



CARANUA

support for survivors of institutional abuse



Executive Summary

Evaluation of the impact of Caranua in
providing funding supports to survivors of
institutional abuse

To: Norma Foley - Minister for Education,
Department of Education

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. INTRODUCTION

Caranua is an independent State body, which was established in 2012 by the Residential Institutions Statutory Fund Act, (RISF) 2012, to manage a Fund of €110 million (€111.38M including interest) for survivors of institutional abuse. Caranua began to accept applications from eligible applicants from the 6th January 2014 and stopped providing services on 11th December 2020.

To have been eligible for support from Caranua, survivors must have received an award of financial compensation through the Irish courts, the Residential Institutions Redress Board, or directly through settlement with religious congregations. Under legislation, Caranua were provided with the name, address and date of birth of survivors from the Residential Institutions Redress Board. This information could only be used to prove eligibility and could not be used to initiate first contact with survivors. The legislation also set out that services were to be provided under the headings of health, housing and education.

Of the survivors who applied to Caranua roughly two thirds lived in Ireland, one third in the UK, and a small percentage are scattered around the world, with clusters in Australia, Canada and USA.

Although a public body, Caranua did not receive any public funding. All funds were provided by voluntary contributions from religious congregations. The legislation also set out that all operational costs must be met from the fund. This caused a negative perception as it was seen by some that Caranua was spending money on operations that should have been used for survivors only. Staff and survivors felt strongly that operational costs should have been provided for separately from the Fund.

Funding from congregations was provided on an ad-hoc basis, this approach caused particular issues for Caranua in 2019 when there was €8.4M in outstanding contributions and no planned timeline for receipt. The funds were finally committed in September 2019 and final payments made in December 2019 (Table 1).

Table 1 Schedule of payments of contributions from Religious Congregations

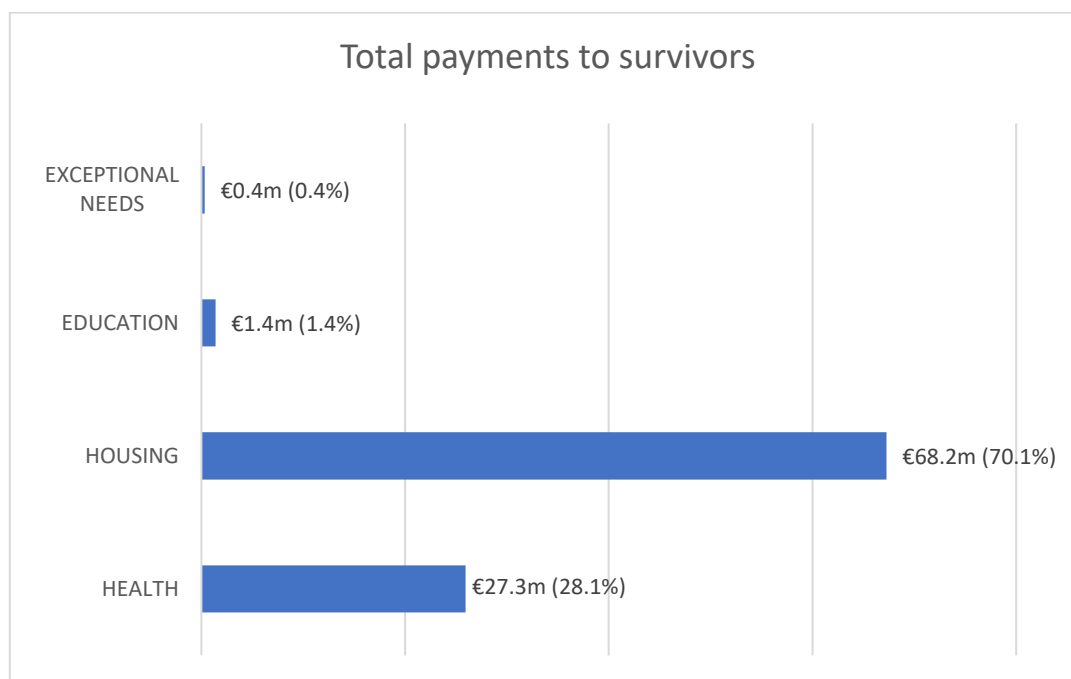
Year	Amount paid into Fund	Cumulative amount
pre-2013	€41,314,845	€41,314,845
2013	€33,454,203	€74,769,048
2014	€5,543,040	€80,312,088
2015	€4,606,081	€84,918,169
2016	€11,194,081	€96,112,250
2017	€4,911,034	€101,023,284
2018	€ 1,987,637	€103,010,921
2019	€8,371,090	€111,382,011

Due to under resourcing of sanctioned staff between 2014 and 2016, Caranua had no option but to employ temporary agency staff to meet the demands of case work. This led to a high turnover of staff as temporary staff moved on to other more permanent opportunities.

