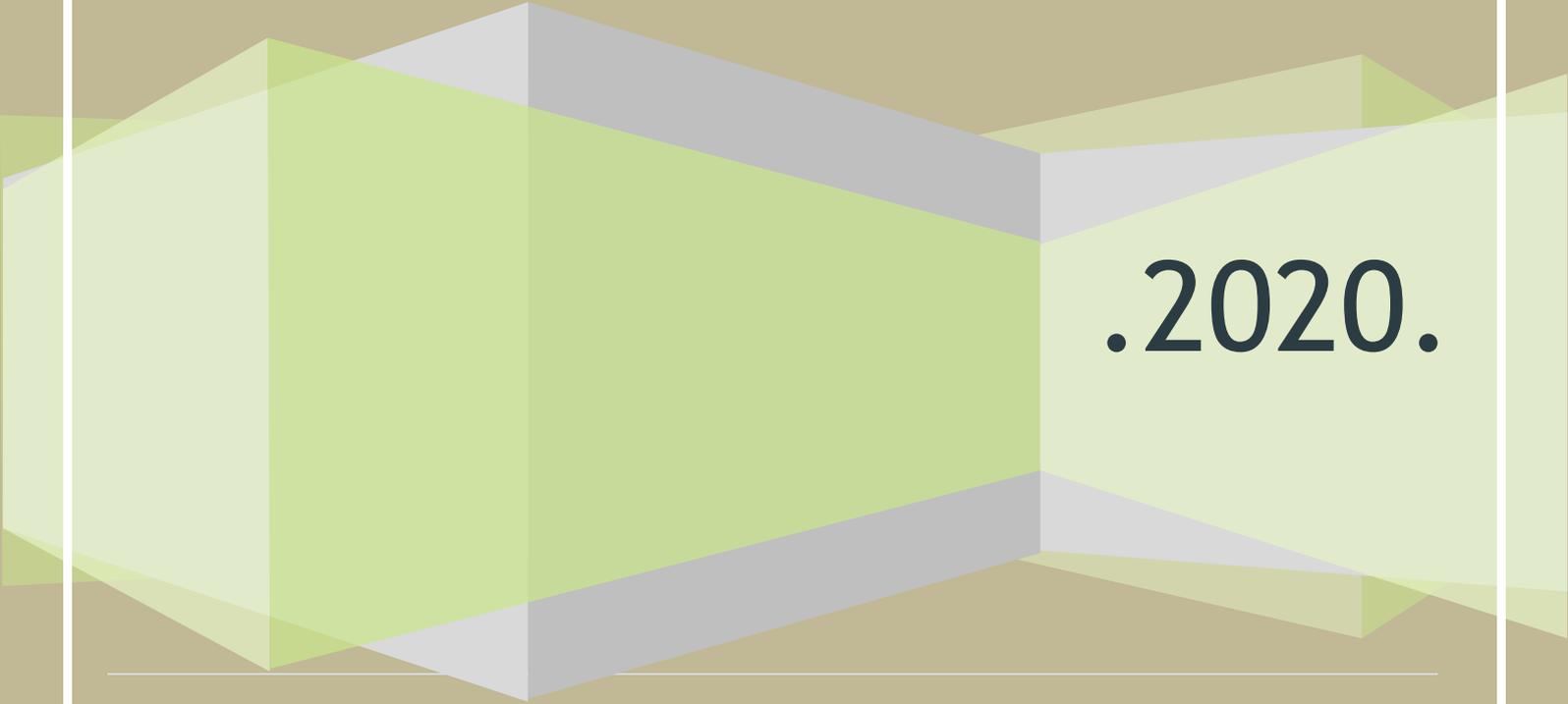


Dignity4Patients Annual Report



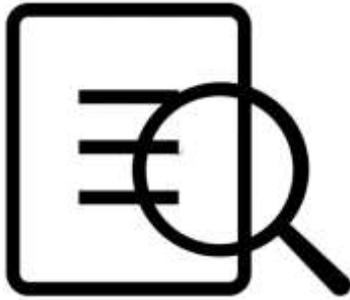
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“Before Dignity4Patients support the issue was never discussed, now it has been brought into the open and has been beneficial to all the family”

“Dignity4Patients service has been of great assistance to me in accessing help, addressing and finally reporting my issue.”



