

3 Year Strategic Plan 2017-2020

Towards 2020

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CARI Vision and Mission

About CARI

CARI offers specialised treatment and other support services to children affected by sexual abuse and non-offending family members to lessen the impact of the emotional and psychological trauma the child and family have experienced.

Founded in 1989, CARI operates two full time centres in Limerick and Dublin and CARI's National Helpline offers services nationally.

Court and Forensic Accompaniment also support the child and family at crucial stages in their healing journey.

Vision

Our vision is to support children, families and communities, so that children and their families affected by sexual abuse (exploitation) receive sufficient therapeutic assistance to aid their recovery process.

Mission

Therefore, our mission is to ensure that every child in Ireland who may need our services, wherever they live, is aware of CARI and able to take advantage of the information, advice, therapy, accompaniment and other support services we provide.

To achieve this mission CARI will continue to provide high quality Therapy, Helpline and Accompaniment services for children and families who are affected by Child Sexual Abuse (CSA) or are displaying sexualised behaviour.

CARI will:

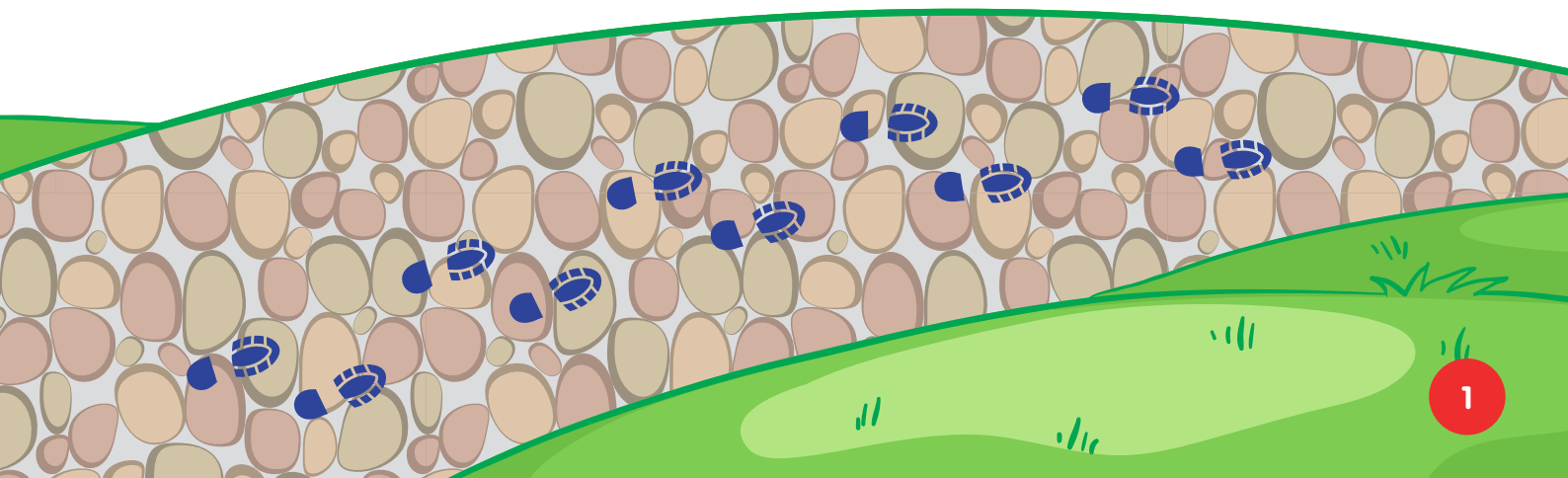
- Work with parents, carers, residential units and the wider community to help them support children recovering from the trauma of child sexual abuse.

- Campaign for adequate resources and funding of necessary services for children to be equal to those available for adults who have been affected by rape or sexual violence.
- Contribute to understanding the dynamics of child sexual abuse and advocate for appropriate responses.

Philosophy

CARI believes that children have the right to a service that respects their freedom of expression and their right to child centered services. We respect the strength and resilience of children and design our services to build on this strength, enabling children to grow into adulthood defined not by their abusive experiences but by their individuality and creativity.

CARI respects the need of each child to an individually tailored response to their particular trauma and its effect on their family.



