

2023

Annual Report



Accessible Mental Health Services - 7 Days a Week

1st Floor, The Plaza
Headford Road,
Galway
Co. Galway
H91 KC6V

No. 2
Upper Charles Street
Castlebar
Mayo
F23 E244

0818 99 88 80
helplinksupport@helplink.ie

Our Chairperson's Message



Evin Cusack, Chairperson

Dear friends and supporters,

It has not been long since we (belatedly) published our 2022 annual report so the themes of my message in this report will be broadly similar to the previous one.

That said, there are a number of elements that bear repeating:

Helplink continues to grow its capacity, serving the needs of an increasing client base through a combination of in-person services and (increasingly) on-line.

The Board of Trustees continues to be impressed by, and grateful for, the efforts and professionalism of the Helplink office team and of our counsellors without whom none of the achievements that Lochlann will address in his report would have been possible.

We continue to harness the power of partnerships and have recently been selected by the HSE to deliver a Gambling Addiction Treatment Service Pilot in the West of Ireland. We see this as a material vote of confidence in Helplink's reputation and ability to deliver and it adds to our existing important partnerships with other organisation including TUSLA, Gambling Awareness Trust, Alone, Galway Traveller Movement and Hand in Hand.

Service Delivery and clinical management continues to be a strong focus as we strive to deliver our services in a safe, well-assured and compliant manner as we provide high-quality supports to clients who use our services.

As always, the Board would 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. We will strive to continue to support you on your journey.

The Board would also like to acknowledge Helplink's partners and sponsors, and we 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 like to say a particular thanks to our CEO, Lochlann Scott, who decided early in 2024, to 'hang up his Helplink boots' after 12 years. Lochlann founded Helplink in 2012, in response to what he saw as an accessibility problem for mental health services in Galway. In the intervening years the upshot of his work and the work of the various members of the team (including staff and counsellors and previous Board members) is that Helplink:

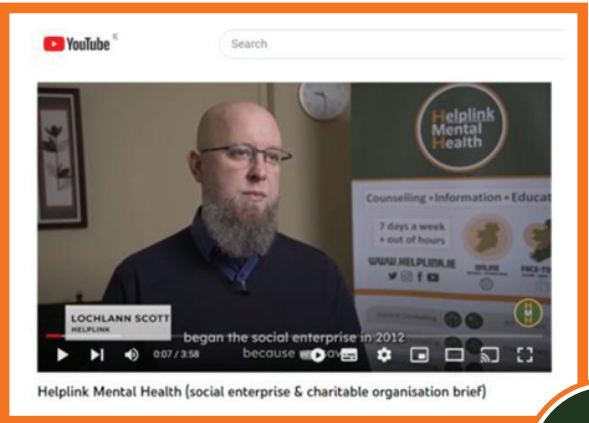
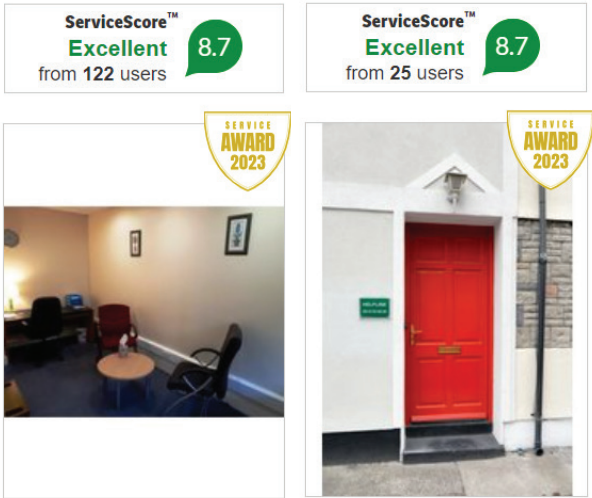
- a) now provides >7.4k appointments a year to people who need our services,
- b) has an evolving organisational structure, a team that will ensure continuity of service as we grow and a cohort of counsellors and therapists who continue to prioritise the needs of our clients.

These are significant achievements and they are something that the Helplink team collectively, and Lochlann in particular, can be proud of, so we want to thank Lochlann for the leadership he has shown and for the service he has provided to Helplink since its foundation. We wish him well in his future endeavours and we will collectively strive to maintain the momentum that Helplink has established during his tenure.

It remains only for me to wish Laura Condon well in her new role as Executive Director of Helplink. I'm sure that under Laura's direction Helplink will build on Lochlann's work and will go from strength to strength.

