
Dignity 4 Patients

Executive Directors Report

Executive Directors Address



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“When I was in the depths of despair, I got enormous support and heartfelt sympathy...really helped me through one of the most difficult times of my life.”

“It’s good to know there is someone to talk to who understands what we have gone through.”

Mission Statement

Dignity 4 Patients mission is the relief of mental and physical distress of people who have experienced trauma, in particular sexual trauma, whilst a patient in any medical and/or therapeutic setting through the provision of support and advocacy services, information and education and to protect patients from sexual trauma by highlighting this potential risk to patients and using our expertise in the implementation of effective preventative strategies.

Executive Director's Message

Dignity4Patients understand how patients may be vulnerable to sexual abuse by some health care providers and also fellow patients. With better resourcing Dignity4Patients would be enabled to advocate for patient protection from sexual abuse on a national level.

In 2018 Dignity4Patients overcame many challenges in fulfilling its mission to provide support services to patient victims of sexual abuse. We increased our support, advocacy and information service to clients and further improved service administration & management.

Our client's wellbeing and safety remains central to our work. In 2018 our concerns for our clients grew, particularly for those most vulnerable and at risk. Demand for our services has always far exceeded the level of service available through statutory funding. For a long number of years I have met this shortfall by working above and beyond what could be reasonably expected of any one person. This practise cannot be continued after 2018.

Providing services to people who suffer patient sexual abuse is complex, challenging and has many inherent difficulties. These difficulties have been insidiously compounded by long term underfunding and resulting understaffing of Dignity4Patients. These difficulties are also compounded by the welcome but ever increasing need for reporting, governance and regulation necessary for transparency and accountability of the charity sector.

At the end of 2018 Dignity4Patients submitted a comprehensive application to the HSE for increased levels of HSE funding in an effort to address this shortfall in funding of patient victim services. We await the HSE's response.

Patient Safety Concerns

In Dignity4Patients we continue to be concerned that the restrictive terms and conditions of the Dignity4Patients/HSE Grant Aid Agreement is negatively impacting on some of our client's wellbeing and safety, impacting negatively on patient victims outside this funding agreement and general patient protection from sexual violence.

We will continue to seek positive engagement with health authorities in an effort to improve client services, address funding levels, terms and conditions and the need to properly address the issue of sexual violence in the Health Service. This current unacceptable situation has gone on for too long. I would like to thank all who have supported us in our work throughout 2018 and who have enabled us to continue supporting our clients especially our funders namely the HSE, CSVG and all who donated to our services or assisted with fundraising activities.

Achievements and Highlights of 2018

In Two thousand and eighteen (2018) Dignity4Patients supported **two hundred and twenty nine (229)** patient victims and their families through our support, advocacy and information services. Court Accompaniment services were also provided to **forty six (46)** persons in this client group. Services were provided to **four (4)** new clients who fell under current HSE Grant Aid Agreement but services could not be provided to **six (6)** patients who requested our service but who did not fall under the terms of this agreement. Significant progress was made in developing administration, management and governance systems and implementation. Development included data management review and update (GDPR Regulation came into force 25th May 2018), data disclosure, child protection reporting to Tusla, regulation and governance. Set up, development and training was required in a number of these areas. Dignity4Patients succeeded in meeting these challenging administration processes and at the same time increased the number of clients assisted during 2018 (See graph below). This is a noteworthy achievement especially in light of further staff reduction and increased compliance obligations. This achievement highlights the benefit of the service efficiencies implemented by management in the preceding years. Staff continuity is essential to this progress.

Client Services

Individual client advocacy services were provided to our clients in 2018. However funding levels and conditions continue to prevent Dignity4Patients advocating for our client's collective needs. Also, it is not possible to provide for the collective needs of patient victims and patient protection from sexual abuse on a national level. Lack of agreed follow up engagement by the Department of Health with Dignity4Patients, since a meeting in January 2016, is keenly felt by many patient victims.

Legal advocacy in criminal and civil cases throughout the year of 2018 was continued and clients were kept informed and supported during difficult legal processes.