The Department of Education gave sanction for the recruitment of additional staff numbers in 2016 and again in 2018 this resulted in a more stable workforce and a decrease in waiting times for survivors.

To the end of 2020, €97,425,226 was spent on funding support services for survivors and €13,492,282 on operational costs.

Chart 1 Fund spend by funding category



As a public body, Caranua is required to follow government procurement guidelines, and this requirement extends to the provision of funding support services to survivors. Therefore, survivors are required to provide a specified number of quotations depending on the cost of the requested service (Table 2). Each survivor worked with a dedicated application advisor who offered supports but this could be a difficult process for some survivors.

Table 2 Procurement quotation process

Service cost under €1,000	One quotation required
Service cost between €1,000 - €5,000	Two quotations required
Service cost over €5,000	Three quotations required

The main purpose of this evaluation was to carry out an independent review on the impact of Caranua's work with survivors. More specifically, the evaluation sought:

1. To identify to what extent the objectives of Caranua have been achieved.
2. To measure the impact of the provision of services for survivors of institutional abuse.
3. To identify the lessons learnt during the operations of Caranua, creating a shared learning experience for professionals and organisation working with survivors.

The evaluation was conducted by means of a mixed methodology, incorporating desk research, in-depth interviews with survivors, and self-completion questionnaires with Board members and current and former staff. A balance of male and female, whose applications spanned across the years of Caranua's operations was used to guide the process (Table 4).

A total of 186 survivors (Table 3) were contacted randomly by Caranua staff to discuss the purpose of the evaluation and to invite them to participate. Of these, 59 survivors agreed to participate and they were contacted by the researcher on a confidential basis. The majority of these survivors (n=45) ultimately took part, while 14 withdrew from the process for a variety of reasons. The confidentiality of respondents was regarded as very important by most of the participants.

Table 3 Survivors sampling process

Total Survivors Contacted by Caranua	186
Year Caranua in Operation	Participants per year
2014	21
2015	21
2016	26
2017	26
2018	34
2019	29
2020	29
Gender of Survivors Contacted by Caranua	
Male	103
Female	83

Table 4 Profile of sample - survivors

Survivors	Number	%
Age		
50 years or less	5	11
51-59 years	9	20
60-69 years	16	36
70+ years	15	33
Gender		
Male	23	51
Female	22	49
Country of Residence		
Ireland (RoI)	27	60
UK	12	27
Other (USA, Australia, Canada, Philippines, Sweden, Netherlands)	6	13
Total	45	100%

Participants included a representation of survivors living in Ireland and abroad. The sampling process also included survivors from smaller demographic groups, such as survivors who had experienced homelessness, people who had been in prison, and members of the deaf community.

A questionnaire was designed for each stakeholder group. The selection process was managed by senior staff in Caranua, and records of contacts and attempted contacts with survivors have been saved for future scrutiny.

Survivors were advised that there was no pressure on them to participate in the evaluation and that, even after consenting to take part, they could rescind their consent at any time. Each of the participants gave verbal permission to participate in the evaluation.

2. KEY FINDINGS

A clear majority of the different stakeholders (survivors, Board members, staff and survivor support groups and counselling services) were satisfied with most aspects of the Caranua programme, as the following findings illustrate.

2.1 The views of survivors who were interviewed

Perceived Positive Features of Caranua

Most of the survivors had something positive to say about Caranua, as the following findings illustrate:

- 87% of survivors said that the support they received from Caranua was either 'very good' or 'good'.
- more than three quarters (78%) of the participants thought that the service provided by Caranua was 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good'.
- three quarters (75%) of participants said they were 'very happy' or 'quite happy' with the range of support services provided by Caranua, including the inclusion of white goods and funeral payments in the list of services.
- three quarters (75%) of participants described their relationship with their application advisor as either 'very good' or 'good'.
- almost three quarters of participants (73%) said they were 'very happy' or 'happy' with the information Caranua gave to them.
- a majority of participants (73%) gave Caranua a score of 8, 9 or 10, where 10 is excellent.
- more than two thirds (69%) of the participants said they were 'very' or 'quite' happy with the application process.
- two thirds (67%) of participants said they found Caranua to be approachable when they contacted them for the first time.