Evin Cusack

Chairperson @
Helplink Mental Health



Our Founder/CEO's Message

Welcome to our 2023 annual report. 2023 was a year of both consolidation and expansion of our much-needed mental health services.

We continued to increase our significant impact through the provision of our accessible services, we expanded our current partnerships and we worked with/gained new partners as well.

Our team of dedicated staff, volunteers and Board Trustees has 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 2023 we provided >7400 counselling appointments to children, young people, and adults locally, nationally, and internationally (Irish abroad); nearly 700 more appointments than in 2022 (6,744).

Furthermore, we added to our growing list of online, continuously available mental health workshops by releasing 'Mind How You Go'. MHYG is a continuously available mental health and emotional wellness programme that young people aged 15 to 25 can access wherever they are. The workshop is available to individuals and/or schools; through our e-learning platform Mind Hacks. Also, on the Mind Hacks platform we supported >2400 people to find mental health information through our unique digital video and podcast libraries; 1,000 of the people accessing the unique digital video and podcast libraries were return visitors who had already gained some support from these libraries.



Lochlann Scott, CEO

We continued our partnership with the Gambling Awareness Trust (providing Ireland's only online, national gambling addiction treatment service) that began in 2020. In fact, we further developed the aftercare service that was established in 2022 by providing even more groups to our national, weekly online aftercare group service – including one solely for women.

Furthermore, I was invited to be panellist at the first GAT Conference. At this conference GAT also released an independent report by S3 Solutions of all services funded by GAT. This report demonstrated that of the >10k counselling appointments from the past 3 years, Helplink provided over 30% of them and we were voted the best for customer service among all funded organisations, by clients.

In this year we also developed a new partnership with Venture Out and other enterprises, where we hosted a symposium in the ILAS Centre of University of Galway. The theme of the symposium was how including Social Enterprises in procurement processes can be beneficial for all concerned.

Speaking of new partnerships, in 2023 Helplink was successful in a competitive tendering process by the HSE to pilot a gambling and gaming addiction treatment service for people with addictions to gambling and/or gaming in the West of Ireland (launched in 2024).

Our partnerships with ALONE and Mental Health Reform to pilot a free online counselling service for older people in their own homes continued at pace.



As did our partnership with TUSLA, in fact the counselling services we provide to TUSLA referred clients expanded in 2023, now we support any adult referred to us from TUSLA in Galway and Roscommon. Previously we supported only foster carers and those dealing with alcohol addictions.

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:

- Galway City Council Community Activities Fund and Social Inclusion Fund,
- ARISE social enterprise fund,
- Mayo County Council Community Activities Fund,
- Oakfield social enterprise scale up fund,
- HSE tender - successfully tendered for a Gambling Addiction Treatment Service Pilot for people in the West of Ireland.
- What Clinic – Customer Service of the Year Award

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 in 2023 and we look forward to continuing to support you into the future.



Furthermore, I would like to thank our funding partners, our technology partner Prevos Solutions, the wonderful Coldtober™ sponsors, the amazing participants who braved the cold dips or showers across October to raise vital funds for our mental health services, and 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, our staff, our counsellors/therapists and of course our volunteers (including our dedicated Trustees); without their support Helplink would not be making the amazing impact it does daily, weekly, monthly, and yearly, regarding mental health service provision.

It is with sadness that I must relate that this will be my last annual report for Helplink. I founded Helplink 13 years ago with the aim of providing more accessible and innovative mental health services for the people of Ireland, I have achieved that aim now and will be leaving the organisation in the capable hands of Laura Condon who is to be Helplink's Executive Director moving forward. Thank you all for allowing me to dream of better and more accessible mental health services and to develop those dreams into a reality that supports so many of our citizens with their mental health across Ireland and for the Irish abroad; I will be forever grateful for the opportunity to serve.

As always, 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 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 to provide robust and effective stewardship. We are a registered charity with the *Charities Regulatory Authority (CRA) Ireland* and 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 Counselling Services

Helplink’s qualified, insured and Garda vetted counsellors are available for appointments 7 days a week and out-of-hours: for free or at low set costs.

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

National Online Counselling Services

- General Counselling
- Couples Counselling
- Youth Counselling (including addiction)
- Addiction Counselling
- Bereavement Therapy
- Student Mentoring/Counselling Services
- **Gambling Addiction Treatment Service:** Helplink provides Ireland’s only free, national gambling addiction counselling and aftercare service, by phone and online (video); 7 days a week.
- **Older Persons at Home Counselling Service:** throughout 2023 we continued to provide our older person’s at home counselling service with our partners ALONE and Mental Health Reform.