Dignity4Patients History

Dignity4Patients was founded in 2008 and incorporated as a charity in 2010. Dignity4Patients has advocated on behalf of Irish patients for over a decade seeking support, recovery and justice for all sufferers of sexual abuse within the Irish Health service. Prevention of sexual abuse of patients is key to our work.



Dignity4Patients Mission

To support victims and survivors in healing from the trauma of patient sexual abuse, to help them to seek justice, and enhance their empowerment. In doing this we aim to raise awareness of the risks of patient sexual abuse to professional services and the public in order to protect and prevent others from harm.



Dignity4Patients Vision

A Healthcare system in which sexual violence and inappropriate sexual behaviour is met with a zero tolerance response, but when it does occur, victims and survivors have access to appropriate Support, Information and Advocacy to empower them and encourage resilience in their recovery.

Chair's Introduction

While 2020 was a year that many would firmly like to forget, in many ways it has taught us all the importance of reaching out for support in difficult times to overcome obstacles as well as the critical need for services that provide such support. As a Board we still feel there are many barriers to victims and survivors of patient sexual abuse seeking the support and justice they deserve. However, it has been heart-warming to see so much effort in 2020 by statutory bodies to raise awareness of the unacceptable levels of sexual violence as well as their efforts to provide greater supports for those victims of sexual violence.

It is with gratitude that in the most difficult of years additional funding, approved by Minister McEntee and the Department of Justice, was secured for 2021. This assists Dignity4Patients in supporting as many victims' as possible to access court support services via our Court Accompaniment program now and into the future. Our work of supporting victims and survivors of patient sexual abuse to seek justice in 2020 increased despite the disruption to the court service during Covid-19. The often protracted and overly complex journey to seeking justice for clients is evidence of the need for a comprehensive support structure for patient victims as now recognised by the Department of Justice.

In mine and the Board of Managements view, sexual violence in the healthcare setting will continue unless the healthcare authorities grasp the gravity of sexual crimes as was highlighted in the O'Malley Review that was published in mid-2020. As stated in the report just one incident of sexual violence is *"inevitably followed by emotional, psychological and psychiatric damage to the victim which can often be of long term, and sometimes lifelong duration."*¹ In line with the Justice Department's own Awareness Campaign of 'No Excuses'² we firmly believe a zero tolerance attitude toward Sexual Violence within the health service still needs to be enforced publicly by the Health Authorities in Ireland. There is also no excuses left as to why this should not happen. Our work in this regard remains critical given the recent referral by An Garda Síochána of a further 25 cases in relation to a perpetrator practitioner within our remit, and other victims and survivors who we are engaging with through various legal processes.

To end my introduction to our 2020 report, it's important to me and the members of the Board to say thank you all those who have had engagement with Dignity4Patients services during the very difficult and turbulent year of 2020. This includes our clients and their families who continued to turn to our service for support, as well as our external stakeholders and partner organisations who assisted us and our clients at this time. While 2020 proved to be a difficult year for so many in our community, the dedication and community spirit of so many people including our committed staff and volunteers showed that victims and survivors of patient sexual abuse were never forgotten in the midst of this unexpected pandemic.

Mr. Paul Murphy

Chairperson, Dignity4Patients Board of Management

¹ This was cited in *The People (DPP) V Tiernan*, [1988] I.R. 250 at 253 and referenced in the Department of Justice and Equality, Review of Protections for Vulnerable Witnesses in the Investigation and Prosecution of Sexual Offences (O'Malley Report), pp. 25-26 at http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/O'Malley_Report

² <http://www.justice.ie/en/JELR/Pages/PR20000263>

Executive Director's Report

As the new CEO my first acknowledgement must be to Bernadette Sullivan the former Executive Director of Dignity4Patients. This organisation would not exist without the tireless work, foresight, knowledge, passion, determination and expertise of Bernadette, and the confidence of victims and survivors in her ability to advocate with them, and on their behalf.