Conversely, a minority (15% - 20%) of survivors were less than satisfied with individual aspects of the process, including

- a perception that there was too much red tape or that they felt that were not trusted. The perceived lack of trust was particularly poignant because it reminded some survivors of the control they experienced in institutions when they were growing up in Ireland.

2.2 The views of seven survivor support groups and counselling services

Perceived Positive Features of Caranua

- the professionalism and friendliness of Caranua staff.
- the way Caranua staff understood and responded to their queries.
- the information updates provided by Caranua.
- their overall service, which was perceived to have improved over the years.
- the positive impact Caranua has had on the lives of survivors.
- the broadening of the service criteria.

- the management team.

Conversely, some Survivor groups were less than satisfied with individual aspects of the process, including

- Caranua's perceived lack of engagement with survivor support organisations, and initial reluctance to engage face-to-face with survivors.

2.3 The views of nine Board Members

Perceived Positive Features of Caranua

- the overall governance of Caranua and its compliance with the Code of Practice for the governance of State bodies.
- the responsiveness of the Board in administering the fund.
- their belief that Caranua has achieved its three core objectives.
- the achievements of Caranua e.g., the provision of services.
- the positive feedback from survivors to the board.
- the positive impact they believe they had on the lives of survivors.
- the hard work, commitment and skills of staff and the executive.
- the work of the Audit and Risk Committee.
- establishing links with Survivor groups, and
- the provision of a wide variety of services to a vulnerable group of 6,000+ people in a fair and equitable way.

Conversely, the Board were also less than satisfied with certain aspects of the programme, including

- the inadequate resources, such as trained staff and support that was available in the early years,
- the constraints of legislation, and the
- differences of opinion between some Board members.

2.4 The Views of 23 Staff (Past and Present)

Perceived Positive Features of Caranua

- the belief that all of the objectives had been achieved.
- the way funding supports were allocated to eligible applicants.
- the perceived difference Caranua has made to the lives of the survivors.
- the relatively straightforward application process.
- the willingness of Caranua to include additional services in 2016.
- the perceived impact Caranua has made on the quality of lives of 6,000+ survivors.
- the positive feedback from survivors.
- the establishment of links and learning with survivor groups.
- the general satisfaction with the way operational matters and staff matters were handled.
- the compassion, experience and skills of the staff.
- a willingness for staff to listen to survivors' stories.
- the empathy and understanding of staff for the survivors.
- the management.
- the case management system
- their willingness to be flexible in meeting with survivors.

Conversely, some of the staff were also less than satisfied with certain aspects of the programme, including, the

- large caseloads and resulting waiting lists,
- inadequate numbers of trained staff in the early years,
- limited support for staff and the potential burnout of staff, and
- the complicated nature of the application process

3. THE EVALUATION

Aim 1: To what extent the objectives of Caranua have been achieved.

The three core objectives of Caranua are firstly, to improve the quality, reach and impact of services to survivors; secondly, to create opportunities for the experiences and views of survivors to be collected; and thirdly, to maximise Caranua's organisational capacity, accountability and effectiveness. The information collected in the course of this evaluation suggests that the objectives of Caranua have been largely achieved, especially objective 1 and also, to a lesser extent, objectives 2 and 3.

Objective 1: *Increasing the reach and improving the impact of services to survivors was a difficult task for Caranua.*

While the name, date of birth and contact details of survivors who accessed redress were provided to Caranua (this was the only information that was provided), Caranua were not allowed to use this information to make first contact with survivors. A survivor made first contact and then their eligibility could be verified by checking the redress data.

Caranua placed posters in public serving spaces and advertised in newspapers to try to extend the reach. Mostly commonly survivors heard about Caranua through word of mouth.

However, a total of 6,661 people contacted Caranua, of which 6,181 were survivors who were eligible for services.

The services provided by Caranua were generally perceived to be useful and timely by most survivors, and that they made a positive difference to their lives.

Objective 2: *Creating opportunities for the experiences and views of survivors to be collected.*

A substantial amount of information on survivors' experiences was collected from different sources, and funding was available for individual survivors to 'tell their stories'. However, this service has only been requested by a small number of survivors. The rationale of this service was that it would respond to the needs and aspirations expressed by some survivors to improve their well-being by aiding healing and recovery, and contributing to a legacy of telling their stories, so that institutional abuse could be understood and prevented in the future. Two of the survivors who took part in the evaluation were interested in publishing their stories.

