



# Listen, Hear, Act

Understanding and Responding to Children and Young  
People's Lived Experience of Domestic Abuse

County Clare Resource Pack



## Foreword by Luke Hart

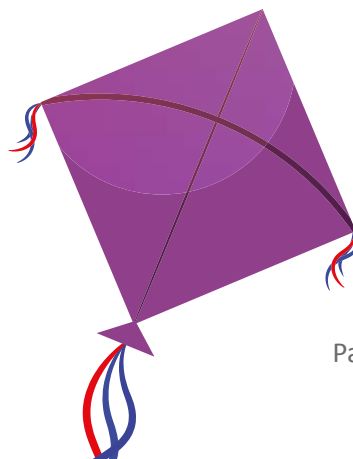
Children are highly perceptive – they need to learn how to live in the world. They look to adults to understand how to understand themselves and others and to determine how to act. Yet, when these children grow up with domestic abuse they are constantly observing, learning, and acting upon broken principles that can have disastrous consequences for them and for society.

Traditionally, our society has assumed that children are only impacted by domestic abuse directed at them or that they directly witness, therefore, we often assume we can hide it from them. This leads us to turn a blind eye to what we think children cannot see. But children don't simply see or experience incidents of abuse, these children are constantly struggling to learn how to live in a family in which the functioning has broken down as a consequence of the abuser's actions. Regardless of what is 'witnessed', these children must navigate a hostile world burdened with chronic stress, fear, and alienation.

Children are often very aware of the disruption that the abuse is having on their family and this is demonstrated by their adoption of responsibility in such cases. It's well recognised that children growing up with abuse will often try to patch up the broken functioning: one child might become the peacekeeper, another the carer, another the stoical rock to support the other family members. Yet these children cannot resolve what is an impossible situation for even the most capable adult, no matter how bravely they burden the weight of their family's struggles.

Our society is beginning to recognise that these children suffer broad developmental challenges from living with domestic abuse, regardless of whether any 'incidents' were 'witnessed'. Additionally, it is increasingly recognised that the costs to our society and to these children is vastly greater than any interventions to stop domestic abuse might be: we all lose by not providing children with a developmental environment in which they can flourish and become healthy, productive, and actualised adults.

Therefore, children deserve our greatest efforts: if only the rest of society could muster the courage that these children routinely display, we would surely all benefit from the better world that this would bring forth. Listen, Hear, Act recognises this and is a call to action on all of us to adopt our responsibilities, recognising that no child should have to suffer domestic abuse. This resource is a crucial step towards a world where all children are given the best chances in life and our society can flourish as a result.



## Acknowledgements

Since 1997, Clare Local Area Network (CLAN) has been in operation. The Network was originally established in response to a report from the National Task Force on Violence Against Women. The Network comprises of representatives from 16 local community, statutory and voluntary agencies supporting individuals subjected to and living with Domestic Abuse. We acknowledge the commitment, dedication and hard work of these individuals operating throughout Co. Clare, who tirelessly work towards enhancing their network's joint responses in supporting, comforting and empowering the lives of those affected by Domestic Abuse.

CLAN members also work collectively to ensure children and young people remain at the centre of our concerted response. Understanding and responding to their needs is central to this publication. It is hoped therefore, that you as a practitioner will develop enhanced knowledge and understanding of Domestic Abuse generally, but also to see it through the eyes of a child/young person, how to support that child/young person and where to go for further supports when required. We have also included children and young people's stories, who offered their thoughts on what Domestic Abuse is to them. It is imperative that we listen to children and young people, hear what they are saying to us and act with empathy and compassion in our efforts to support them.

We acknowledge the support and participation of the frontline workers who offered their experience and contributed to this publication. We are also extremely grateful for the information, statistics, research and reports provided by varying national, regional and local support agencies and academics for their informative work on this pervasive issue. Their contributions have enabled us to provide you with a collated, comprehensive and up to date resource which, is hoped will support you in your future work.

\* \* \* \* \*

As with the joint report submission by 'The Children Living with Domestic and Sexual Violence'<sup>1</sup>, Group Submission to the Family Justice, we also agree and recognise that domestic and sexual violence is predominantly perpetrated by men and the victims are predominantly women and children. The challenges and dynamics we seek to describe and which inform our message, cannot easily or usefully be separated from both the gendered nature of domestic and sexual violence and the broader systemic gender discrimination against women. Therefore, we will use both gender neutral and gendered language in the following resource.