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.



Local & International Counselling Services

Galway & Mayo: locally we provide the suite of counselling services (shown below), and also Play or Art Therapy, face-to-face.

Tusla Commissioned Services: we provide free counselling to people over 18 referred to us through TUSLA in Galway and Roscommon. These are the counselling services we provide to them - general, bereavement, addiction, couples counselling, and we also provide art therapy.

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 returning Irish emigrants.

ONLINE COUNSELLING

7 DAYS & OUT-OF-HOURS

LOW COST

GENERAL COUNSELLING

YOUTH COUNSELLING

ADDICTION COUNSELLING

COUPLES COUNSELLING

BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING

FREE SERVICES

GAMBLING ADDICTION COUNSELLING SERVICE

IRISH ABROAD COUNSELLING SERVICE

IN-PERSON COUNSELLING

7 DAYS & OUT-OF-HOURS

(Galway & Mayo)

GENERAL COUNSELLING

YOUTH COUNSELLING

ADDICTION COUNSELLING

COUPLES COUNSELLING

BEREAVEMENT COUNSELLING

PLAY THERAPY

ART THERAPY

LOW COST

INFORMATION & EDUCATION

7 DAYS & OUT-OF-HOURS

VIDEO LIBRARY (free service)

'The Netflix of Mental Health Content'

PODCAST LIBRARY (free service)

'The Spotify of Mental Health Content'

STUDENT WELLBEING WORKSHOPS (low cost service)

'Mental Health Life Skills for 6th Class Students & 2nd/3rd Level Students'

mindhacks.ie

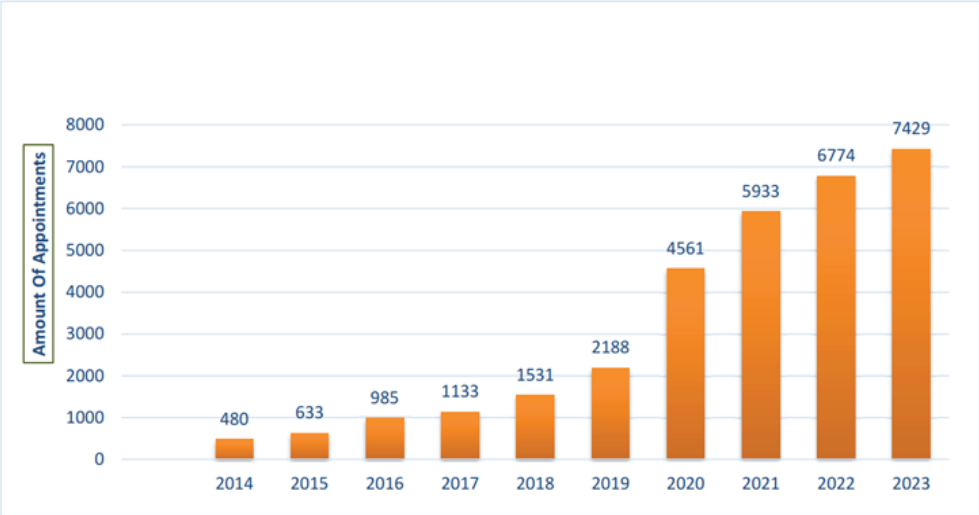
INFORMATION SERVICES – MINDHACKS.IE LIBRARY VIEWS

Mind Hacks 2022 Acquisition & Behaviour		Mind Hacks 2023 Acquisition & Behaviour		Diff.
Users	2.4k (just 8 users came back form 2021 when the platform began)	Users	2.4k (2.3k were new users = 1k people returned to the site from 2022)	
Page Views	7690	Page Views	11,173	37% ↑
Bounce Rate	73.99%*	Bounce Rate	40.35%*	

*33.64% more people stayed on platform rather than moving to another site

10 Years of Counselling Services Appointments

Graph A: All Appointments – YOY 2014-2023



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 increase low cost and discounted service delivery. In 2021 we began our first national fundraiser called **Coldtober™**.

Coldtober™ is our main fundraising event for the year, and it takes place across the month of October. In 2023, each day we had participants from all over the country, and other countries too, join us in this month-long cold water fundraiser challenge.

The fundraiser was a significant success not just financially (**we secured over 55k in donations**), and it also helped to raise awareness of our organisation and services nationally, leading more people availing of our services.