The Board, Dignity4Patients staff and victims and survivors will be forever grateful for her tireless work over the years. Particularly during the upheaval of the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020, where she managed to keep the services going, secure further funding and prioritise victims and survivors at a critical time when engaging with health services was difficult for many reasons.

Regretfully, after decades of advocacy and support, in 2021 Bernadette retired from her position as Executive Director. However, Bernadette's legacy will be the continuation of the critical work of Dignity4Patients, and I am very excited to have taken up the new role of Chief Executive Officer in October 2021 to lead this forward.

I come with over twenty years' experience of working with victims and survivors both domestically and internationally, with expertise in the areas of institutional abuse, trafficking and conflict-related deaths. I have worked for the United Nations, the International Organisation for Migration, Transitional Justice Institute at Ulster University, the Northern Ireland Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry, as well as leading human rights NGO's in Northern Ireland including the Committee on the Administration of Justice and most recently the Pat Finucane Centre. I am also currently undertaking a part-time PhD in Social Work focusing on institutional abuse, with a public inquiry, symbolic reparation and justice remit.

A native of Drogheda, I am very excited to return home to use my expertise for a cause that is very close to my heart. I am looking forward to taking Dignity4Patients to the next level in terms of advancing pathways of advocacy, information, support and redress for victims and survivors of sexual abuse in health care settings. I feel very privileged to be working with victims and survivors and their families in this capacity, and do not underestimate the enormity of the endeavour alongside and on behalf of Dignity4Patients clients.

I am also delighted to be working with the new Dignity4Patients Senior Support & Advocacy Officer, Pat Murphy, a trained and vastly experienced psychiatric nurse, as well as Dignity4Patients long standing Operations Manager, Philip O'Donoghue.

Adrienne Reilly

Chief Executive Officer, 2021

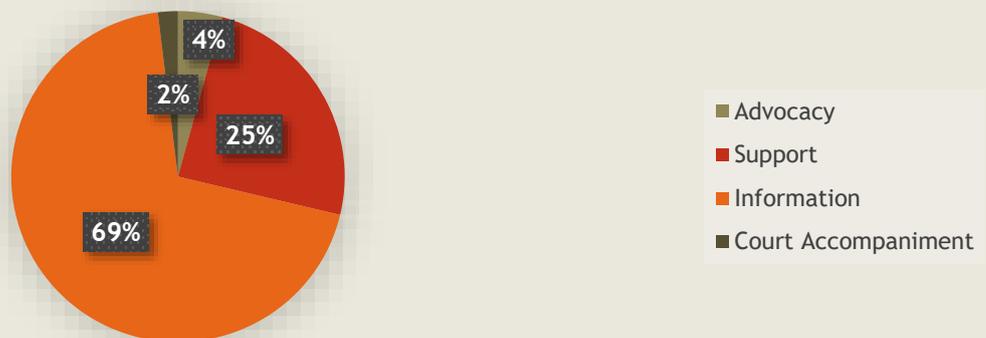
Dignity4Patients

Client Support Services

Support

Dignity4Patients support services is a free and confidential listening and advocacy support service for all those who have experienced sexual abuse or inappropriate sexual behaviour whilst a patient in the Irish Health service. At the start of the Covid-19 pandemic many users of our service reported feeling overwhelmed and anxious at the thoughts of contracting Covid-19 and being forced to return to a healthcare setting where their personal experience of sexual abuse had taken place. Many users expressed their reluctance to seek medical help and were supported in addressing these feelings to ensure their mental and physical wellbeing was protected should healthcare treatment be necessary.