Our Core Services

CARI is unique among childcare organisations in that it specializes in the provision of professional therapy and counselling to children and support to families affected by CSA. CARI sees parents or carers while their children are awaiting assessment. CARI supports children and their families and assists in their recovery process, regardless of their means. The organization also provides information and raises awareness of CSA, an important element in detection and prevention. CARI's core services are:

National Helpline

The CARI Helpline (Lo Call 1890 924 567) is a specialised, confidential national service and the overarching resource provided by CARI and is often the first point of contact with the organisation. CARI has a team of specially trained Helpline Advisors available from Monday – Friday from 9.30am – 5.30pm.

The expert CARI Helpline advisors respond to calls from professionals seeking referral advice and parents who have just received the devastating news that one of their children has suffered sexual abuse currently or in the past or they are concerned about their child's sexualised behaviour.

Callers to the CARI Helpline often find it difficult to express themselves but the Helpline advisors are professionally trained to deal with the difficulties that callers have, the difficulty speaking, and the intense trauma that is often evident on calls.

The CARI Helpline advisors will organise face to face appointments for parents and carers where there is an immediate and urgent need.

Child and Adolescent Therapy

CARI provides child-centred therapy for children and adolescents who have been affected by sexual abuse. CARI also provides therapy to children, up to (and including) twelve year olds, who present with sexualised behaviours.

CARI is a post assessment therapy centre and child protection concerns must have been reported to the HSE before therapy can commence.

While CARI sees the child as the primary client of our work, we believe that it is important to work with the child's family – his/her non-abusing parents and siblings – in order to effect any real change for the

child. CARI will involve, where appropriate, extended family members who are in a position to assist in the child's recovery – either by directly supporting a child or as a supportive ally to the parent/carer.

If the child is in the care of the HSE, CARI will work with the foster parents, residential care staff and social worker responsible for the child.

Parental Support

While young people are attending CARI, a unique and important service is offered through parallel support services for parents/carers. Parental support is a vital service offered to parents to support both them and their children. These parental sessions run at the same time as the child's therapy session. The therapist will explore all issues with the parents helping them to develop a language and a skill set to use to support their child in everyday life.

Parental sessions offer a space for parents to discuss their fears and worries about their child and possibly their wider family.

Child Accompaniment Support Services (CASS)

Court Accompaniment (CA)

CASS is the name given to the advocacy and support service established by CARI in response to the particular needs of child victims of sexual abuse who are called as witnesses in criminal court. CASS supports the children and their parents, carers or guardians who have to go to court. Currently the court system is designed and set up for adults, and the professionals involved are used to dealing with adult witnesses. Therefore, the court process can be a frightening, alienating and traumatic experience for the child. The continued reliance on an adversarial court system means that those few children who are asked to give evidence within a court are placed under enormous pressure, both real and perceived when asked to make a formal statement in the court setting.

At the beginning of 2009 the decision was taken to widen CARI's remit so that it accepts referrals to assist children attending court no matter what the crime. Originally CARI was specifically set up to cater for children who were giving evidence in sexual abuse cases but once protocols and standards had been

established it was evident that support could be equally beneficial to all children giving evidence no matter what the criminal case related to.

Forensic Accompaniment (FA)

CARI provides forensic accompaniment to children and their families who attend the Child & Adolescent Sexual Assault Treatment Service (CASATS), Galway and the Sexual Assault Treatment Unit (SATU) in the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin.

CARI's highly trained volunteers accompany children and their families/carers as children undergo a forensic medical examination. They offer emotional and practical support to the families while their child is being examined. This is a difficult and often traumatic time for children and families and the support offered can be really helpful in reducing the stress and trauma.

In addition, CARI volunteers have also supported and assisted in co-ordinating CARI's aftercare service. This service is offered to any adult/carer involved in supporting a child through the forensic process. Aftercare phone support is a service that families

can avail of, free of charge, that provides a client led empathic, supportive space. The aftercare support helps families from feeling isolated and allows a space for a parent or carer to explore any common concerns or questions.