The information contained within this document is a guidance tool only. The agencies involved do not assume legal or other liability howsoever arising therefrom.

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## Significance of Domestic Abuse

*'Interpersonal violence, especially violence experienced by children, is the largest single preventable cause of mental illness. What cigarette smoking is to the rest of medicine, early childhood violence is to psychiatry'<sup>2</sup>*

In Domestic Abuse situations, supports for children are often linked to those of the adult victim. In that regard it is extremely important that practitioners are aware of any perceived 'invisibility' of the child. Children don't just witness domestic violence, they are not passive bystanders, they see it, hear it and feel it. It is their lived experience and it impacts on how they engage with the world around them. By creating more awareness, it is hoped this will help to reduce children's anxiety and possible mistrust when dealing with support services, while also helping make sure they don't 'slip through the net' of fragmented services.

Children and young people should be supported in recognising and realising that they are not responsible, either for causing the abuse or making the abuse stop. They should also be helped to recognise and realise that the abuse is never justified and is in fact a violation of their human rights.

**Childhood  
Domestic Abuse  
is a criminal  
offense.**



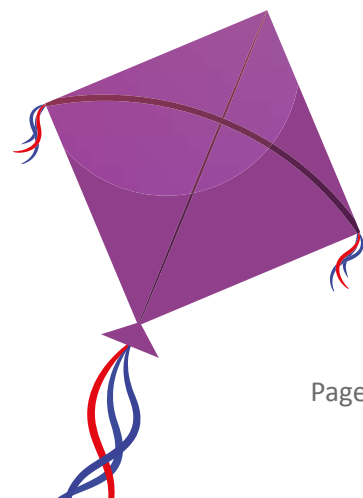
## About Clare Local Area Network (CLAN)

CLAN was established over 20 years ago. Its members have a wealth of experience and knowledge of Domestic Abuse and its impacts on the victim, family and society. It is agreed that Domestic Abuse in Co. Clare, is prevalent, pertinent, complex and requires a multifaceted approach with seamless collaborative response. On International Women's Day 2019, Ireland ratified the Istanbul Convention<sup>3</sup> (Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence). Ireland's commitments and actions under the Convention are based on four pillars: prevention, protection, prosecution, and co-ordinated policies.

It is under these pillars that CLAN operate and continue their work in ensuring access to services for children, young people and their families at the correct level and time of need. It is widely recognised that Domestic Abuse not only affects the adult who is subjected to Domestic Abuse, but also significantly affects the children who may witness and live with Domestic Abuse. It can result in reduced communication, emotional expression, less positive interactions which may lead to problems like poor social and emotional development in themselves or lead the children to adopt poor beliefs and ideals about how to interact with others. The extended family may also be exposed to the emotional fallout of the Domestic Abuse and can affect overall family functioning. Domestic Abuse can have a fundamental impact on mothers or fathers who are parenting within this context.<sup>4</sup>

It is also important to be aware that every Domestic Abuse experience is different. This can include cultural diversity, socioeconomic background, ability etc. There are many elements to a victim's experience of Domestic Abuse, and they are not limited.

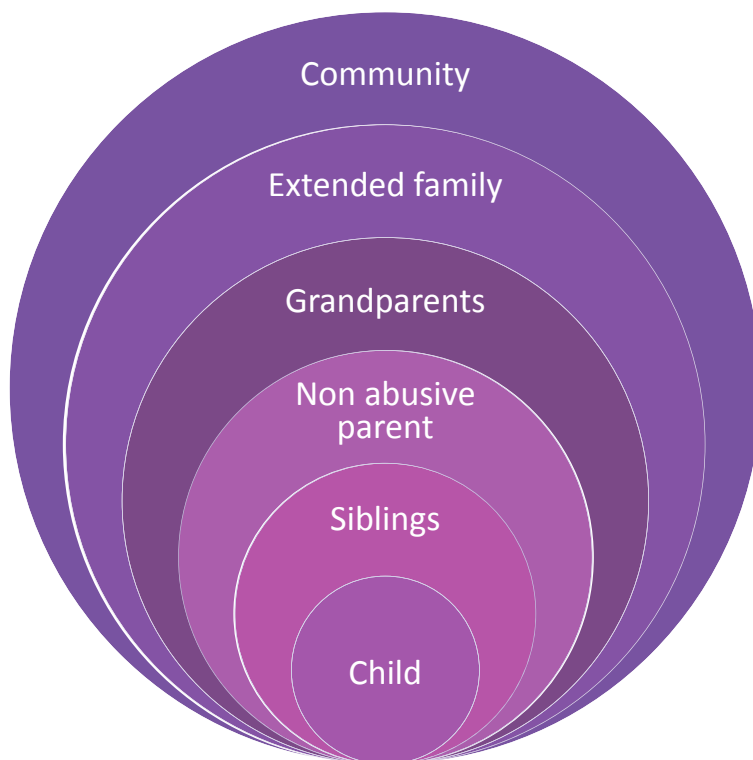
Due to the complex nature of Domestic Abuse, no single agency or institution can successfully tackle such abuse on its own and isolated policies are not sufficient in responding to such a complex and multi-faceted problem. Good practice examples show that results are enhanced when law enforcement authorities, the judiciary, victim support services, child protection agencies, non-governmental organisations and other relevant partners join forces to develop a comprehensive and co-ordinated response to combating Domestic Abuse. Clare Local Area Network is a positive example of operating in accordance with and following these best practice examples.