Service Provision Provided



**Note: As indicated in the chart above in 2020 the main area of Dignity4Patients service activity was in providing vital information. This service was provided to new and ongoing Dignity4Patients clients and to callers to our Helpline.*

Helpline

While Dignity4Patients endeavoured to maintain our high level of client services the effects of Covid-19 required a transformation of the service to a digital offering, where appropriate, to ensure the continuity of the service. Many callers due to being confined at home during Covid-19 chose to engage with the service via Helpline Text for privacy in the family home. Other clients expressed the desire to continue engagement with the service but the priority of their needs switched to the needs of their family or friends during the crisis of the Covid-19 pandemic. Throughout the pandemic Dignity4Patients continued to advocate and empower our clients to access support and information and to refer them to partner organisations for appropriate services despite the incredibly challenging circumstances for all.

Many clients reported feeling isolated and trapped during the government lockdowns of 2020 and the additional time at home increased the incidence of dwelling on past incidents of sexual violence against them. This time allowed room for increased suicide ideation, anguish and trauma memories for many victim and survivors to return. Dignity4Patients were determined to try to mitigate these client

difficulties as much as possible as well as facing the difficulties of providing our service safely during the pandemic.

Breakdown of Service Interactions

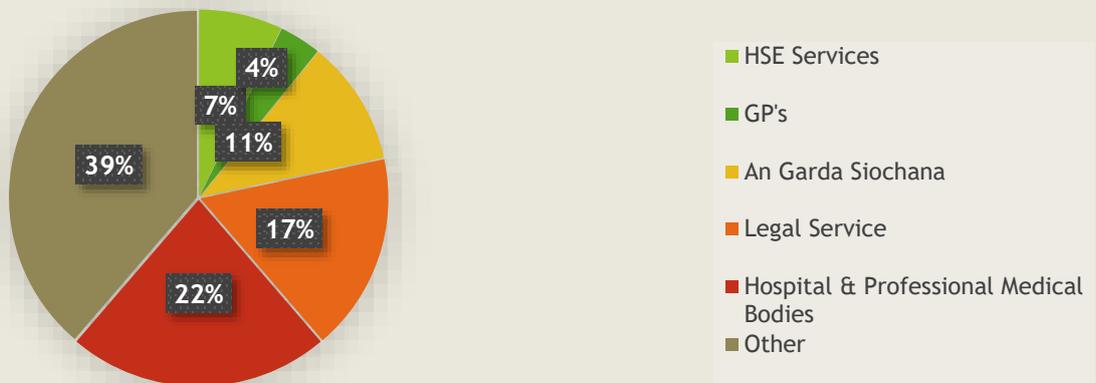


***Note:** Increase in client Helpline Texts during Covid-19 lockdowns and Government Restrictions on in Person Meetings and Working from Home Guidelines.

Referrals

With the threat of Dignity4Patients services closing during Covid-19, we were increasingly concerned at finding ways to meet our clients’ needs during this time. The effects of sexual abuse persevere long after the abuse has stopped and increase during distressing times. This was borne out in the number of referrals made by our organisation to assist clients in meeting their immediate needs. We are thankful to the many organisations who assisted us in providing vital services in such a difficult and demanding time to our clients.

Referrals to Reporting & Support Organisations



***Note:** Other referrals include advocacy referrals for clients relating to Data Protection, Information Commissioner, and Freedom of Information Requests etc.

Advocacy Programme

Advocacy

Our advocacy service endeavours to link clients with other suitable and relevant supports and provide information on accessing the services required to meet victims and survivors individual needs. Those who try to navigate these services without support are often frustrated at the complexity of patient/victim/survivor services. This was felt even more acutely during 2020, when our clients experienced further distress with the closure of the courts and further delays to their already protracted and drawn out court hearings. Our Advocacy service was also utilised by family and friends of patient victims and survivors who often find themselves at a loss assisting patient victims with the anxiety leading up to court appearances as witnesses.