Training / Education

Drawing on our expert knowledge, CARI endeavours to offer the most up to date education and information service for children, adults and professionals on the dynamics of CSA, including child protection and child therapy. CARI provides training courses focusing on CSA, child protection and child therapy to professionals including social workers, therapists and psychologists. CARI also provides preventative education programmes for young people (focusing on building self-esteem and resilience), parents and other interested groups. Due to resources limitations, this service has been scaled back in recent years, but CARI is looking to secure additional funding to support its expansion.

CARI works to raise public and political awareness of the serious crime that CSA represents.



Focusing on Outcomes and Objectives

This plan –‘Towards 2020’ - sets the course for CARI for the next three years and is the result of a 6-month process that has brought together our staff, funders and stakeholders to inform and support the development of an outcome focused strategy.

Seven strategic objectives will shape our operational plans over the next three years - ‘Towards 2020

1. *Raise the profile of CARI so that every child and family that has been affected by CSA is aware of CARI.*
2. *To identify and secure a wide range of funding sources and opportunities to ensure that we can continue to deliver a suite of high quality core services.*
3. *Ensure that we play a key role as a strategic partner to other stakeholders providing services for CSA on a regional and national basis.*
4. *Lead a continuous improvement programme in our high quality therapy-focussed services to children and their families.*
5. *Continue and update training and development programmes for all our staff and volunteers, recognising that they are a key strength.*
6. *Implement the highest level of organisational governance in accordance with best practice and regulations.*
7. *As resources allow, extend the educational programme for children, adults and professionals.*

Raise the Profile of CARI

Raising our profile will ensure that children and families who need our services are aware that we exist and know how to reach us. We also want to ensure that potential donors recognise that we have a strong profile and see us as a worthwhile organisation to fund.

We must be explicit about the services we provide so that the public understand what it is we do and why we are unique.

Key operational actions:

- Develop a communications strategy to improve public and corporate awareness of CARI;
- Increase the use of social media to raise our profile;
- Avail of broadcasting media charitable rate advertising;
- Reinstate the annual CARI conference to raise awareness of CARI and its services.

Identify and Secure a Wide Range of Funding Sources and Opportunities

To secure the future of the organisation so that CARI, as a leading non-governmental service provider, can continue to provide therapy services to children and families affected by CSA.

We will ensure that we have a balanced mix of income streams from events, direct marketing, sponsors, community fundraising, major gifts, grants, trusts and foundations. In addition, we will explore new funding sources and opportunities and improve the effectiveness of our fundraising efforts.

Key operational actions:

- Develop a fundraising strategy to identify new fundraising sources;
- Produce high quality literature to promote CARI to sponsors and donors;
- Develop fundraising skills across the organization;
- Review existing fundraising activities and ensure that they are cost and resource effective.

Play a Key Role as Strategic Partner with Other Agencies

To ensure that CARI maintains its independent status and its unique systemic therapeutic model but is integrated into the national and regional services for CSA. Clearly defining where CARI sits in a national structure for CSA will ensure that we are aligned

with and ready to deliver on the plans currently in development. We want to make sure that we can take any opportunity to offer our proven service to children and families nationwide and to be better integrated with statutory services therefore creating the best possible environment for children and families to heal.

We will also increase networking and collaboration with other leading organisations in the community and voluntary sector.

Key operational actions:

- Arrange regular meetings with other key stakeholders in partner agencies;
- Continue as a member of the national and regional steering committee;
- Improve networking and collaboration with other organisations in the voluntary sector;
- As resources allow, play a role in multi-agency working groups.

Lead a Continuous Improvement Programme in our Services

To fulfill our mission of providing “Professional, child centred therapy for children and families affected by sexual abuse” and to ensure that we provide the best possible service.

We will maintain our position as a specialised provider of services for children and families who are affected by CSA. We will regularly evaluate internally and externally by seeking feedback from clients and other professionals as well as our Board of Directors.

Key operational actions:

- Undertake a review of our existing structure and services to ensure that we are positioned to meet the demand for current and future services;
- Obtain feedback from our key stakeholders and clients (principally our child clients and their families) to understand how we can improve our core services;
- Continuous development of our best practice approaches to CSA and evaluate our services;
- Collaborate with other organisations to share knowledge.

Continue and Update Training and Development Programmes

Our staff and volunteers represent our key strength and it is important to us that they receive appropriate training and development. We employ a mix of staff and volunteers across our core services. One of our key goals is to employ more therapists to reduce our waiting lists and an effective training and development plan will ensure that we continue to provide high quality services.

