



Annual Report

2022

Dealing with the trauma
of sexual abuse suffered
by users of health care
services in Ireland



Park Heights, Grange
Rath Drogheda



www.dignity4patients.org



+353 41 984 3730



support@dignity4patients.org

DIGNITY4PATIENTS



Our HISTORY

Dignity4Patients was founded in 2008 and incorporated as a charity in 2010. For over a decade Dignity4Patients has advocated on behalf of patients who have been victims of sexual abuse while accessing health care in the Irish health service. We provide support information and advocacy to victims and survivors on their justice and health and well being pathways. Prevention and zero tolerance of sexual abuse of patients in all health care, nursing care, and other forms of care services by service users is key to our work.



Our MISSION

Dignity4Patients is committed to upholding the dignity and rights of victims and survivors of sexual abuse in healthcare settings throughout Ireland.



Our VISION

A healthcare system in which sexual abuse and inappropriate sexual behaviour is met with a zero-tolerance response.

BOARD'S STATEMENT

2022 saw the discovery of the shipwreck of Ernest Shackleton's boat the Endurance. Shackleton words "difficulties are just things to overcome, after all" reminded us of our need for endurance for the ongoing difficulties our service and our clients' face.

2022 saw further revelations of sexual abuse committed against the children and vulnerable adults in Ireland. This time by the Spiritan Order at Blackrock College, St Johns Ambulance Service, and 143 cases of sexual abuse in Residential Disability Centres and Nursing Homes as reported to the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). On top of these complaints 19 other healthcare settings were reported to Dignity4Patients from victim and survivor service users. Evidence shows that serious crimes of sexual abuse go unreported, to the Gardai, family members and friends often for extended period of time which often leads to it being very difficult to bring a perpetrator or organisations which cover up sexual abuse, to account.

Some of these recent accounts of abuse resonated with many of our service users whose childhood was stolen from them, and where many were forced to endure years of silence.

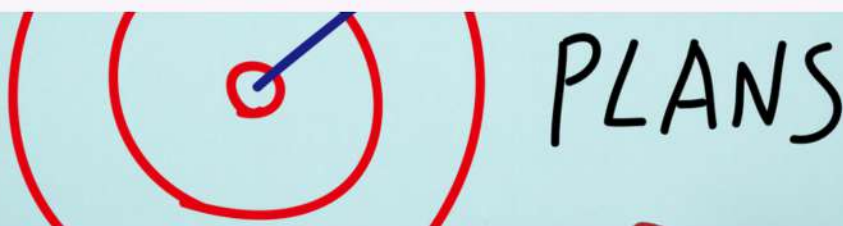
In 2022 the Director of Public Prosecutions once again did not pursue prosecution of Michael Shine for a further 25 victims. Other victims who received civil redress (financial payments) were forced to sign non-disclosure orders, just as Vicky Phelan had been asked to do, but refused. Our victims felt backed into a corner and left with no choices. Working with Government Agencies and Regulatory Bodies and healthcare practitioners we continue to fight for victims' voices to be heard and for justice pathways to be opened, not closed. In light of all of the above, we remain resolute that Commission of Investigation into cases of sexual abuse in healthcare, medical and care settings is imperative.

I must also acknowledge that we as an organisation welcome the additional financial support for our overheads during the cost-of-living crisis. As highlighted many times in the media, charities continue to be underfunded which could lead to a collapse in public services. We welcome The Wheels work in highlighting this discrepancy and hope in anticipation of this being addressed at governmental level with appropriate funding to run our services.

Finally, we would like to thank our CEO Adrienne Reilly and all of the Dignity4Patients staff on the front line, Philip O'Donoghue (Operations Manager), Pat Murphy (Snr Advocacy Officer), and Catherine Smith (Support Advocacy) for their dedication, insight and hard work in advocating for our client's needs, without whom we would have no service to offer victims and survivors.

Dignity4Patients - Board of Management

CEO'S STATEMENT



It is hard to believe this is only my second year in the new position of CEO at Dignity4Patients. I thought I had to hit the ground running when I started because of the exposé of continued sexual abuse by Prime Time in Naas Hospital in late 2021. I had no idea what was to come. In February 2022 convicted child sexual offender Michael Shine was released from Portlaoise Prison after serving 3 years of a 4-year sentence. To say this was majorly traumatic for the 350 plus victims and survivors and other service users that we support is an understatement. Yet these are the only words we have.

