

I (T) A S

Irish Tourist
Assistance Service

helping tourist victims of crime

ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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MESSAGE FROM OUR CHAIRPERSON

Message from Gina Murphy, ITAS Chairperson

When I accepted the appointment of ITAS Chairperson in March 2021, we were in the midst of another roller-coaster year, trying to navigate an unknown path in a very uncertain environment. As our country is now re-open for business, the reality dawns that our world as we knew it will never quite be the same and we must learn to navigate the many challenges that lie ahead and embrace our new reality.

Where there are challenges, there are also opportunities and as we come out of the pandemic, I am aware that Ireland is very fortunate to have the only dedicated service in Europe assisting visitors who experience crime and trauma and we must continue to support it, ensuring that as visitors return, their experience is a positive one. This is vitally important for the recovery of our industry.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our core funders, the Department of Justice, Fáilte Ireland and Dublin City Council whose continued support allowed ITAS to carry on its work during this very difficult time. We are also most grateful to our tourism partners who, despite their own difficulties, gave a fantastic response to appeals made for meal vouchers, accommodation and local transport for tourists needing these supports. We were humbled by their response, when even in the most challenging circumstances, their support was unwavering. I would like to thank them for continuing to recognise and support our work.

Our partnership with An Garda Síochána remained strong and I would like to extend my gratitude to them but particularly Pearse Street Garda Station's recently retired Superintendent Joe Gannon and current Superintendent, Dermot McKenna and all Garda members at the station for their ongoing collaboration and for the provision of office accommodation at the station. This enables tourists to receive an immediate response from the Service at a time when they are particularly traumatised and requiring intervention. It also facilitates swift referral from other city stations.

To my fellow directors who are always so very generous with their time, thank you for your expertise and guidance and on behalf of the board, I would like to extend our thanks to the dedicated ITAS team who continue to be committed and passionate about the work that they do.

We look forward to a better and brighter 2022 and to working with all our partners to support tourists who are unfortunate to experience crime or trauma in this beautiful country of ours.

Gina Murphy
Chairperson

2021 Overview

2021 started out as another incredibly difficult and uncertain year. The increase in Covid-19 cases meant that the country remained in an emergency lock-down, with restrictions imposed on non-essential international travel until July 2021. While still offering a service remotely for any tourist enquiries for the first half of the year, it was great to open our doors on the 12th July to begin the preparation for returning visitors and to work with our partners to do what we do best, offering face to face assistance and support to tourist victims of crime and trauma.

While the pandemic continued to have a severe impact on the main activities of the Service, despite the difficulties, progress was made in the following areas.

Re - Connecting with our Partners

Our partners are a critical part of our success as an organisation. Much of the summer was spent re-engaging with them - Garda stations, embassies, tourism and hospitality sector – to let them know that the Service was once again operating face to face support and to ensure they had our information to hand for easy referral of tourists in need of support.

Gardaí

In 2020 ITAS made a submission to the Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB) for inclusion in their training programme for Gardaí on victim engagement. We were delighted to be chosen as part of the training programme to effectively implement the Criminal Justice (Victims of Crime Act) 2017. Recording of this training took place in September 2021 and it is due to be rolled out in early 2022. This programme will give Garda personnel an insight into the difficulties faced by victims and demonstrate how their response can ensure better outcomes and experiences for victims of crime.

From October 2021, ITAS re-commenced presentations to Gardaí undertaking Continuous Professional Development (CPD) training in DMR North-Central and South-Central Garda Divisions. These presentations were postponed due to Covid-19 and it was good to get back into the classroom in a face-to-face setting with Gardaí to deliver our message. We also extended our reach to the Wicklow Division and will add the North Dublin Division to our CPD training calendar in 2022.

The Importance of this training cannot be overstated as we get to interact with Gardaí on the frontline dealing with victims and can learn first-hand of the situations they deal with and how we might be able to support them in their work. They in return learn the types of situations we can assist with, the services we offer and the referral process to the service.

Embassies

While there continued to be fewer visitors in the country, our connection with embassies also continued and we were delighted to welcome representatives from 4 embassies to our office over a number of weeks in late 2021. This is always a great opportunity to meet new embassy staff and to explain how ITAS can best assist their citizens should they require support when visiting Ireland.