Key operational actions:

- Update our training and development policy and consider a performance management system;
- Ensure that all staff are supported by an on-going professional development plan;
- Facilitate career development for our staff so that we can retain and attract talent;
- Formalise CARI's induction programme for all new staff and volunteers.

Implement the Highest Level of Organisational Governance

Governance is key to our organization. Our current Board of Directors has a range of skills including legal, finance, compliance and risk management and we ensure that governance is a key focus of the Board and senior management. We prepare annual audited financial statements and ensure compliance with all requirements of the Charities Act 2009.

Key operational actions:

- Implement a formal system of governance including an embedded risk management framework;
- Undertake a review of all procedures and controls underlying the risk management framework and where necessary introduce additional controls;
- Update the organisation's compliance policies and procedures to ensure that we continue to comply with all relevant procedures, guidelines, codes and standards;
- Continue our journey towards compliance with The Governance Code.



Extend the Educational Programme

CARI provides training courses for professionals run by our clinical staff, focusing on the areas of sexual abuse, child protection and child therapy. It is our plan to expand our ad-hoc educational talks and develop a preventative educational programme for children, parents and other interested groups. In addition, we would like to resume educational conferences which bring together professionals (Teachers, GPs, Social Workers and other mental health professionals etc) and agencies so that we can facilitate discussion on latest research, therapies and programmes for children and families affected by CSA.

Key operational actions:

- Prepare and implement an educational strategy that focuses on using our unique knowledge and skill sets to provide education for children, adults and professionals;
- Develop a professional series of educational conferences that bring together experts in CSA therapy to offer training to therapists and other professionals;
- Produce new educational material that is focused on current and future challenges that young people are facing when they use a highly sexualized social media;
- Digitise our preventative education programmes to expand to a wider audience.

Context and Strategy Development

Throughout 2015 and 2016 CARI recorded a dramatic increase in the numbers of children waiting for therapy. Currently within existing resources CARI can work with about 100 children in any year. There is an urgent need to provide local access to services for children and families impacted by CSA. Our plans take account of this and the need to provide timely support for children affected by CSA.

We continue to be challenged by funding and capacity cuts, by the need to reconfigure resources and respond to emerging needs and gaps in provision. We are committed to raising CARI's profile so that we can secure sustainable funding, increase resources, reduce waiting lists and support more children and families.

The success of our new Strategic Plan depends on CARI having the necessary organizational capability and capacity. We will continue to model good governance to develop our capacity and capability while we deliver our key strategic objectives.

We have set out our ambitions for the future based on what is achievable now and how CARI can continue to strengthen and build on success. This Strategic Plan has been developed based on a comprehensive review of key factors including:

- CARI's existing remit as service provider and advocate for children and families affected by CSA;

- The ever-increasing demand for our services and the need to ensure we keep waiting lists low and short in duration;
- The state's establishment of a national approach to addressing the impact of CSA and specifically what CARI can contribute as a national service provider.

Our approach to developing our strategy has been inclusive and integrated. *'Towards 2020'* - was informed by a review of our previous plan *'Building on Strong Foundations 2011 – 2014'* and through consultation with our key stakeholders. Core groups of staff in both Dublin and Limerick participated in workshops covering the challenges faced by CARI today and their vision for the future. The Board of Directors provided guidance and direction as to the necessary priorities for the next 3 years. In addition, we have taken account of the development plans in TUSLA (our major statutory partner) and other CSA services.

Our Strategy is directional and it will be supported by annual operational plans. While it aligns to the national agenda in relation to supporting children and families impacted by CSA it is very much a plan for CARI.



Background Information

Incidence of CSA in Ireland

The only comprehensive Irish study (SAVI, 2002)¹ indicates 1 in 5 people in Ireland experience an incidence of abuse in childhood, ranging from mild to one in eight experiencing some contact abuse. Child sexual abuse crosses ethnic, racial, religious, and socioeconomic boundaries. It happens to children in every kind of family, neighbourhood and community. Sexual abuse can happen to anyone regardless of age, gender or race. Myths still abound and there is an ongoing need for education. The latest published Tusla figures² indicate that in 2015 the number of new referrals for CSA was 2,940.