With funding from the Department of Justice and the Health Service Executive ring fenced at least we were confident we could provide the service they required at this time. This was so important as the Medical Missionaries of Mary Insurers, Allianz, still held fast with their purse strings. So, Shine's release, no civil payments forthcoming and then a refusal by the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to prosecute a further 25 cases in relation to Michael Shine in June 2022 literally had us all on the floor. Everything was closing in on the victims and survivors after decades of pursuing and persisting in long protracted justice pathways.

However, a lifeline came from Prime Time Team at RTE Investigates, as we reached out to them. In August 2022 they put on a Prime Time investigates special outlining the barriers to justice, interviewing victims, and survivors about the impact of all of this. I spoke in studio highlighting and questioning the absolute neglect by the State in handling both the civil and criminal justice pathways for the hundreds of adult survivors of Michael Shine, who were abused by him as children.

In September 2022, we like to believe that due to the bravery of the victims who spoke on TV, and the light that Prime Time shone on this grave and egregious injustice led to the Medical Missionaries of Mary insurers quietly paying out in the Autumn to another large cohort. Others are still waiting. Victims that were refused prosecution by the DPP requested Summary of Reasons as to why? At the end of 2022 they were still waiting for the DPP response. We face into 2023 with further fights and challenges on our hands, fights which are so traumatic for victims and yet they still continue on. I am in awe.

At this time, I would also like to thank with all my heart the hard work of our dedicated staff and Board, and the courageous victims and survivors that we work so closely with. I am immensely privileged and hope I am doing they job they truly deserve.

2022 STATISTICS





Advocacy

SERVICE OVERVIEW

Dignity4Patients provides Support, Advocacy, Information (SAI) and accompaniment services to victims and survivors who have experienced sexual abuse or inappropriate sexual behaviour while in a healthcare setting as a patient, service user or client. We aim to support the physical and mental wellbeing of victims and survivors who have experienced such behaviour (primary victims) in a health care setting (hospital, psychiatrist rooms, doctors treatment rooms etc). We also support others abused in other care settings such as nursing homes.

In providing these services we help victims and survivors of sexual abuse as well as their families and next of kin (secondary victims) on their journey towards dealing with sexual abuse, healing, and recovery.

Dignity4Patients on an ongoing basis continually addresses issues of prevention of sexual abuse within the health care service Health Service Executive (HSE) and the Medical Council, and any other relevant bodies by exploring all avenues of justice to remove perpetrators from the Irish health care service.



HELPLINE ENGAGEMENT

During 2022, Dignity4Patients provided vital support and assistance to many individuals and their families as they sought to report their experience of sexual abuse in healthcare settings and other care settings. Once again revelations of sexual abuse in Irish institutions, education, health and other settings have led to a year-on-year increase in users of our helpline service.

Many of the callers received immediate support from our helpline staff in a safe space where they felt comfortable to share their experience and understand what they could do about it. By providing a calm and safe place Dignity4Patients provided support and advocacy to those at a very vulnerable and critical time. Once again, the increase in callers from various locations in Ireland and from a variety of healthcare settings or other care settings where service users reported they were sexually abused, reveals to us that sexual abuse or inappropriate sexual behaviours is still being underreported. Thus an ongoing patient safety risk.



**Helpline
Calls**

447



**Helpline
Texts**

816



**Helpline
Emails**

909

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Dignity4Patients is deeply concerned about the decision by the Director of Public Prosecutions not to prosecute 25 cases of sexual abuse. 16 of these victim and survivors are directly supported by Dignity4Patients. This decision was based on the cumulative factors of delay, cognitive and physical health of the accused, age and historical nature of allegations, and a legal precedent of 'wholly exceptional circumstances' emanating from the DPP themselves failing to notify Michael Shine for two-years of notice to prosecute. It is well established in law that age, health and time passed are no barrier to preventing future prosecution.

A decision by the Director of Public Prosecution to rely heavily on a 2021 Court of Appeal Judgement, which is not directly applicable regarding 'wholly exceptional circumstances' and 'delay' arguably leaves ALL non-recent sexual abuse victims in a vulnerable position regarding prosecution.

