

2022

Annual Report



**Accessible Mental Health
Services - 7 Days a Week**

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Chairperson's Message



Evin Cusack, Chairperson

Dear friends and supporters,

Since I joined the Board of Trustees of Helplink Mental Health in late 2021, I have been greatly impressed by the energy, passion and commitment of its Board under the leadership of Gilles Varrette and the Helplink team led by our CEO Lochlann Scott. As Gilles has described in previous annual reports, this team reacted with creativity, resilience and empathy to all the challenges (practical and emotional) that the Covid period presented. It is a testament to that resilience and creativity that Helplink continued to grow its capacity and reach during that very challenging time. For that reason, as we move forward into 2023 and the new challenges it will undoubtedly present, I want on behalf of my colleagues on the Board of Trustees, to acknowledge the continued efforts and professionalism of the Helplink office team and of our amazing counsellors without whom none of the achievements that Lochlann will address in his report would have been possible.

2022 was a year of re-building and refocusing after the challenges of 2020 and 2021. In Helplink this re-building took the form of increasing the number of appointments delivered, having another good year in fundraising and recruitment of a new Service Delivery Manager (Laura Condon), with clinical management experience to help us

grow in a safe, well-assured and compliant manner as we strive to provide high-quality supports to clients who use our services.

As we face into 2023, the Helplink team will need to focus on maximising how we use our physical premises, expanding the reach of our on-line services (built originally during Covid time), harnessing the power of partnerships by entering more and larger service level agreements with key sector partners (like those with whom we are already aligned including TUSLA, GAT, Alone, Mental Health Reform, etc.) and seeking sponsorship and other new sources of funding for key initiatives and to support our efforts to develop additional reach.

The Board would like to acknowledge Helplink's partners and sponsors. We value and appreciate the trust that you have placed in us to deliver services in your name or to align your brands with ours. We take this trust seriously and are conscious of the responsibilities we have to you. We will continue as a Board and as your charity partner to provide high quality, readily accessible care to the communities that we serve and to find new ways of growing those services in range and reach to the best of our ability.

Continuing with the theme of acknowledgement, I would also like to thank our clients on behalf of the entire Helplink team for continuing to put their faith in our services and more particularly for having the self-belief, determination and courage to take on their own personal challenges and invest time and energy in their own well-being. Be under no illusion, your courage and your efforts are inspiring to us.

Finally, I would also like to say a particular "Thank-You" to Gilles Varrette, my predecessor as Helplink Chair. All of the developments mentioned have been achieved under his stewardship and guidance. As a Board colleague, he was welcoming and supportive, knowledgeable and patient. He had a strong vision for how Helplink could develop and the role that the Board could have in terms of strategic oversight, risk management and the provision of supportive challenge. Gilles contribution during the years of his involvement has been immense, so we know that as he moves on to other challenges, he will keep one eye on us and remain a good friend of Helplink into the future.

All the best

Evin Cusack

Chairperson of Helplink Mental Health



CEO's Message



Lochlann Scott, CEO

Welcome to our 2022 annual report. 2022 was a significant year of impact, growth, and new partnerships for Helplink Mental Health. 2022 also saw Helplink celebrate its ten-year anniversary of providing free or low cost and accessible mental health services for children, young people, and adults!

From very humble beginnings we have developed Helplink to be a national, award winning and sustainable organisation that continuously works with the communities we serve to provide mental health services in ways that people are more likely to and more interested in engaging with.

In 2022 we provided >6550 counselling appointments to children, young people and adults locally, nationally and internationally (Irish abroad); nearly 500 more appointments than in 2021 (6,100).

Furthermore, we provided our unique and award winning continuously accessible Student Mental Health Workshops to >500 primary school children across the country through our e-learning platform Mind Hacks. Also, on the Mind Hacks platform we supported >2500 people to find mental health information through our unique digital video and podcast libraries; some of the most viewed videos and listened to podcasts were around how your family affects your mental health, sleep issues and child and youth anxiety.

We continued our partnership with the Gambling Awareness Trust (providing Ireland's only online, national gambling addiction counselling service). In

fact, we further developed the service in 2022 by providing a national online aftercare group meeting service - where clients that had finished their one-to-one counselling support (free) could continue to have support through therapeutic/peer support; to help them deal to continue to deal with their ongoing addiction.