Advocacy & Court Accompaniment



**Note: While many court cases were delayed or suspended in 2020 due to closure of Courts & Organisations during Covid-19 lockdowns and Government Restrictions client engagement increased in 2020.*

Client Quote:

“before Dignity4Patients support the issue was never discussed, now it has been brought into the open and has been beneficial to all the family”

Court Accompaniment

With thanks for the Department of Justice funding in 2020, Dignity4Patients have provided their Court Accompaniment and support service to those clients navigating the legal and justice systems of Ireland. Our trained and experienced staff provide vital support to both victims and their family members. Many victims are apprehensive by the prospect of reporting or reliving their experience to An Garda Síochána or to strangers in a court room. However, our aim is to offer understanding and support systems when clients are overwhelmed by the criminal and civil proceedings. Reassurance and talking through the process for many with a trusted and experienced service provider proved invaluable.

As with other services during 2020, our Court Accompaniment services adjusted in line with government guidelines for everyone’s safety. Where required remote contact with those accessing our Advocacy and Court Accompaniment service was conducted via video link as face to face appointments had to be limited as a precaution.

Criminal Justice

Dignity4Patients supports a large number of clients on their journey through the criminal justice system. In 2020 further trials and appeals relating to a number of Dignity4Patients clients were scheduled. A successful conviction was achieved in February 2020 of which the outcome was of direct relevance to over 300 of our clients. This conviction however was appealed, which further increased our client's anxiety and frustration at the legal system and in turn increased the demands on our service. In November however, all 17 grounds of the appeal based on the conviction and four-year sentence were rejected by the Court of Appeal.



Number of Criminal Trials / Appeals

2



Number of Witness/Victims

7

Civil Justice

During 2020, patient victims and survivors continued to seek justice through the Civil Courts against organisations that had failed in their duty of care to protect them from sexual violence. One particular Case is still awaiting a trial date to be set down and heard. This case was delayed again in 2020 due to the pandemic and increased the anxiety and stress for the complainants. Dignity4Patients continued to provide Support, Advocacy and Information to this group during this protracted court case.



Number of Civil Cases

1



Number of Complainants

113



Number of Judgements

0

Funding & Fundraising

HSE Engagement & Grant Aid Agreement Funding

Dignity4Patients would once again like to express its gratitude to the HSE North East and the Department of Justice for their contribution to our service in 2020. The funding received in 2020 continued to greatly assist Dignity4Patients to cover our costs, enabling us to provide our vital work of support, information and advocacy on behalf of all patient victim and survivors in Ireland.

The promise of increased funding by the Department of Justice at the end of 2020, to provide an extended Court Accompaniment service and support for our clients in 2021 has been most welcome. With a Civil Case expected to be concluded in 2021 and affecting over 113 clients of Dignity4Patients the funds from the Department will assist in providing the support these clients need.

Further criminal trials are expected in mid-2021 should the easing of the pandemic restrictions allow and these trials and appeals will no doubt increase the demands on our service. However, with the promised funding from the Department of Justice we look forward to meeting this challenge and meeting the needs of our clients during these difficult and often anxious times.

Fundraising

Like every year preceding this one, state funding did not always meet the full cost of providing Dignity4Patients frontline services. This was compounded in 2020 with the restrictions placed on public gatherings and fundraising opportunities. Donations from our service users and local political figures assisted us in covering our costs in 2020. Good financial planning and generous donations in previous years allowed Dignity4Patient to meet its costs in 2020 and continue the service into 2021. Dignity4Patients continues to be very much dependent on the generosity of the public to supplement our finances as we continue to meet the demand for our services and our work.

Patient Safety & Prevention

Inquiry Requests & Reviews

The majority of healthcare professionals work with commitment and honesty and are dedicated to the best possible patient care. However, in our experience of providing services to patient victims and survivors of sexual violence in the Healthcare system, we have seen how only a small number of healthcare professionals, who have the opportunity to breach sexual boundaries with patients, can cause wide scale harm and devastation when unchecked or not investigated thoroughly.

