



**Rape Crisis Ireland's
Specialist Sexual Violence Training for Accredited Counsellors
October 2026 – June 2027**

The mission of **Rape Crisis Ireland's Specialist Sexual Violence Training for Accredited Counsellors** is to meet survivors' evidenced need for a specialist sexual violence counselling response. This response is based on the Rape Crisis model, which understands sexual violence in context and trauma as political as much as it is personal. Our aim is to equip qualified practitioners to support survivors in breaking through complex societal and cultural barriers to understanding what was done to them, in a manner that empowers. Our method in each course is to create a strong, committed and safe group to work together, face-to-face, in mutual support and challenge. Our trainers are drawn from the most experienced practitioners in the movement in Ireland.

The next training will take place over the course of nine two-day trainings*, which will take place in the [Clayton Hotel, Sligo](#), starting in October 2026.

The aim of the course is to build on the professional counsellors' skills the specialist knowledge to engage safely with sexual violence survivors. The course will encompass theories on sexual violence, various models of counselling, counselling practice and personal process. A typical weekend will have a theme or a couple of theme topics; for example, sexuality will be covered in a whole weekend.

Other topics will include childhood sexual abuse, rape, dynamics of sexual violence, feminist theory relating to sexual violence, counselling practice and issues relating to counselling, male rape, issues of self-harm, addiction, medical and legal issues, perpetrators, emotions and stages of recovery, body work, crisis counselling and transference, and intersectionality.

Theories will be delivered in lecture format with group discussion encouraged. Most of the learning will be experiential, and group members will be expected to participate by feeding back their ideas, thoughts and feelings etc. within both small and large groups.

The objective of the course is to give qualified counsellors specialist skills and competency in sexual violence to enable them to work within the sexual violence sector or with clients directly impacted by sexual violence.

Other objectives of the course are to:

- Further develop reflectiveness
- Attain a clear understanding of counselling survivors of sexual violence, and gain a comprehensive knowledge of the issues involved

- Foster the skills involved in creating the therapeutic conditions and advancing the therapeutic process in the counselling relationship with these clients
- Enhance self-awareness and self-acceptance
- Develop sufficient confidence to work with clients both short term and long-term
- Gain an in-depth understanding of the effects of sexual violence on the individual, the family and society
- Understand how culture, context and myths around sexual violence impact on the survivor and society and self
- Understand the role of the counsellor in supporting someone who is disclosing crime/s, including issues around counselling notes, disclosure and reporting.

Commitment

The course places strong emphasis on group work and active participation. Trainees, as qualified counsellors, are expected to honour this commitment and take responsibility for their own engagement. Successful participation requires trainees to be fully engaged and genuinely motivated to be there. On joining the course, trainees agree to a contract outlining their responsibilities. This is a reflective and sometimes challenging space; therefore, ground rules must be respected at all times to ensure safety and maximise learning and growth opportunities.

Any issues that arise during the course will generally be addressed within the group as part of this reflective and ongoing process; however, we recognise it may on occasion be necessary for the trainers to discuss a matter directly with a trainee outside of the group in order to explore and assess a trainee's needs.

Evaluation on a module-by-module basis and a final evaluation are part of the course.

A **Certificate of Attendance** will be issued and can go towards Continuing Professional Development (CPD) to everyone who successfully completes the training. It is strongly encouraged to attend every weekend.

Trainers - The course will be delivered by **Vera O'Leary** and **Ruth MacNeely**, who are both highly experienced rape crisis counsellors and trainers who have decades of experience in the sexual violence sector under their belts.

Fee - The course is subject to a small sliding scale fee based on capacity to pay (maximum €450). Applicants currently working in one of RCI's member Rape Crisis Centre will have that fee waived on the basis of continued commitment to service in that centre for the next two years.

*We are grateful to **Community Foundation Ireland** for funding to support this training.*

****The course will take place on the following dates:***

9-10 October 2026

13-14 November 2026

11-12 December 2026

08-09 January 2027

12-13 February 2027

12-13 March 2027

09-10 April 2027

07-08 May 2027

11-12 June 2027