As part of the Slovenian Embassy's Presidency of the Council of the EU, the embassy hosted a local consular meeting of EU embassies. As part of that meeting, ITAS CEO was invited as their guest speaker to inform embassies of the important role ITAS can play in easing the difficulties their citizens may encounter, should they experience a crime or other trauma. These events are always a great forum for networking and meeting new and longstanding consular staff.

International Reach

ITAS is the only national service in Europe offering dedicated and specialist assistance to international visitors experiencing crime. We were therefore delighted to present a workshop "Victims in an International Context", which was part of the Victim Support Europe Conference held in May 2021. This gave us an opportunity to showcase the Service to other victim support organisations in Europe and perhaps inspire them to develop dedicated services for international victims in their own countries. Falling victim to crime abroad can be a very traumatic experience and a completely different experience than being a victim in the country you reside.

Tourist crime victims face many additional challenges including language, culture shock and lack of access to support structures. Due to the crime, they may be without cash, passports, mobile phones and without the means to support themselves, which adds enormously to their trauma. Having access to immediate support in the aftermath of a crime is extremely important for their wellbeing and recovery.

Broadening our Expertise/Scope

EU Project on the Rights of Victims of Terrorism

ITAS in conjunction with AdVic and the Crime Victims Helpline cooperated on an EU project on the Rights of Victims of Terrorism, coordinated by the EU Centre of Expertise (EU-CVT) on Victims of Terrorism. The goal of the EU-CVT project was to ensure that national structures in all EU countries can offer support and assistance to victims of terrorism.

ITAS' involvement centred around the provision of a handbook to inform relevant stakeholders on how to respond to victims of terrorism, their rights and to outline what needs to be achieved at a national level to satisfy EU Directives and best support victims of terrorism.

The second element of the project involved the national training of relevant stakeholders. While ITAS participated in the training, we were not part of the training team.

While it is hoped that we will never have to utilise these skills, it is important from a victim perspective, that organisations are aware of the needs, rights and protection of victims of terrorism.

Advocating on Behalf of our Clients

EU Consultation on Consular Protection

The European Commission launched a review of its legislation on consular protection of citizens travelling outside the EU, where their embassy is not represented. This arose as part of a response to the Pandemic when many EU citizens were affected by travel restrictions and stranded in countries where they had no consular representation and needed to be repatriated. The goal of the initiative is to improve consular protection of EU citizens.

ITAS contributed to the review by highlighting the many additional challenges faced by tourists experiencing crime and trauma when there is no consular representation in the country they are visiting.

Input into the evaluation of Directive by EU Commission

The EU Victims' Rights Directive, has changed the landscape not only for victims of crime in Ireland but for victims throughout Europe as it provides substantial legal rights and seeks to ensure that all victims of crime have procedural rights to information, support, and protection. Its implementation however has not been consistent across member states and the EU Commission instigated both a public and a targeted consultation in relation to the Directive to gauge how it was working in practice

and assess if changes were required. ITAS contributed to the targeted consultation through our membership with Victim Support Europe where we highlighted the unique issues faced by tourist victims of crime and the requirement for immediate support and intervention. ITAS would like to see a standardised procedure where information is tailored to the victim, with the immediate referral of tourist victims to ITAS or other relevant support services and access to justice for all victims.

International Recognition

Many of you will remember Guido Nasi, the Italian student who was the victim of an assault in 1999, which left him confined to a wheelchair and requiring 24hr care for the remainder of his life. At the time of the assault and since, our wonderful volunteer Bernadette Kelly DiGiorgi tirelessly assisted Guido and his mother Simonetta, providing them with ongoing support and helping to fundraise for specialist care and equipment for Guido. In recognition of the ongoing dedicated support provided by Bernadette, she was awarded the honour of "Cavaliere" (Knight) "Ordine della Stella d'Italia" (Order of the Star of Italy) conferred on her during an official ceremony in the Embassy by H.E. Paolo Serpi, Ambassador of Italy.

Bernadette's award is the third award associated with the Service. Bernard Lavelle, former Manager, received a similar "Cavaliere" award in 2008 and Ann Meade, founding member of the Service, was awarded an MBE in 2004. While these awards are bestowed on the person, they are a positive reflection on ITAS and the many people and organisations involved with it.