Impact of Abuse

The impact of sexual abuse can range from no apparent effects to very severe. Every experience of abuse is individual and every individual child and family's response equally so. Sexual abuse may distort the child's sense of self, their relationship with others, their view of the world and reality, and their development. This can manifest itself in a range of ways such as the child becoming depressed, isolating him/her self, misusing substances, refusing school, self-harming, developing eating disorders, becoming promiscuous or having relationship difficulties. Sexual abuse also impacts on the family, who may experience a wide range of feelings such as shock, anger, disbelief, fear and guilt denial and shame, and these are difficult emotions to deal with.

Families or carers may feel totally inadequate to the task of helping their child deal with disclosure. This is one of the key competencies of CARI. Therefore it is vital that both children and families have timely and local access to services where their trauma and distress are acknowledged and supported without judgement.

Long Term Impact of CSA

The long-term effects of CSA have been correlated with higher levels of depression, guilt, shame, eating disorders, somatic concerns, anxiety, dissociative patterns, repression, denial, sexual problems, and relationship problems, addiction and mental health issues in adult life. Research has shown that up to 90% of children who have experienced sexual abuse

(without treatment) will develop mental health issues by the time they are 18. Many children believe that they have done something to cause the abuse to happen and see it as their fault. Children must be helped to understand that it was not their fault.

The SAVI Report showed that 47% of women and 60% of men who suffered sexual abuse in their childhood never told anyone until they spoke to the SAVI researchers.

Common relationship difficulties that adults who have experienced CSA may experience are difficulties in recognising that abusive behaviour may be happening to their children, difficulties establishing and maintaining relationships, difficulties with trust, fear of intimacy, fear of being different, holding boundaries, passive behaviours and getting involved in abusive relationships. It is important to point out that although research has shown there to be significant relationships between long-term effects and childhood sexual abuse, each person's responses and experiences are different.

There is hope for children who have experienced sexual abuse. International research and 25 years of CARI providing the services needed by children and families in a supportive safe environment confirms that children who have access to the appropriate supports can regain their childhood. Through the helpline, therapy and accompaniment services CARI creates that hope, trust and confidence enabling these children to recover and to live full lives and reduces the risk of developing mental health issues in adolescence and adulthood.

Societal Cost of CSA

A planned investment of funding in early detection, prevention and specialised therapy is not only a moral necessity, but is vital in reducing the long term costs on society. The long term costs of the alcohol and drug services, the criminal justice system and the adult mental health services are significant. For example, research shows that victims of CSA are over-represented in prisons and in 2015, the average annual cost of an 'available, staffed prison space' was €69,000. In addition to these tangible costs, the human and emotional cost cannot be underestimated.

¹ The SAVI Report -McGee H, Garavan R, de Barra M, Byrne J, Conroy R. The SAVI Report: Sexual Abuse and Violence in Ireland. Executive Summary. Dublin: Dublin Rape Crisis Centre; 2002.

² Tusla Business Plan 2017.

Peer reviewed publications of research and statistical evidence shows that, independent of socio-economic class or other demographic factors, ongoing poor physical and mental health has been linked to trauma in childhood. We need to think long term and acknowledge that health problems we see as adults, such as cancers, diabetes, addiction, and increased surgical procedures such as hysterectomy, begin in untreated childhood trauma.

Recognising the proven role that adverse childhood experiences play in adult ill health should provide opportunities for better treatment of children and their families, and refocus our efforts on holistically supporting them at an early stage. Cutting corners with support for families and children affected by adversity will mean we see increased pressures on health services which support them throughout their adult lives, and for generations to come.

Siblings

Non-abused children whose siblings have been abused may have to deal with many issues but siblings' needs are often overlooked. Siblings may be confused, feel neglected, feel guilty because they knew or suspected the abuse or guilty because they were spared from being abused. Siblings may be overwhelmed or upset by the changes in the family. They may feel angry towards the abuser or angry towards the child who has experienced the abuse because of the disruption in the family life. CARI ensures that siblings' needs are also recognised and supported. Providing information to parents about the needs of non-abused siblings is vitally important for families affected by CSA. Siblings also need their own space in therapy to work through their experiences and the impact on them.



Company Details

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