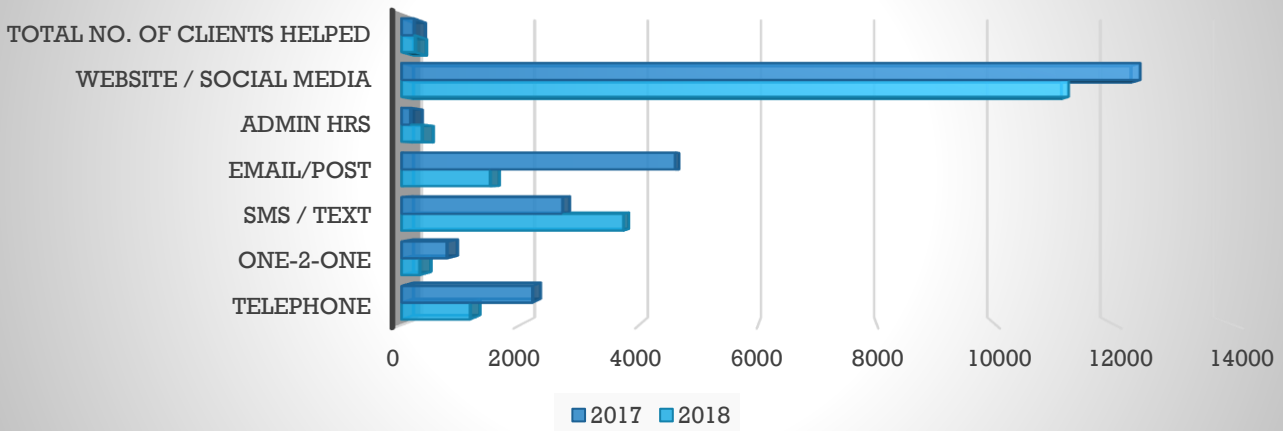
Disclosure

During the latter part of 2018 a wide-ranging volume of work was completed to meet further disclosure requests in a number of high profile criminal cases.

Medical Council

Dignity4Patients has provided further support to clients in the complex complaints processes and fitness to practice inquiries with the Medical Council. In 2018 **five (5)** clients have benefited from the support of the Dignity4Patients advocacy and support team.

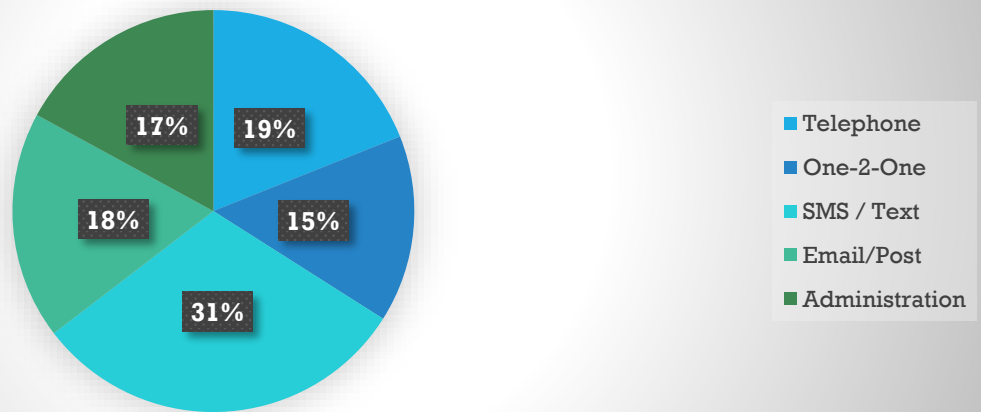
2018 - Year on Year Comparison



*Note: Increase in **Admin Hrs** due to implementation of GDPR regulation, managing disclosure and discovery obligations for legal cases, Initiating Child Protection Reporting Processes etc. This resulted in reduction in some areas of client work. However the number of clients assisted increased in 2018. No' of Clients supported in 2018 was **229**.