Funding

We continue to be very appreciative of our core funders the Department of Justice, Fáilte Ireland and Dublin City Council for their contributions to the work of the Service.

In a normal year we are fortunate to receive contributions from the tourism and hospitality industry to meet our costs however, with the industry reeling from the effects of Covid-19, our sponsorship from this sector was put on hold for 2021. We look forward to the return of international visitors in 2022 and the revival of the industry and re-engaging with our partners.

Complimentary Supports

With the lifting of non-essential international travel restrictions in July, we were delighted to reopen our office and begin to re-establish connections with our partners who provide the essential complimentary supports that ITAS relies on to assist tourists requiring accommodation, meals and local transport. The response from our benefit in kind sponsors was a testament to their resilience after the devastating impact the pandemic had on their businesses. We are truly grateful to them for valuing the work that we do as ITAS depends on these supports to offer a comprehensive service to tourists.

Other Support

ITAS provides a seven-day operation which would not be possible without our collaboration with South Dublin Voluntary Groups and Ballyfermot Chapelizod Partnership who provide operational staff to the Service through the Department of Social Protection's back to work initiatives. Our thanks to both organisations for their ongoing assistance.

Governance

After reviewing and updating the Service's policies and procedures in 2020, ITAS reported on being compliant with the Charities Governance Code in its annual reporting to the Charities Regulator in 2021. During the year we continued to monitor compliance and ensured all aspects of governance were adhered to and effectively implemented.

ITAS continued to comply with its legal obligations, including the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), Health and Safety and company and employment legislation.

Beyond the Pandemic

The last year two years have been particularly difficult but we look forward to more optimistic times with increasing visitor numbers returning to experience our great country and warm welcome.

We are aware that it will take time to rebuild the resources and capacity of the Service but are confident that it is well within our ability to achieve this. As the only national service in Europe offering dedicated support to international visitors experiencing crime and trauma we we are a great resource for Gardai and the tourism industry and we look forward to working with them to enhance our service and ensure tourists have access to essential and comprehensive supports in 2022 and beyond.

2021 Client Contacts and Support Statistics

Due to the ongoing pandemic and the restrictions on non-essential international travel which were in place from the beginning of the year until 19th July 2021, ITAS assisted just 133 tourists of which 70% were face to face interactions.

When the service finally re-opened to offer face to face support, the return of visitors was slow and while there was a slight increase in visitor numbers each month, the surge of covid cases from the new omicron variant saw many visitors postpone their journey in December.

Of the cases we assisted, the majority (59%) were referred through the Gardaí. The next major category (30%) came from tourists who contacted the service directly for assistance.

34% of tourists availing of support from the Service were victims of theft related incidents, which included 'Theft from Person', 'Theft from Car', 'Fraud' and Burglary'. There were 6 incidents of violent crime referred to ITAS. These incidents included 5 tourists who were assaulted and one incident of sexual assault.

ITAS assisted tourists in 8 cases of accommodation fraud, where visitors paid for accommodation online, only to discover on arrival in Ireland that the accommodation either didn't exist or was already occupied. This is an extremely stressful situation to find oneself in, with the average amount of money sent to secure the accommodation in excess of €1,000.

Throughout the beginning of 2021, the team remained available on the phone and by email and we received many non-crime related queries from visitors in relation to travel restrictions and quarantine rules. There were also enquiries in relation to overstaying their visa period and we were able to give reassurance in relation to extension of visa periods due to ongoing restrictions. As a result of our good working relationship with INIS (Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service), when a young woman contacted us to say that her father had passed away and she needed to return home, we were able to secure the return of her passport from INIS, and she was able to return to her family.

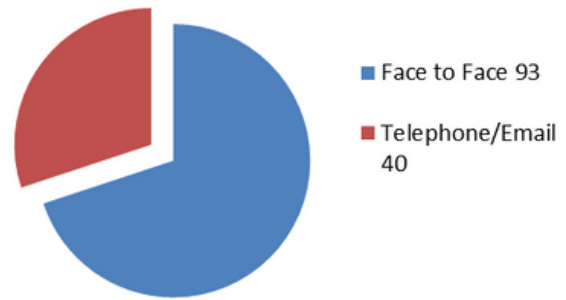
25 cases related to lost property incidents, where tourists are left without travel documentation and access to cash and required support and practical assistance. Some of these incidents may have been a crime, however as there were no witnesses or CCTV footage, they were categorised as lost property incidents.