Dignity4Patients will continue to advocate for justice for those victims who the DPP has refused a prosecution to address this issue. If this avenue is being closed down for our victims due to the Court of Appeal Judgement, then a Commission of Investigation is imperative, without question, as there are still Michael Shine clients coming forward for the first time to our services.



Footnote: 2021 Court of Appeal Judgement - cumulative factors of delay, cognitive and physical health, age and historical nature of allegations.
[https://www.courts.ie/acc/alfresco/4e4b93a5-9e1a-4909-8ed9-b220075f0dde/2021_IECA_193%20\(Unapproved\).pdf/pdf#view=fitH](https://www.courts.ie/acc/alfresco/4e4b93a5-9e1a-4909-8ed9-b220075f0dde/2021_IECA_193%20(Unapproved).pdf/pdf#view=fitH)

CIVIL JUSTICE

Dignity4Patients continues to support victims and survivors navigating their way through the civil justice process. In 2022, Dignity4Patients are delighted to report the civil settlement of over 112 victims and survivors with the Medical Missionaries of Mary via their insurers. After a decade long battle for civil litigation and despite redress finally forthcoming, what was glaringly absent was any symbolic reparation in the form of acknowledgment or apology from religious, political and healthcare organisations in relation to the prolific sexual abuse committed by one man on 340+ children and young people over a thirty-year period. Nor indeed any public acknowledgement of the brutal trauma inflicted on the lives of so many children, young people and their families in the North East area of Ireland. Unbearable trauma, which they have had to live with for decades and continue to live with. They are still seeking public acknowledgement.

Dignity4Patients continues to provide support, information and advocacy for many of this group who expressed their anger and disappointment at the delayed justice and perceived lack of care or consideration for them as adult victims and survivors of childhood and non-recent sexual abuse.



Number of Civil Cases

118



Number of Complainants

118



Number of Settlements

112

REFERRAL PATHWAYS



Dignity4Patients has supported and assisted a number of victims and survivors in their pursuit to report the crime of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct committed against them by healthcare professionals. To support victims and survivors we have assisted them in reporting their complaints through a variety of justice pathways including An Garda Síochána; the Medical Council; and various health complaints processes. We also assisted in helping them with referrals to other legal and wellbeing organisations.

In 2022 a total of 247 referrals were made to or on behalf of our victims and survivors and service users to other organisations including those in the chart below.




COMMISSION OF INVESTIGATION

With further revelations of sexual abuse being made in educational settings, calls for a Commission of Investigation into sexual abuse was most welcome in 2022. However, Dignity4Patients along with many of our service users have serious concerns regarding the limitation of any Commission of Investigation into sexual abuse being confined to educational settings only. Evidence suggests that there have been high incidences of childhood sexual abuse under the auspices of religious orders in various settings in Ireland, spanning decades. The Medical Missionaries of Mary were the owners of the hospital in Drogheda when Michael Shine was able for decades to abuse hundreds of children. To date, sexual abuse in religious order run institutions (schools, hospitals, psychiatric hospitals) has either been under investigated or never investigated. The state arguably needs to address the past failings that allowed such widespread sexual abuse in all manner of settings including those in hospitals. It is our firm belief that a broader investigation into all sexual abuse in a wide variety of settings be established to gain valuable insight for future learning and protection of children and vulnerable adults (e.g., Scouting Ireland, Swim Ireland, Schools, Religious institutions which have not been investigated etc).

There is precedent for this in the England and Wales where 15 institutions, organisations and individuals were investigated in the Independent Inquiry into Sexual Abuse in England . Thus, illustrating this can be achieved with the same aim of exposing the 'collusion, concealment and coverups' that led to decades of known perpetrators being allowed to sexually abuse children and young adults continually and systemically in all manner of settings.

Footnote : The Report of the Independent Inquiry into Child Sexual Abuse <https://www.iicsa.org.uk/final-report.html>



Investigations



NON-ADVERSARIAL RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Criminal trials and civil actions in Ireland continue to be a source of distress to victims and survivors. These processes are not trauma informed. In fact, victims and survivors have reported engagement with these criminal and civil processes as traumatising, humiliating, and dehumanising. It is high time that organisations who fail to protect in children and young people as well as vulnerable adults accessing any form of health care from sexual abuse, and when this is exposed, that there is constructive and timely engagement from the outset.