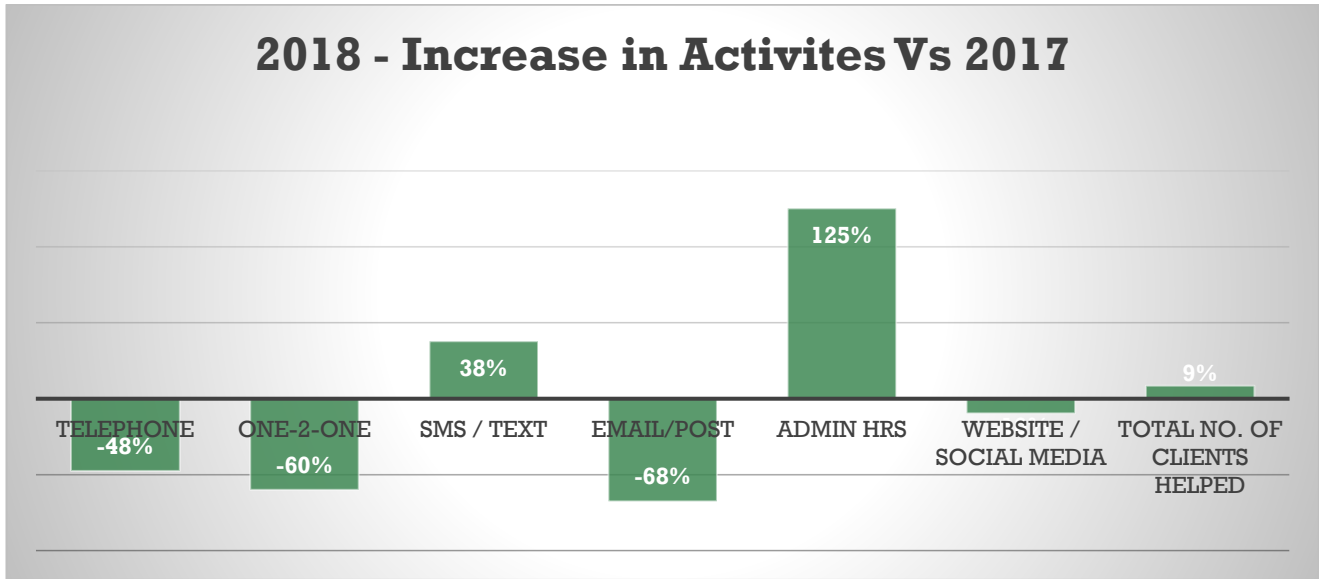
Our core client interactions over 2018 were split in the following areas:-

2018 - Activities Comparison



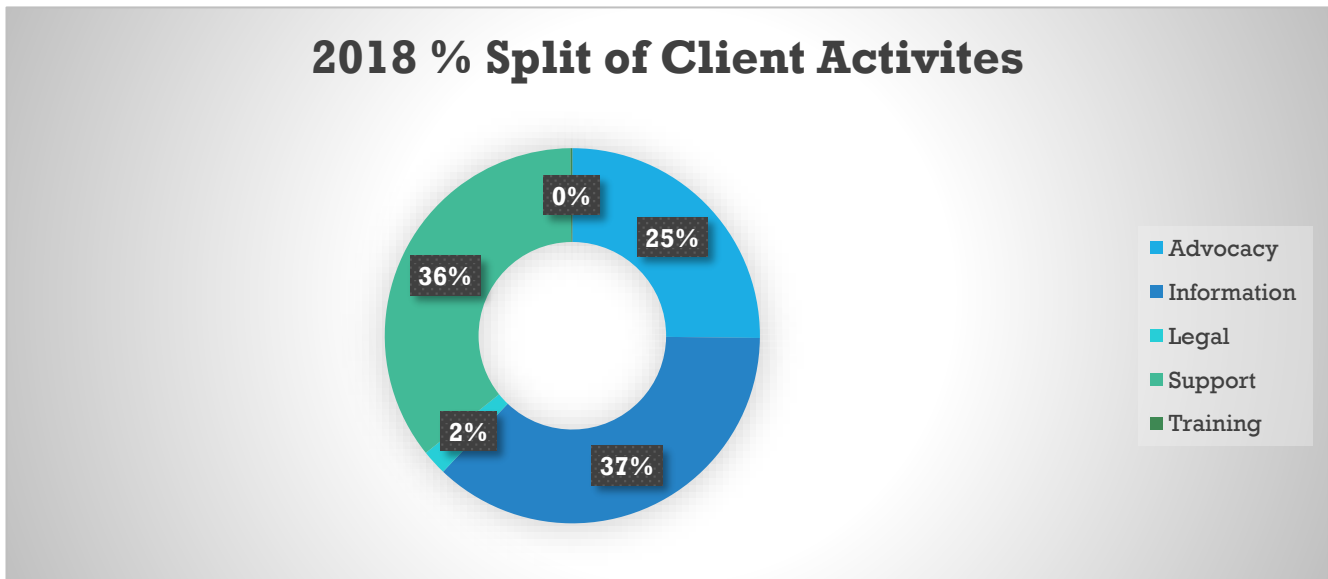
*Note: **Admin Hrs** included in the 2018 chart above increased by 125% compared to 2017. Due to the reduction in staff in 2018 and the increase in Admin Hrs work in other areas reduced.

