing volunteers have the most up-to-date training when dealing with victims, our office staff along with Chairperson, Tom Brophy, attended two virtual training workshops hosted by [LGBT Ireland](#) Training Coordinator Colette O'Regan, aimed at enhancing our awareness and understanding of the issues experienced by LGBT people and their family members.

The training was excellent and it is our intention to introduce it as a module into our new volunteer training programme to ensure our new and existing volunteers have the confidence and knowledge to engage with any victim who identifies as being part of the LGBT community.



Help us reach our goal of €5,000

In these strange times, we are one of many charities looking for funding from the public. We are part-funded by the **Department of Justice** but with increased demand for our services and limited opportunity to fundraise due to **COVID-19** restrictions, we are asking the public for their help. The more funds raised means that we can continue providing support to people that need our services. To help raise much-needed funds, we have set up a **GoFundMe** page with the goal of raising €5,000. For anyone interested in donating through this page, they can do so by visiting <https://www.gofundme.com/f/federation-for-victim-assistance>



Interpol issues a global threat assessment

With **COVID-19** drastically changing the law enforcement landscape, **INTERPOL** has issued a global threat assessment on crime and policing to its 194 member countries. The report, which is for law enforcement only, draws on expertise and knowledge from police in countries already dealing with **COVID-19** related issues and will be regularly updated as new threats emerge. It outlines the 'crime lifecycle' to help law enforcement in countries which are now being affected, and identifies the challenges facing police across different regions, as well as best practice and measures to mitigate the effects of **COVID-19** related crimes.

Among the evolving threats outlined in the report:

- Marked increase of cyber threats including malicious domains, malware and ransomware
- Health service providers and essential products outlets increasingly targeted as critical infrastructure
- Fraudulent and counterfeit trade in personal protective equipment (PPE) and anti-viral pharmaceuticals
- Increased drug commerce via social media, encrypted apps and the Darknet
- Individuals and businesses on reduced incomes potential targets of loan sharks

The report also includes exclusive insights by police chiefs from around the world, ensuring information is shared directly by those currently shaping and implementing national law enforcement responses. For more on this article, please visit: <https://www.interpol.int/en/News-and-Events/News/2020/Preventing-crime-and-protecting-police-INTERPOL-s-COVID-19-global-threat-assessment>



Awards - Mayo People of the Year & Irish Red Cross

As an acknowledgement of our services to victims, last year, our longest serving volunteers, Chairperson, Tom Brophy and National Coordinator, Michael O'Connor, who have over 30 years' service each, were recipients of two special awards in recognition of their long-term service supporting victims of crime.

Well deserved honours for two dedicated and unselfish people who for over 30 years, have given up their evenings and weekends travelling the length and breadth of the country, offering support and assistance to victims.

Our thanks to *Rehabcare, Connaught Telegraph, Mayo County Council* and the *Irish red Cross* for acknowledging Tom and Michael for their great work.



Emergency accommodation: free for victims of domestic violence

Safe Ireland and *Women's Aid* have announced they are partnering with *Airbnb* to offer safe emergency accommodation for women and their families who are victims of domestic violence. *Safe Ireland* will co-ordinate the initiative with its frontline services and support from the Women's Aid national freephone helpline.

This is a welcome initiative as there is a reduced capacity of specialist accommodation available to victims and their families by approx. 25% due to Covid-19 safe social distancing restrictions.

The emergency accommodation will be available through *Airbnb* free-of-charge when specialist emergency accommodation is not available.

Catherine Gleeson, the Communications Manager with *Safe Ireland* said "the pandemic has shone a light onto the epidemic of domestic violence in Ireland. It has also sparked an incredible outpouring of empathy, understanding and support for survivors trapped with abusers".

Women's Aid helpline: 1800 341 900



Migrants Rights Centre Ireland

We are delighted to be associated with [M.R.C.I.](#) (Migrants Rights Centre Ireland).

[M.R.C.I.](#) is a national organisation working for justice, empowerment and equality for migrants and their families. Since inception, they have supported migrant workers, documented racism on our streets and at our borders, won landmark victories for domestic workers, victims of forced labour, students, undocumented workers and their families.

If you would like to hear more about the work of [M.R.C.I.](#) or would consider joining a campaign to support migrants, please visit <https://www.mrci.ie/contact-us/>



Irish Network Against Racism

Racism raised its ugly head again with the tragic death of George Floyd in the US some weeks ago. Dictionary.com defines Racism as:

- a belief or doctrine that inherent differences among the various human racial groups determine cultural or individual achievement, usually involving the idea that one's own race is superior and has the right to dominate others or that a particular racial group is inferior to the others.
- a policy, system of government, etc., based upon or fostering such a doctrine; discrimination.
- hatred or intolerance of another race or other races.

As part of the national network of anti-racism civil society organisations, we fully endorse and support the work that is being done by the [Irish Network Against Racism](#) team in combating racism and all related forms of discrimination in every sphere of life in Ireland. To understand Racism and how to combat it, they have produced a number of booklets and reports that can be downloaded at <https://inar.ie/racism-in-ireland/learn-about-racism/> .

If you have been affected by Racism, you can report it to [iReport.ie](#). [iReport.ie](#) (**Racist Incident Reporting System**), is [I.N.A.R's](#) flagship project and was launched in July 2013. It allows the people, communities, and organisations to confidentially report racism in Ireland from any online device. The iReport smartphone app can be downloaded to both iPhone and Android phones at <https://inar.ie/ireport-app-to-report-racism/>

VICTIMS CHARTER

Victims Charter

In February of this year, the Department of Justice launched the "Victims Charter". It is a guide that describes the criminal justice system from a crime victim's point of view. It sets out a victim's rights and entitlements to the services offered by the various state agencies working with crime victims.

The charter is divided into a number of sections dealing with the *Gardai, Garda Ombudsman Commission, Courts Service, Office of the DPP, Prison Service, Oberstown Children Detention Campus, National Forensic Mental Health Service, Probation Service, Legal Aid Board, Coroner, Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal, Department of Foreign Affairs, Victims* and the Law along with a list of Victim Support Services (which includes the details of *Victim Assistance*). A copy of the Charter can be downloaded from their website at <http://www.victimsofcrimeoffice.ie/en/vco/Pages/WP10000006>



Sign up to our Newsletter

Stay connected to us by signing up to receive our newsletter. You will not be spammed, and you will get to see how your support helps! By clicking on the Newsletter sign up button you will be brought to our "**Contact Us**" page. Scroll to the bottom to find our **Newsletter Sign Up**



Coming in our next Newsletter...

- Our "**5 MILLION steps in our Walk to Freedom**" fundraising event.
- Our proposed **Autumn Volunteer training** dates and venues.
- Our upcoming fundraising **Concert**.
- Our upcoming fundraising **National Draw**.
- Date and location for our **2020 A.G.M.** (deferred due to Covid-19)
- Date and location of our **National Crime Awareness Event**.
- Profile of a **Victim Assistance Volunteer**
- **Testimonial from a victim** supported by Victim Assistance