2021 Statistics

Number of cases assisted	93
Cases assisted in the office	59
Cases assisted by phone/email	34
Number of casework days*	119
Number of people involved	133
Face to face assistance	93
Assistance by phone/email	40
Total Cases Assisted	93

*many cases take several days to resolve

Tourists Assisted

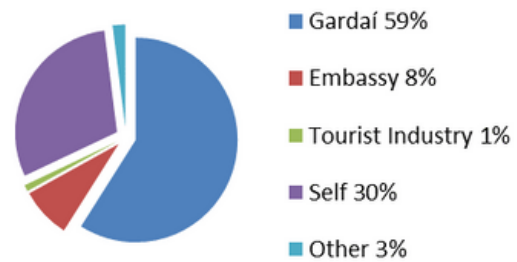


Cases Assisted 93

Contacts to ITAS via:

Gardaí	55
Embassy	7
Tourism Industry	1
Self	28
Other	2

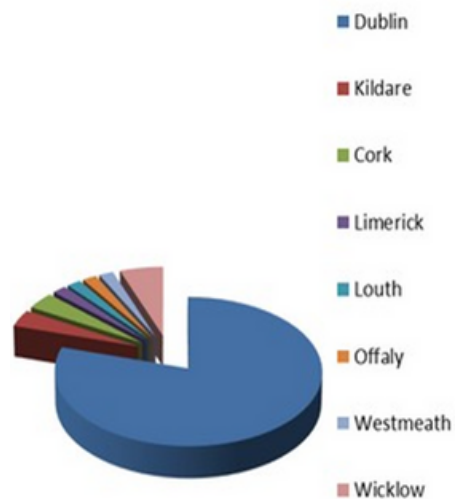
Total Sources of Contacts



Garda Contacts by County

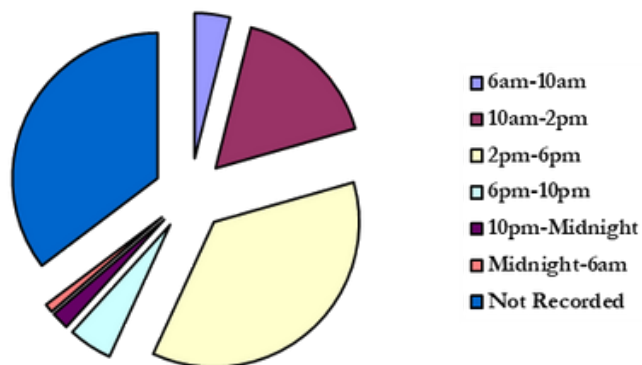
Dublin	43
Wicklow	3
Cork	2
Kildare	2
Limerick	1
Louth	1
Offaly	1
Westmeath	1
Wexford	1
Total	55

Garda Contacts by County



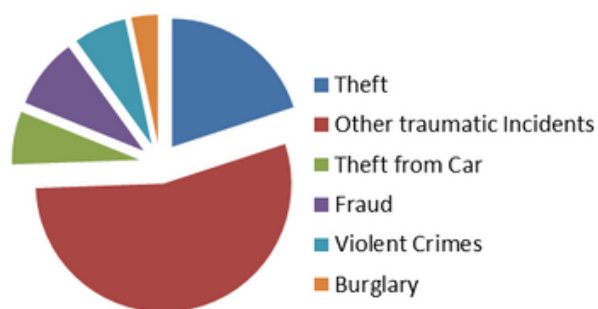
Time of Occurrence

6am-10am	4
10am- 2pm	17
2pm- 6pm	37
6pm- 10pm	5
10pm- midnight	2
Midnight- 6am	1
Not Recorded	27