In fulfilling our mission statement Dignity4Patients provided support, advocacy and information services to **229** out of **344** clients throughout 2018. These services were provided as listed in the graph below:-



Note: All core service activities with the exception of our Text service are down on 2017 figures. With reduced staff and increased administration demands it was necessary to change our method of client contact to text message communication, where suitable. However, the number of individuals engaging with Dignity4Patients **increased to 229 clients of our 344 Clients.*

Area of activities where most hours were spent supporting Clients:-



Note: **Advocacy in chart above includes provision of services in criminal and civil legal processes, Medical Council processes and other areas (Social Welfare etc). Training included refers to external training. However, internal staff training and supervision is required and provided on an ongoing daily basis.*

We provided information on counselling support and other support services referring to counselling and other services and supported our clients in their many areas of difficulties during 2018. Dignity4Patients also provided information on reporting options to civil and criminal authorities where appropriate.

Governance & Policy Development

With the additional governance now required Dignity4Patients management and Board of Management continued to reassess, review and develop its governance throughout 2018.

Board of Management Development

The Executive Director together with the Finance and Administration Officer, assisted the Board with Policy development and implementation of improved governance systems. Dignity4Patients wishes to acknowledge the time and commitment of its board members in their oversight of our service. Volunteering their expertise and assistance proves invaluable to our service. During the coming years Dignity4Patients intends to increase our board numbers to assist in the growing demand for governance in the not-for-profit sector. Continuous review and compliance development was addressed by the board of Management in 2018.

HSE Statistics Reporting

A considerable volume of work was undertaken by Dignity4Patients in the review and implementation of system changes to our statistical recording and reporting. This workload arose in an effort by Dignity4Patients to meet HSE Reporting formats. In 2018 HSE and Dignity4Patients agreed to change from bi-monthly to quarterly activity & financial reporting. This change is most welcome. Further consultation between Dignity4Patients and HSE Management is required to address patient victim/client issues of concern.

Service Information Management Review & Restructure.

Since 2008 we have gradually established a service administration system. In 2018 Dignity4Patients successfully initiated a large scale improved Data Management project which encompassed reviewing and further upgrading all current filing and information storage systems.

Training

Dignity4Patients received intensive GDPR training. In 2018 The Executive Director Continued to provide frontline client services staff with supervision and training on an ongoing day to day basis.

Staffing Issues

Increased funding is needed for the recruitment of an experienced and qualified Counsellor/ patient advocate. CE staff have been a considerable asset to our organisation but are most beneficial when working in support of core staff. The level of training and supervision required for CE staff adds excessively to management workload and takes away time available for management and client services. We trust the HSE will consider this fact in addressing our funding application to employ suitably qualified staff for client services.

Financial Information

Dignity4Patients have requested additional HSE funding to better serve our clients who are patient victims of sexual abuse in the Irish Health Service and seek funding to address the broader issue of sexual abuse of patients.

HSE Funding under the Grant Aid Agreement

Dignity4Patients once again benefited from the allocation of €100,000 of HSE Funding. This was again very greatly appreciated. However, Dignity4Patients is concerned as this funding provided is not sufficient to recruit

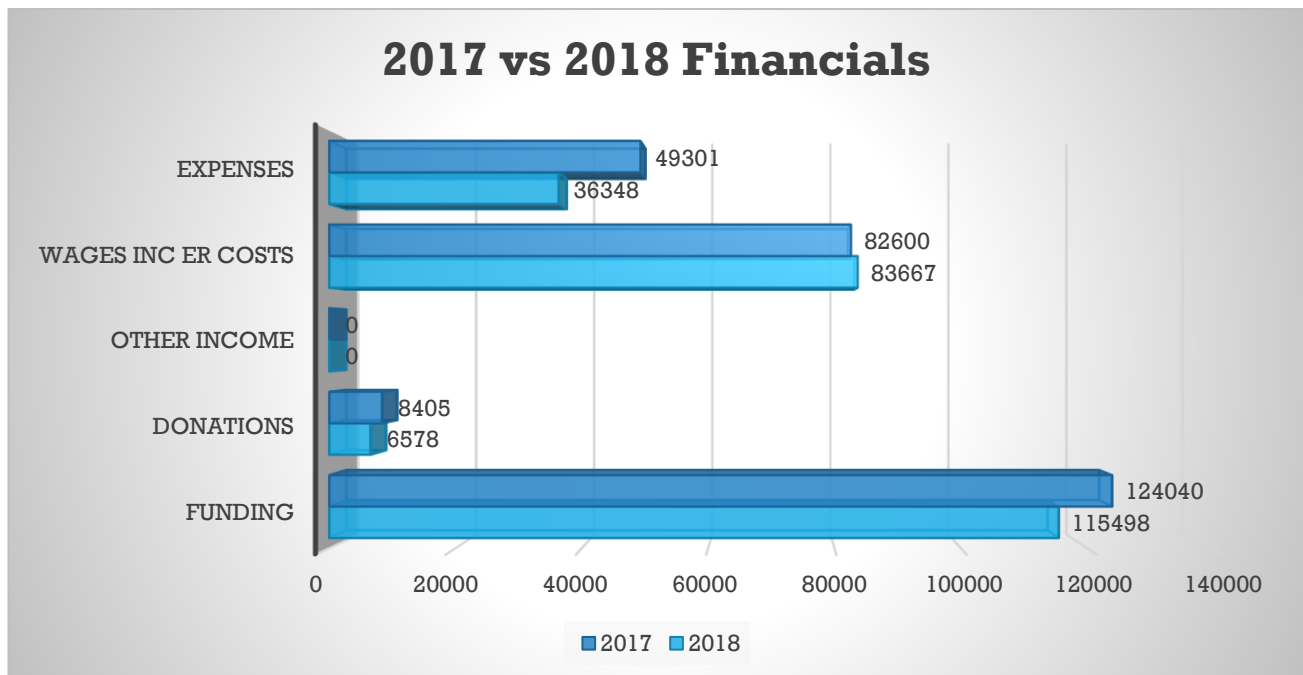
the experienced staff from suitably skilled backgrounds. In 2019 Dignity4Patients looks forward to a review of this funding level with the aim of providing appropriately skilled staff for the field in which we operate.