In light of our experience in this regard Dignity4Patients still believes an Inquiry into sexual abuse of patients is long overdue in Ireland. Reports have shown that patients can be seriously harmed when healthcare professionals breach sexual boundaries and these harms can extend beyond the offence itself to have continued lifelong negative physical, mental and wellbeing health consequences for patient victims and survivors, their families and society trust in healthcare services in general.³

The lack of an interest by government to review cases of patient abuse and publish their findings, in the words of Gene Kerrigan is like “*treating victims of abuse like enemies of the state*”⁴ which only serves to compound the confusion and isolation patient victim and survivors feel. Lessons from the ongoing institutional abuse scandals illustrate the need for ensuring allegations of sexual abuse should be taken seriously and investigated thoroughly. No matter how prominent the accused is, or the position in society the employer of the accused holds, all sexual abuse complaints should be dealt with in a manner that promotes dignity and respect for all.

This is the object lesson that all statutory agencies need to use as a baseline to ensure that sexual abuse within the Irish Healthcare is stamped out.

Governance Obligations

Dignity4Patients can confirm that our service provision complies with the Charities Governance Code published by the Charities Regulatory Authority and during 2020 undertook a review of its policies and procedures to ensure compliance with the Governance Code.

Dignity4Patients also continued to meet our legal obligations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the Children First Act (2015) and the Regulator of Lobbying in Ireland.

Dignity4Patients also fulfilled its reporting obligations for all funders during the course of 2020. Included in this report is the 2020 financial accounts which give a comprehensive picture of the income, expenditure and activities of Dignity4Patients.

³ To Zero: Independent Report of the Minister's Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Patients and the Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (gov.on.ca)

⁴ Gene Kerrigan, October 17th 2021, Irish Independent, 'Victims of Abuse are Treated Like Enemies of the State' at <https://www.independent.ie/opinion/comment/victims-of-abuse-are-treated-like-enemies-of-the-state-40955506.html>

Meet the People of Dignity4Patients

Board of Management

Paul Murphy –Chairperson
Paul Farrell – Treasurer
Peter O Toole – Director
Eve Farrelly – Director
Mantas Ambraziejus - Director

Management Team & Employees

Bernadette Sullivan – *Executive Director (2020)*
Adrienne Reilly – *Chief Executive Officer (2021)*
Pat Murphy - *Snr Advocacy & Support Officer (2021)*
Philip O'Donoghue – *Operations Manager*
Catherine Smith – *Helpline Assistant (Temp)*

Client Testimonials

Service Benefits

“The ease of talking to Dignity4Patients has been a weight off my shoulders that has sat there for years”

“The benefit of my contact with Dignity4Patients has been immense to me”

“I wouldn't be alive today if it wasn't for Dignity4Patients”

“I am so appreciative of Dignity4Patients service and their kindness, I never knew where to turn to until contacting them”

Reporting Benefits

“Dignity4Patients service has been of great assistance to me in accessing help, addressing and finally reporting my issue.”

“Before Dignity4Patients support the issue was never discussed, now it has been brought into the open and has been beneficial to all the family”

Expert Medical/Nursing Knowledge

“thanks to Dignity4Patients nursing expertise, it's helped me to finally disclose my sensitive complaint”

“I could never have come forward to a general sexual abuse service. I needed to talk to somebody with medical knowledge. The service and support I received from Dignity4Patients has been so helpful to me”

Financial Statements

Profit and loss account

financial year ended 31 December 2020

		2020	2019
	Note	€	€
Income	5	<u>117,434</u>	<u>121,426</u>
Gross profit		117,434	121,426
Administrative expenses		<u>(123,411)</u>	<u>(120,015)</u>
Operating Loss / profit	6	(5977)	2,314
Exceptional Item			
(Loss) Profit before taxation		(5977)	2,314
Tax on profit		=	=
(Loss) Profit for the financial year		<u>(5977)</u>	<u>2,314</u>