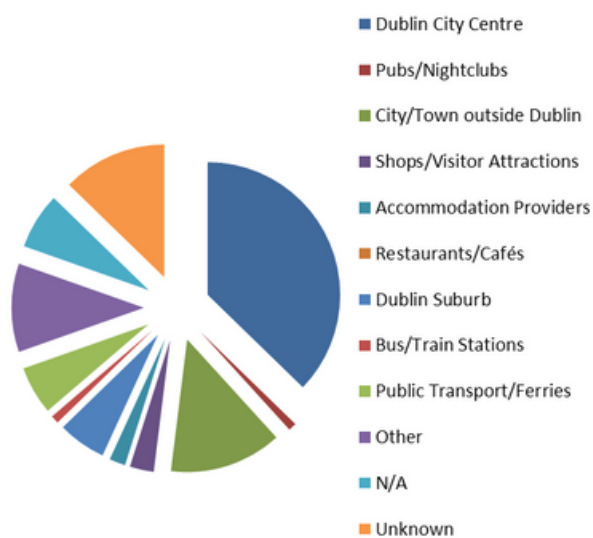
Main Incident Type

Theft	18
Fraud	8
Theft from Car	6
Violent Crimes	6
Other Crimes	6
Other Traumatic incidents	49



Location

Dublin City Centre	38
Pubs/Nightclubs	1
City/Town outside Dublin	14
Accommodation Providers	2
Restaurants & Cafés	0
Dublin Suburb	6
Shops/Visitor Attractions	3
Bus/Train Stations	1
Public Transport/Ferries	6
Other	11
N/A	7
Unknown	4



Age Groups 2021	Female	Male	Total
Under 10 years*	1	1	2
10-16 years *	1	1	2
17-25 years	13	18	31
26-35 years	14	18	32
36-45 years	14	13	27
46-55 years	5	8	13
56-65 years	3	7	10
66+ years	3	1	4
Unknown	8	4	12
Total	62	71	133

*Accompanied by Parent or Gaurdian

Items Stolen	2021
Cash (Approx. €16,316 Stolen)	20
Passports	25
National Identity cards	27
Credit cards/Bank cards	37
Drivers Licences	13
Luggage	7
Jewellery	5
Laptops	4
Medication	2
Mobile Phones	5

Complimentary Assistance	2021
Telephone	103
Referrals to Embassies	42
Complimentary Reschedule of Flights	2
Airline Travel Authorised with ITAS1 Form	19
Garda Liaison	29
Accommodation	2
Money Transfers	2
Interpreting	5
Meal Vouchers	2
Complimentary Transport	7
Sightseeing Vouchers	5
Retail Vouchers	3

Client Nationality

American	11
Australian	4
Austrian	3
Belgian	2
Bosnian	1
Brazilian	7
British	12
Canadian	2
Croatian	1
Dutch	7
French	15
German	15
Indian	1
Iranian	1
Irish	4
Italian	17
Japanese	2
Lebanese	2
Malaysian	1
Moldovan	2
Norwegian	1
Polish	2
Portuguese	4
Russian	1
Slovak	2
Spanish	11
Venezuelan	1
Zimbabwean	1
Total	133

Nationalities referred to Embassies

American	11
Brazilian	4
British	3
French	2
German	1
Indian	7
Italian	12
Spanish	2
Total	42

ITAS Board Members

A board of 8 directors oversees the operation and leadership of the Service. During the year, three directors resigned from the board – Kevin McPartlan, Dr Muireann Cullen and Neil Cullen. We also welcomed 4 new members to the board Gina Murphy, Noel Anderson, Conor O’Kane and Catherine Keegan.

The Board of Directors are voluntary and are not paid for the work that they do and do not receive expenses for attending board meetings.

Board Members in 2021

Gina Murphy – Chairperson (Appointed March 2021)

Harry Carberry – Company Secretary

Noel Anderson (Appointed June 2021)

Dr. Muireann Cullen (Resigned June 2021)

Neil Cullen (Resigned March 2021)

Kasia Debska

John Gilligan

Catherine Keegan (Appointed June 2021)

Kevin McPartlan (Resigned June 2021)

Conor O’Kane (Appointed March 2021)

Garrett Power

The Irish Tourist Assistance Service is a Company Limited by Guarantee and not having a Share Capital, registered number 406419. ITAS holds charitable tax exemption from the Revenue Commissioners CHY No. 16729 and is also registered with the Charities Regulatory Authority RCN 20060961

Irish Tourist Assistance Service (ITAS)

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12:00 to 18:00

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