In this year we also developed a new partnership with Galway City Partnership, where we provide six free counselling sessions to each of the unemployed people they work with and refer on.

Speaking of new partnerships in 2022 we partnered with ALONE (national charity that helps older people to age at home) and Mental Health Reform to pilot a free online counselling service for older people in their own homes (with the support of ALONE support workers). The service was initially with older citizens in Donegal in 2022; and expanded to cover more counties in the West and Northwest in 2023 in phase 2.

Furthermore, we expanded the TUSLA service contract in 2022 from solely an alcohol addiction counselling service (adults) to also providing a general counselling service for TUSLA foster carers as well. This service is due to expand even further in 2023.

From a funding, recognition, and awards perspective we are delighted to say that the following organisations saw the merit of the work we do with our communities and as a result wanted to be a part of our efforts to support children, young people and adult across our communities with their mental health:



At the Rethink Ireland SED showcase Helplink was one of four chosen social enterprises (out of 100 that they funded) for special mention in their 2018 to 2022 Impact Report.

We won the award in recognition of 'Excellent Patient Experience' What Clinic Patient Service Awards 2021

We won Best Gambling Addiction Counselling Service - Republic of Ireland GHP Mental Health Awards 2022

The ESB Energy for Generations Fund. & the Ireland Funds - Heart of the Community Fund 2022 both supported us to increase our footprint in Galway; we are in the process of tripling our therapy rooms as result.

Galway City Council (social inclusion fund and community enhancement scheme), Bons Secours and more...

Social inclusion is extremely important to us in Helplink, that is why providing innovative and accessible mental health services is one of the key pillars of our organisation. To advance and enhance this area we try to upskill those who work with us as much as possible. For example, as per the fund mentioned above from Galway City Council around social inclusion, we provided a CPD training event by trainers from Amach (LGBTQ+ organisation) and from Galway Traveller Movement to our counsellors/therapist and staff. Both expert trainers concentrated on the topic of cultural competency to support our staff in providing as culturally competent a service as possible to our clients.

I, on behalf of Helplink, would like to thank all our counselling clients, workshop participants and mental health information seekers for choosing to work with us to benefit their

mental health and wellbeing and we look forward to continuing to support you all now and throughout your lifetimes.

Furthermore, I would like to thank our funding partners, the companies that have taken on our Employee Assistance Programmes for their staff, the schools we work with, local councils in Galway and Mayo, our partners on the Irish Abroad counselling service, our technology partners Prevos Solutions and the wonderful Coldtober™ participants who braved the cold dips or shower across October to raise vital funds for our mental health services; and of course everyone else who works with us to provide the best in class mental health services possible for our communities.

Finally, I would like to thank Helplink's Board of Trustees for their time and dedication to Helplink's mission and vision, our administration staff, our counsellors/therapists and of course our volunteers; without their support Helplink would not be making the amazing impact it does daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly, regarding mental health service provision.

Mise le meas,

Lochlann Scott

Founder/CEO @ Helplink Mental Health

Our Mission

Helplink Mental Health's mission is to provide accessible, free or low cost mental health services; locally, nationally and internationally, 7 days a week and out-of-hours.

The three types of mental health services that Helplink provides are: Counselling, Information Provision and Education.

Our Vision

To be a leading charitable organisation by providing innovative and accessible mental health services locally, nationally and internationally.

Our Values

We value **Innovation** in service delivery and we work on an ongoing basis with our funding partners and clients to ensure that we are providing the best service possible; in a way that meets our clients' needs. Innovation in technology is one of these examples as we provide most of our services online, as well as face-to-face, which enables people in rural areas, people with physical disabilities and others to receive the support they need in a way that suits them.

We as an organisation value **Partnership** with other agencies/organisations in local, national and international communities. It is our belief that non-profit organisations can accomplish more if we work to complement the existing resources available in these communities rather than duplicate them. An example of our partnerships on a local level is providing appointments in local health centres and community centres in order to bring our much needed services to the people where

they need them. Our work with Irish support organisations on the ground internationally to promote our Irish Abroad Counselling Service and to help facilitate client referrals; is an example of our work with international partners.

As a charitable organisation, that provides mental health services, **Transparency** is of paramount importance to us. Helplink operates in a way that is honest, transparent and ethical. Our accounts are available to the public for viewing, upon request, as are our annual reports.