Objective 3: *Maximising Caranua's organisational capacity, accountability and effectiveness.*

There was significant learning for Caranua in the early years of the project, when its capacity and effectiveness were hampered by inadequate numbers of trained staff and resources, which led to heavy workloads. The flexibility of the organisation was curtailed by legislative restrictions and red tape.

Aim 2: To measure the impact of the provision of services for Survivors of institutional abuse.

The evidence from the current study and data provided by Caranua suggests that the services provided to these survivors of institutional abuse had a positive impact on their lives.

To the end of 2020, Caranua has made 57,134 individual funding payments, amounting to €97.4 million, across three main sectors: housing, health and education.

- 87% of the survivors said that the support provided by Caranua was important to them.
- 75% of survivors were happy with the range of support services they received from Caranua.
- 78% found the service provided by Caranua to be good.

The different stakeholders generally believe that Caranua have had a positive impact on the lives of survivors. However, while they believe that the impact is unlikely to be significant, it is nonetheless perceived to be a real and a positive impact.

Aim 3: To identify the lessons learnt during the operations of Caranua, creating a shared learning experience for professionals and organisation working with survivors.

Learning recommendation for people working with survivors

- Trust survivors and recognise it takes time for survivors to build trust in an organisation.
- Survivors are a complex group with many different needs; some are very passive and require additional support to engage, while others are more aggressive.
- Consult with survivors to agree on services and the most appropriate process for distributing these services.
- Be more flexible with services.
- Be consistent with information provided.
- Facilitate feedback opportunities.
- Younger survivors are too often left out of discussions.
- Don't forget survivors who may be more vulnerable e.g., prisoners, homeless
- Be aware that survivors often have literacy problem.
- Survivors may be reluctant to engage with state organisation or perceived authority figures.

Learning recommendations for Government and Government Departments

- Review any relevant legislation before it is enacted to ensure it has no unintended consequences. Understand what impact legislative constraints may have on day-to-day operations.
- Have clear processes in place to support the establishment of new state bodies.
- Don't establish a body until all resources (financial & staffing etc) are scoped, agreed and sanctioned.
- The government department, chairperson and anyone responsible for the legislation to sit down together and ensure full understanding of purpose with the intent of working together for benefit of service user.
- Funding should be guaranteed, not voluntary.
- Setting up a fund and then requiring operational costs to be met from it has far reaching consequences. E.g., perception of survivors, pressure to have minimal operational spend, impact of service provision.
- Understand the governance requirements on state bodies and recognise how this may impact on the running of a person-centred service.
- All government agencies should adopt a more holistic approach when working with survivors or other marginalised groups.
- Many survivors will require ongoing supports when Caranua closes down.

4. Conclusion

More than three-quarters of the participants thought that the service provided by Caranua was 'excellent', 'very good' or 'good'.

87% of survivors questioned believed the support given to them by Caranua was 'very important' or 'important' in their lives; for some, the difference in the quality of their lives was monetary, for others it was assistance at a bad time in their lives or that the support helped improve their mental or physical health.

It should be noted that some survivors held both positive and negative views of different aspects of the process, where they could be generally very positive towards most aspects of Caranua but annoyed by a specific issue.

The survivors questioned articulated the importance of feeling trusted, and for some, the adherence to processes undermined their trust in Caranua particularly when receipts were requested. The concept of fairness is also significant, survivors raised matters such as, why some survivors got more funding supports at the beginning and a desire that survivors in the UK/abroad and prison are not at a disadvantage.

When asked about future supports from the State, many survivors raised their concerns about their health (mental and physical) and the assistance of an enhanced medical card.

Survivor support groups recommended connecting with them at the outset, to build positive relationships and to benefit from their knowledge and networks. They recognised providing a survivor focused service for a diverse group and balancing compliance with processes is an issue. The introduction of one-to-one meetings for survivors was significant, as some survivors managed the process without any problems, others need more intensive one to one support.

The Board members main recommendations for future services of this sort are to have properly-trained and experienced staff from the beginning of the project, to ensure all members of the Board are adequately trained for their roles, and it would have been better to impose limits on individual funds from the beginning.

When asked to identify the main learnings from Caranua's work, current and former staff made the following suggestions most often, staff should have an awareness of the complex nature and needs of survivors; the importance of all staff receiving trauma-informed care training, and the importance of having enough staff who are trained and supported for the task.