Ireland's restorative justice should adopt a non-adversarial, human rights based and victim centred approach. Any process should include acknowledgment of wrongdoing as a key element of restorative justice. Sadly, in Irish justice processes to date this has been very reluctantly given, if at all.

ONGOING WORK



Dignity4Patients and the victims and survivors that engage with us, feel optimistic yet despondent, with regards to where we sit in the overall justice trajectory at the end of 2022.

Our work in responding to the Law Reforms Commission Consultation on Compensating Victims of Crime (LRC CP 67-2022) was very important as it is not often the voices of those who are still engaging with justice processes for non-recent (so called historical) sexual abuse, particularly as children, can get input into significant legislative and policy changes.

Our work in responding to the Irish Medical Council's invitation to submit a response to their consultation on the development of their research strategy, of which we were very pleased to contribute, highlights the broader picture of sexual abuse crime prevention.

RTE's Prime Time also undertook a special feature about the refusal of the DPP to prosecute victims and survivors of Michael Shine based on the Court of Appeal Judgment, the outstanding civil action and the call by victims and survivors for a Commission of Investigation.

The disclosure by the now adult survivors of sexual abuse, by teachers in the Spiritan Order in Blackrock College revealed to the nation what went on for decades in all walks of life in Ireland. It raises questions on what was known, who knew, and why it wasn't dealt with by the authorities. This mirrors exactly what happened and continues to happen to the victims and survivors of Michael Shine, former surgeon, in Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital and associated treatment rooms over a 30-year period.

In the aftermath of these revelations 16+ new victims of Michael Shine came forward in 2022 to seek the services of Dignity4Patients. The unprecedented oral evidence by the Spiritan victims and survivors, revealed to the public how much sexual abuse occurred in Ireland. As well as how much needs to be done to address victim needs, particularly around sexual abuse as children.

Dignity4Patients will also continue to lobby and call for the government to explicitly include in any gender-based violence policy or national action plan, service users and patients in health care and other care settings, who were, have been, or could be sexually abused or suffer sexual misconduct.

GOVERNANCE

Dignity4Patients is governed by a board of directors who give their time and advice freely as volunteers. All directors are non-executive and receive no remuneration for their services. As a board they represent a diverse range of relevant experience and skills and meet regularly to discharge their duty of care of overseeing our charity. The Chief Executive Officer is not a board member.

Dignity4Patients board members have all signed up to a code of conduct for trustees and have completed a declaration of interest. A standing item on all board meeting agendas is a question asking for any conflicts of interest or loyalties to be declared before each meeting begins and ends.

As a board we will continue to implement and review the Charities Act to ensure our compliance with the The Charities Regulator’s Governance Code. Our main concern with compliance is to reassure our funders and donors that their money is being managed by a well run organisation with good governance and that we are always open, honest and transparent in our our operations and services.

BOARD MEETING ATTENDANCE

Meeting Date	Meeting Type	E. Farrelly	M. Ambraziejus	P. Farrell	P. Murphy	P. O’Toole	B. O’Shea	L. Brennan
12th Jan 2022	GM	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-
2nd Feb 2022	GM	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	-	-
9th Mar 2022	GM	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	-	-
11th May 2022	GM	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	-	-
29th Jun 2022	AGM	Y	N - Resigned	Y	Y	Y - Resigned	-	-
29th Jun 2022	GM	Y	-	Y	Y	-	-	-
28th Sep 2022	GM	Y	-	Y	Y	-	N - Appointed	Y - Appointed
8th Nov 2022	GM	Y	-	Y	Y	-	Y	N

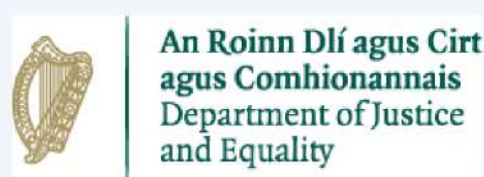


ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

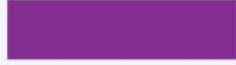
Dignity4Patients work would not be possible without the ongoing support of the Department of Justice, the Department of Health, and the HSE. We acknowledge and sincerely thank them for their support in 2022.