CSVC Funding

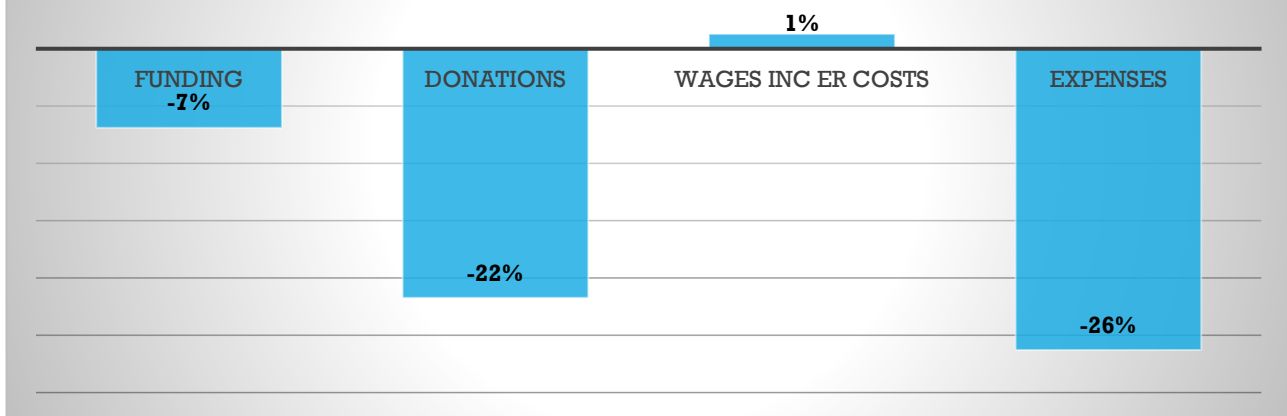
The Commission for Support of Victims of Crime (Dept. of Justice) kindly increased our funding in 2018 and Dignity4Patients received €11,000 to assist in the provision of our court accompaniment to **forty six (46)** specific clients whose cases are currently in the criminal justice system. Again this funding is truly appreciated. An increase in this funding too would be most welcome considering the number of court cases, appeals and Supreme Court hearings our clients are involved in 2018/19.

Self-Generated Funding

Donations during 2018 decreased slightly due to staffing levels and workload commitments and this trend is expected to continue unless increased funding is provided. Considering the level of funding available to Dignity4Patients in 2018, Dignity4Patients management were diligent in controlling expenditure to minimise any interruption to our client service. This can be seen in the graph below. The work of our Finance Officer was of considerable benefit in this achievement.



Financial Increases % in 2018



Conclusion

In 2018 Dignity4Patients continued its very valuable work in supporting patients who suffer sexual violence in the Irish Health Service. Our presence and services, had a very positive impact on many lives and we have witnessed and received verbal testament to this fact from many clients. Dignity4Patients has worked tirelessly for the good of patient victims in fulfilment of our mission statement. However we were unable to address prevention measures at our desired level. Together with Health and Justice Authorities and other support services, we know we have made a difference in the lives of those affected but much more is needed.

We thank all our clients who have put their trust in us. We will continue to give you the respect and dignity you deserve.

“(Dignity4Patients is) somewhere to go and know you’re not on your own.”

“It has made me feel not alone...part of a group of people who...fight our way toward the light at the end of the tunnel.”