Confidentiality is a key value for our organisation due to the work we carry out in the mental health sector. We go above and beyond the industry standards when it comes to confidentiality – we achieve this, for example, by not storing client counselling notes in the cloud and by not keeping any paper based files for clients. We also have client contracts where confidentiality is discussed with the client for transparency. Furthermore, all staff, volunteers, board members, contractors sign up to our code of conduct which is available in our HR policies and procedure document.

Helplink believes in the philosophy of **Good Stewardship**. As a result we endeavour to have a Board that has a diverse range of skills, expertise, genders and personal qualities in order to provide robust and effective stewardship. We are a registered charity with the Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) (Ireland) and also have (CHY) status with the Revenue Commissioners.

Furthermore, we have systems and processes that are regularly reviewed, to ensure that we can achieve and sustain our objectives with integrity.



Our Mental Health Services

Helplink's qualified, insured and Garda vetted counsellors are available for appointments 7 days a week and out-of-hours from 9 am to 9 pm Monday to Friday and 12 to 6 pm Saturday and Sunday; for free or at low set costs.

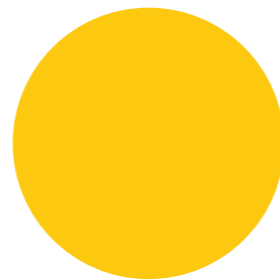
Since its inception in 2012, our Counsellors and Therapists have provided appointments to children, young people and adults, online nationally and also face-to-face in Galway and Mayo.

National Counselling Services

- **General Counselling**
- **Couples Counselling**
- **Youth Counselling** (including addiction)
- **Addiction Counselling**
- **Bereavement Therapy**
- **Student Mentoring/Counselling Services**
- **Employee Counselling Service:** we provide a national staff/employee counselling service that is available 7 days a week; nationwide. This is a pay-as-you-go service; which is perfect for companies small, medium and large.
- **Gambling Addiction Counselling Service:** Helplink provides Ireland's only free, national gambling addiction counselling service, by phone and online (video); 7 days a week..

“ I found these sessions to be invaluable to my healing. Both immediately and over time a safe space was developed to allow me to gain strength and support. I will always be grateful for this time and space and the kind empathy shown to me. ”

Online counselling client, 2022.



Local & International Counselling Services

Galway & Mayo: locally we provide the above suite of counselling services and also Play or Art Therapy; face-to-face.

Tusla Commissioned Services: Since 2017 we have been providing a free alcohol dependency counselling service to clients over 18 referred to Helplink by Tusla. In 2021 Helplink was commissioned by Tusla to provide a second service, where we provide counselling to Tusla foster carers in need of support (general, bereavement, addiction and/or couples counselling).

Irish Abroad & Returning Irish Counselling Service: we also have an international service where we provide our unique free, online Irish Abroad counselling service for Irish citizens living abroad and also returning Irish emigrants.

Testimonial from an Irish Abroad service client, 2022:

“ Thank you so much for organizing the Irish Abroad counselling sessions with Mark. I am incredibly grateful! These sessions have been so instrumental in helping me deal with the isolation and struggles of living abroad as well as with life in general. Mark is such a great listener and I feel that he really cares. He has been helping me to see that I have the tools to help myself. It means so much just feeling that my thoughts and feelings are heard and validated.

While there are still some very tough times, I'm getting more hopeful that life will get better, no, is getting better! ”

Information Provision & Educational Services



Mind Hacks (mindhacks.ie) is an e-learning platform by Helplink, which provides mental health and emotional wellbeing information and education services:

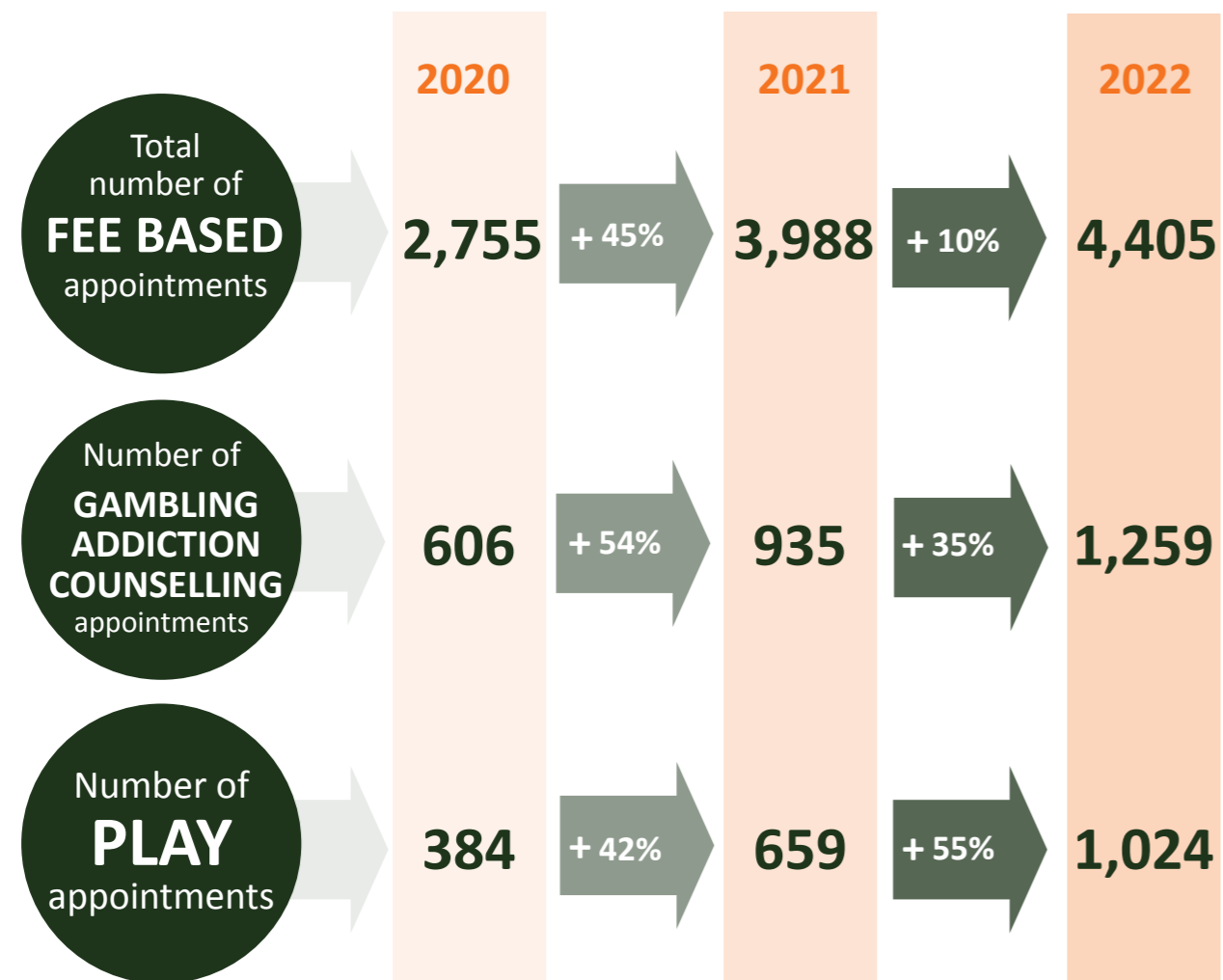
- **Information service:** we curate >1000 video and podcast Libraries around the topics of mental health & emotional wellbeing. Free to use, content for all ages; available 24/7.
- **Education service:** we provide accessible mental wellness and resilience building life skills workshops for children (6th class workshop called The Voyage) and young people (aged 15 to 25 years workshop called Mind How You Go) which are available 24/7.



Counselling Appointment figures

In 2022 we provided >6550 counselling appointments to children, young people and adults locally, nationally and internationally (Irish abroad); nearly 500 more appointments than in 2021 (6,100).

Please see below some of the appointment statistics with regard to our counselling services:



National Fundraiser



For many years, we as an organisation have been searching for a national fundraiser that will aid in creating an even more sustainable organisation from a finance point of view; to help us deliver our services and also develop new services and locations. In 2021 we began our first national fundraiser called Coldtober™.

National Fundraiser to Support Our Services Coldtober™ 2022.

Coldtober™ is our main fundraising event for the year, it takes place across the month of October. In 2022 each day we had over 400 participants to join us in this month-long cold water fundraiser challenge. The fundraiser was a significant success not just financially (we secured over 93k in donations), it also helped to raise awareness of our organisation and services nationally, leading to more people availing of our services.