We would also like to acknowledge and thank the numerous agencies who also work alongside providing support to victims and survivors as they navigate the criminal and civil justice systems.

As always, we sincerely commend the courage of those who have put their trust in Dignity4Patients to support, assist them, and advocate for or alongside them as they seek justice and healing. Their bravery and openness have created a path and narrative for others to come forward and to achieve criminal convictions, civil redress and other forms of justice accountability against those who allow or commit the crime of sexual abuse in our health care services in Ireland.



OUR TEAM



Board of Management

Eve Farrelly - Interim Chairperson

Paul Farrell - Treasurer

Barbara O'Shea - Trustee



Management Team

Adrienne Reilly - Chief Executive Officer

Philip O'Donoghue - Operations Manager

Pat Murphy - Support & Advocacy Officer

Catherine Smith - Helpline Assistant





Financial Statement

2022

Dealing with the trauma
of sexual abuse suffered
by users of health care
services'



Park Heights, Grange
Rath Drogheda



www.dignity4patients.org



+353 41 984 3730



support@dignity4patients.org

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Profit & Loss Accounts

Financial year ended 31 December 2022

	2022	2021
Income	€ 202,167	€ 139,827
Gross profit	€ 202,167	€ 139,827
Administrative expenses	-€181,668	-€ 132,307
Operating Loss / profit	€ 20,499	€ 7,520
Profit/(Loss) Profit before taxation	€ 20,499	€ 7,520
Tax on profit	-	-
Profit/(Loss) Profit after taxation	€ 20,499	€ 7,520

	2022	2021
Employed Staff	Number	Number
Administration	3	2
Management	1	1
Total Employed Staff	4	3
The aggregate payroll costs incurred during 2022:		
Wages and salaries	€ 124,364	€ 81,712
Social insurance costs	€ 13,811	€ 8,737
Total Payroll Costs	€ 138,175	€ 90,449

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Balance Sheet

Financial year ended 31 December 2022

	2022	Total	2021	Total
Fixed assets				
Tangible assets	€ 9,108		€ 12,666	
		€ 9,108		€ 12,666
Current assets				
Debtors	€ 1,624		€ 2,755	
Cash at bank and in hand	€126, 655		€ 107,627	
		€ 128,279		€ 110,382
Creditors: falling due				
within one year	-€ 2,897		-€ 4,171	
Net Current Assets		€ 125, 382		€ 106,211
Total assets less current liabilities				
after more than one year	-€ 95,944		-€ 100,830	
Net Assets		€ 38,546		€ 18,047
Capital & Reserves				
Accumulated Reserves	€ 38,546		€ 18,047	
Members Funds		€ 38,546		€ 18,047

These financial statements were approved by the board of directors on **26th July 2023** and signed on behalf of the board of trustees' by Dignity4Patients **Chairperson** Mr. Paul Murphy and **Treasurer** Mr. Paul Farrell.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Statement of Cashflow

Financial year ended 31 December 2022

	2022	2021
Cash Flows from Operating Activities		
Profit/(Loss) for the financial year	€ 20,499	€ 7,520
Adjustments for:		
Depreciation of tangible assets	€ 3,815	€ 3,781
Accrued expenses/(income)	€ 369	€ 369
Changes in:		
Trade and other debtors	€ 1,131	-€ 663
Trade and other creditors	-€ 6,529	€ 54,992
Cash generated from operations	€ 19,285	€ 65,999
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	€ 19,285	€ 65,999
Cash Flows from Investing Activities		
Purchase of tangible assets	-€ 257	-€ 1,027
Net cash used in investing activities	-€ 257	-€ 1,027
Movements in Cash Flows		
Net Increase/(Decrease) in Cash & Cash Equivalents	€ 19,028	€ 64,972
Cash & cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	€ 107,627	€ 42,655
Cash & cash equivalents at end of financial year	€ 126,655	€ 107,627

Thank you for your support.

**Thank
You**

Dealing with the trauma
of sexual abuse suffered
by users of health care
services'



Park Heights, Grange
Rath Drogheda, Meath



www.dignity4patients.org



+353 41 984 3730



support@dignity4patients.org