Staff costs

The average number of persons employed by the company during the financial year, including the directors, was as follows:

	2020	2019
	Number	Number
Administration	2	2
Management	1	1
	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>

The aggregate payroll costs incurred during the financial year were:

	2020	2019
	€	€
Wages and salaries	79,719	72,034
Social insurance costs	<u>8,674</u>	<u>7,605</u>
	<u>88,393</u>	<u>79,639</u>

Balance sheet

As at 31 December 2020

		2020		2019	
	Note	€	€	€	€
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	9	15,420		18,805	
			15,420		18,805
Current assets					
Debtors	10	2,092		2,025	
Cash at bank and in hand		<u>42,655</u>		<u>46,115</u>	
		44,747		48,140	
Creditors: amounts falling due					
within one year	11	(7,641)		(3,374)	
Total assets less current liabilities			<u>52,526</u>		<u>63,571</u>
Creditors: amounts falling due					
after more than one year	12		<u>(41,999)</u>		<u>(47,067)</u>
Net assets			10,527		16,504
Profit and loss account			<u>10,527</u>		<u>16,504</u>
Members funds			<u>10,527</u>		<u>16,504</u>

These financial statements were approved by the board of directors on **29th April 2021** and signed on behalf of the board by **Paul Murphy** and **Paul Farrell**.

Statement of cash flows

Financial year ended 31 December 2020

	2020	2019
	€	€
Cash flows from operating activities		
Profit for the financial year	(5,977)	2,314
<i>Adjustments for:</i>		
Depreciation of tangible assets	3,852	3,908
Government Grant Income	(111,000)	(111,000)
Gain/Loss on tangible assets	-	3,458
Accrued expenses/(income)	1	(703)
<i>Changes in:</i>		
Trade and other debtors	(67)	(649)
Trade and other creditors	(801)	(16,437)
Cash generated from operations	(113,992)	(119,109)
Net cash from/(used in) operating activities	<u>(113,992)</u>	<u>(119,109)</u>
Cash flows from investing activities		
Purchase of tangible assets	(466)	(9,631)
Net cash used in investing activities	<u>(467)</u>	<u>(9,630)</u>
Net increase/(decrease) in cash and cash equivalents	(3,459)	(17,739)
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of financial year	<u>46,115</u>	<u>63,854</u>
Cash and cash equivalents at end of financial year	<u>42,656</u>	<u>46,115</u>

Acknowledgements

In 2020, Dignity4Patients continued its valuable work in supporting patient victims and survivors of sexual abuse in the Irish Health Service. We thank all who have supported us in our work including our Board of Management, staff and volunteers including volunteer expert advisers.

We thank all our clients who have once again put their trust in us and continue to turn to us for help and support. Our aim is to continue to give you the time, respect and dignity you deserve and to listen and assist you to meet your needs now and in the future.

We acknowledge and sincerely thank the HSE North East and the Department of Justice for their continued support and trust placed in us to support and assist those effected by patient sexual abuse within the Irish Health Service. We would also like to acknowledge and thank our partner agencies who provided assistance to Dignity4Patients and our clients in 2020.

Ways to Help Us

Thank you for reading this annual report. To continue to expand our service and to continue to be available to assist those who have or who will suffer sexual abuse in our Healthcare service, we require ongoing financial help.

There are many ways in which **YOU** can support the service we provide:

- Donate via a monthly Standing Order.
- Make a once off donation.
- Leave us a gift in your will.
- Take part in our fundraising events.
- Corporate support from your employer's social responsibility fund.

If **YOU** would like to help us continue our services please contact us at:

1st Floor Offices, 29 Park Heights, Grange Rath, Drogheda, Co. Meath, A92 P8FP.

Tel: 041 - 984 5761

Web: www.dignity4patients.org

Email: fundraising@dignity4patients.org

“(Dignity4Patients) their support and information around hospital systems and medical records has helped me get to a better place”