With thanks to our main sponsor:



And our new sponsors:



Client feedback

“ I felt nervous starting my sessions, but Melissa and immediately clicked on our first session. She created a very welcoming and safe space for me to feel comfortable in sharing my story and opening up to her. She was extremely helpful in helping me work through my situation and showed a very compassionate understanding for me. Insightful positive encouragement the sessions flew 10 in total. ”

Galway in-person client, 2022.

“ Liam really helped me to become a much happier person. With his help and work, I am now able to be less anxious and turn my negative thoughts into positive ones. ”

Gambling addiction counselling service client, 2022.

“ Thank you so much for organizing the Irish Abroad counselling sessions with Mark. I am incredibly grateful! These sessions have been so instrumental in helping me deal with the isolation and struggles of living abroad as well as with life in general.

Mark is such a great listener and I feel that he really cares. He has been helping me to see that I have the tools to help myself. It means so much just feeling that my thoughts and feelings are heard and validated.

While there are still some very tough times, I'm getting more hopeful that life will get better, no, is getting better! ”

Irish Abroad Counselling Service client, 2022.



“ Natalie was excellent. Always easy to talk with, kind, encouraging and gave great advice and helpful worksheets. I'd like to think I'd go back to her again if ever I need to. ”

Online counselling client, 2022.



“ This service is a lifeline. ”

Irish Abroad Counselling Service client, 2022.

“ I found play therapy really helpful for my child while we were going through a lot of change. Play therapy has given my son an outlet to express himself in a safe environment which I am really pleased with. It has also given me support and advice to support my son as best as I possibly could.

It's provided me with new tools for when dealing with some of my child's emotions which I struggled with such as anger. He has not had an outburst in weeks, and I am truly thankful for Clíodhna. Play therapy with Helplink has helped us at a difficult time in our lives. Thanks. ”

Play therapy client, 2022.



Financial Review

	2021	2022	Increase
Income	€758,063	€489,400	-€268,663
Expenditure	€555,086	€568,345	€13,259
Surplus	€202,774	-€78,946	

Summary surplus for the year

Full results for the year are set out in the abridged audited accounts on this webpage: <https://helplink.ie/about-helplink/> - with a detailed breakdown of all our sources of funding, with comparative figures for 2021.

As can be seen from the above figures Helplink made a significant investment (from an expenditure point of view) into the organisation in 2022. The majority of that expenditure was outlaid to help us drive better communication of our impact, to support even better clinical governance, and to enhance our award-winning service delivery in general. This was achieved by hiring a part-time marketing/communications manager and a full-time service delivery manager.

Reserves Policy

Helplink has a responsibility to ensure that it uses the funds and resources it receives for its charitable purpose of the provision of accessible mental health services. As a result Helplink has targeted the creation of a reserves policy and will work towards holding six months of operating costs in reserve at any one time.

Fundraising

Helplink Mental Health Ireland remains a stable and sustainable organisation as it is funded by multiple revenue streams: from the public for some of our low-cost counselling services, from Service Level Agreements with third party entities/organisations, via funding applications from other bodies and via general donations; both corporate and public. And finally, via our now annual fundraiser Coldtober™.

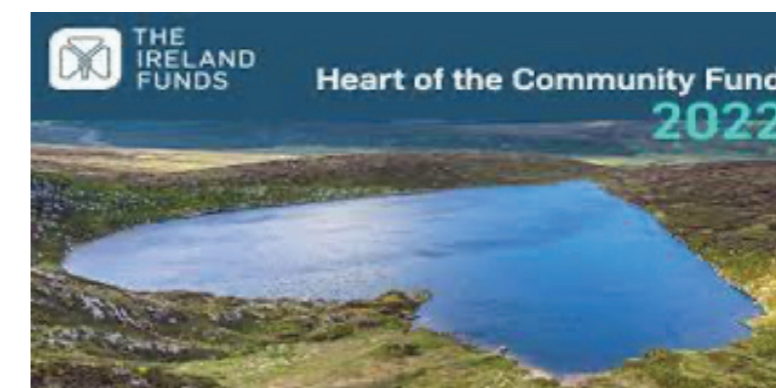
Thank You

to our 2022 Supporters/Partners/Funders

(A selection of which are below)



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Registered Charity Numbers: CRA No. 20143237 & CHY No. 21366