National Fundraiser



With thanks to our main sponsors:



Client feedback

“ Counselling has helped me so much through my final year in University! I needed help dealing with anxiety. This anxiety was not confined to just the pressures of college but filtered out through other areas of my life! Claire always allowed me to speak my mind and gave me great tools to cope with my anxiety! My self confidence increased greatly! I would recommended Helplink to everyone! ”

General Counselling Client,
Galway

“ Since I’ve had my first session I’ve gained a better perspective of how my actions have played a role toward my addiction and thanks to learning how to combat my addictions with the help from Édana I’m learning to become better equipped to fight my addictions. Édana speaks to me like a human being and is also guiding me with extra help with a book on addiction and NA meetings. I’ve still a long way to go at the same time and this motivates me since I started Im becoming a better person. Highly professional and recommend to anyone fighting to get out of the dark patch they are in. There is light at the end of the tunnel. ”

Addiction Counselling Client

“ My sessions with Adrian were great. We started with a few specific issues I was having in my life. Adrian helped me unpack what they meant and where they were coming from. Our sessions began with a check in on the previous week and ended with a check in with my body and mind. Each week we built on what we’d already discussed at a rate that felt productive but also sustainable. Towards the end of my final year of university my schedule changed frequently and Adrian was very gracious in allowing for the changes to our times and structures as needed. I came away feeling that I had dealt with a lot of what I was initially struggling with in a way that made me feel prepared to take on the next phase of life on my own. I’d recommend Adrian to any young queer men who need support. ”

General Counselling Client,
Castlebar



“ Ciara helped me through a lot of difficult times when I had no one else to talk to. She also helped me through a very difficult Christmas being all alone abroad & very lonely, as I have lost my family and this is a very difficult sad time for me. I really don’t know what I would have done if I didn’t have her to speak to online to get me through the difficult times as I had some hope because I knew I had her to unpack to and sometimes cry each week. This really kept me going for a long time and though these the difficult days. I really appreciate her and appreciate her support and that you can do this for people abroad as it really helps when you are so far from everyone and everything that is familiar. From the bottom of my heart thank you Ciara for everything you helped me out with. ”

Irish Abroad Service client

“ Thanks to Karel's expertise and compassionate care, my child has made significant progress in their mental and emotional health. They are now more confident, self-aware and better equipped to handle stress and challenges. I highly recommend Karel to anyone looking for a play therapist who truly cares about their clients and their families. ”

Parent of Play Therapy client,
Galway

“ I brought my daughter to Art Therapy. Kathryn is amazing at what she does. It was a great help to my daughter going here every week and she really looked forward to it. The skills that she learned here that she can use over and over if need be were great and she is like a different child. I would highly recommend Kathryn as she is so understanding and kind and a genuine person. My daughter definitely felt the same about Kathryn as she said you would know she really likes her job as it's not just a job, she really cares. ”

Parent of Art Therapy client

“ Play therapy for my child has been of huge benefit to her. Her anxiety has improved as has her confidence to try new things. She also knows she had a safe space to return to with Clíodhna if she ever needs it.

Clíodhna is very professional, thoughtful and tuned into my child very quickly, helping her with her confidence and communication. Play therapy with Clíodhna has been a hugely positive experience. ”

Parent of Play Therapy Client,
Galway



Financial Review

	2022	2023	Increase/Decrease	%
Income	€489,401	€489,097	Decrease = €-304	0.06
Expenditure	€568,346	€535,838	Decrease = €-32,508	5.7%
Surplus	€-78,945	€-46,741		

Summary surplus for the year

Full results for the year are set out in the audited accounts on our website: <https://helplink.ie/about-helplink/> - with a detailed breakdown of all our sources of funding, with comparative figures for 2022.

As can be seen from the above figures Helplink made a significant decrease in its expenditure outlay in comparison with 2022 and are on track to reduce this even further in 2024.

Reserves Policy

Following a recommendation of the Finance Sub-Committee, the Board has previously agreed that a prudent reserves policy is the maintenance of three to six months of self-funded operating costs. The Helplink Mental Health Board have now put this reserves policy in place and are sustainably building up this reserve.

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 various fundraising efforts such as Coldtober™.

Thank You

to our 2023 Supporters/Partners/Funders

(A selection of which are below)



Awareness Raising Initiatives for Social Enterprise (ARISE)





helplink.ie
mindhacks.ie

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