It is hoped that through this resource pack, practitioners will develop enhanced knowledge and understanding of Domestic Abuse generally but also to see it through the eyes of a child/young person, how to support that child/young person and where to go for further supports when required.

CLAN therefore hopes, this document will act as a roadmap in assisting people working with children, young people and their families and to signpost to appropriate support services/ resources available in Co. Clare. To do this effectively, people working with children and families need to be able to recognise the signs of Domestic Abuse. It is also essential that we are know what the local resources are to ensure seamless referrals. Service providers should make themselves aware of their agencies' policies and procedures regarding Domestic Abuse and avail of training opportunities which will enhance knowledge and optimise positive outcomes for children, young people and their families.

*“Domestic abuse needs each and every one of us to have the courage to call out immoral behaviours, to challenge the false narratives and victim-blaming and to make a stand against tyranny behind closed doors. Every woman and child deserves to live free from fear and violence. We all have a responsibility to act to allow them to achieve this basic human right.”<sup>5</sup>*



## Women's Aid Report 2020 <sup>6</sup>

### Women's Aid reported incidences in Ireland

- One in four women in Ireland who have been in a relationship have been abused by a current or former partner.



### Children

- In more than 40% of cases, children who live with domestic violence abuse are also frequently directly abused, physically or sexually (Tusla, 2015).
- In 2020, there were 5,948 incidents of child abuse disclosed to Women's Aid (Women's Aid, 2020).
- In Europe, 73% of women who have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or a previous partner indicate that their children have become aware of the violence (The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, 2014).
- In 2020, 148 women told Women's Aid that they were abused while pregnant and 28 women suffered a miscarriage because of the abuse (Women's Aid Annual Impact Report, 2020).

### Intimate Relationship against Young Women - the Irish Context

- The One in Five Report by Women's Aid (2020) on intimate relationship abuse against young women shows that:
  - one in five young women in Ireland have been subjected to intimate relationship abuse.
  - 51% of young women affected experienced the abuse under the age of 18.
  - nine out of ten of the young women who were abused experienced emotional abuse.
- The 2020 Femicide Factsheet from Women's Aid shows that:
  - 43 women aged between 18 and 25 years old have been murdered in the Republic of Ireland since 1996.
  - of the resolved cases, 52% of women were murdered by a boyfriend or former partner.



## The Legal System

- Applications to the District Court under the domestic violence legislation increased by 12% in 2020 to 22,970 from 20,501 in 2019 (Courts Services Annual Report 2020).
- In 2021 (up until the 9<sup>th</sup> of September), there were a total of **24,686 incidents of Domestic Abuse** reported to an Garda Síochána (Oireachtas.ie, 2021).
- In 2020, Gardaí received approximately **43,500 calls to respond to Domestic Abuse incidents in 2020, a 17% increase on 2019**. In total, there were in excess of:
  - 4,000 criminal charges were created for 2020 for breaches of Domestic Violence Act orders, a 24% increase on 2019.
  - 7,600 charges created in 2020 for crimes involving Domestic Abuse, an increase of 24% on 2019.
  - 12,000 Domestic Violence Act Orders in 2020 (Annual Report An Garda Síochána, 2020).
- In 2020, Women's Aid Support Workers accompanied 71 women to 112 court appointments for Domestic Violence-related hearings:
  - 62% of women we supported were attending court in relation to an order under the Domestic Violence Act 2018.
  - 35% of women were attending a hearing on child-related cases within the context of domestic violence such as custody, access and child maintenance payments (Women's Aid Annual Impact Report, 2020).

## Leaving and Post-Separation Domestic Violence and Abuse

The Women's Aid Annual Impact Report 2020 shows that:

- 23% of women who contacted Women's Aid in 2020 disclosed that they were abused by an ex-male partner.
- we heard 515 disclosures from mothers that their ex-partners were using access visits to abuse them, often in front of their children.
- it was disclosed on 114 occasions that children were being directly physically, emotionally and/or sexually abused during access visits with their fathers.

**Clare Haven Service** - the Clare based agency that provides specific frontline services to women and children subjected to Domestic Abuse.<sup>7</sup>

Service Offered	To August 2021	2020	2019
Children and Young People admitted to refuge	111	135	93
Children and Young People who attended childcare in Clare Haven	87	117	130
Children and Young People who received child counselling/play therapy/therapeutic horse-riding	25 children 111 sessions	29 children 116 sessions	14 children 112 sessions
Mothers who availed of Parenting through Domestic Abuse support	69 women 308 sessions	68 women 407 sessions	N/A
Children who participated in Clare Haven facilitated Barnardos' TLC Kidz Intervention Programme	7	7	N/A

In 2020/2021, admission of women to refuge increased by 21%, but more pertinent to this report admissions of children to the refuge increased by 35%. The number of calls to Clare Haven Services 24hour helpline increased by 25% while the number of outreach supports in 6 areas across the county increased by 25% on the previous year. Although the numbers have reduced slightly since the most extreme of the restrictions have been lifted, Clare Haven Services continue to have higher demand from the women and children in Clare than in the immediate months and year pre-Covid.



# Safe Ireland

“The Journey of a Child from DSGBV to Personal Wellbeing”



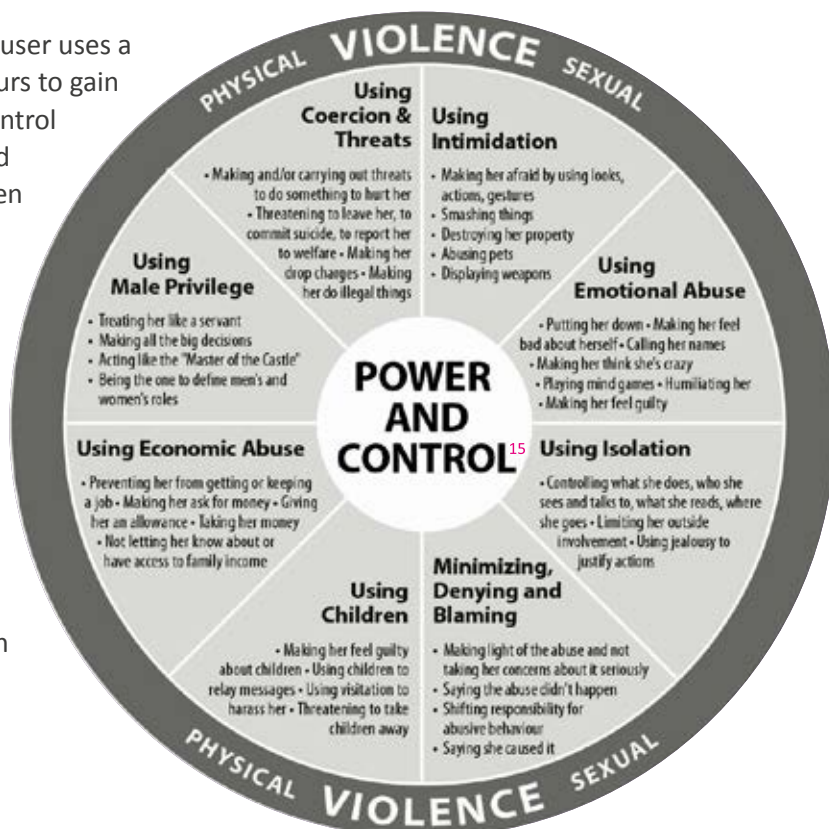
Safe Ireland’s, ‘No Going Back, 2021’ infographic above, examines the multitude of ways in which a child can be victimised, using a DSGBV lens. It also identifies four non-hierarchical pathways- Legal, Wellness, Kinship & Education- capture the most pertinent and insistent needs that a child will encounter from their point of exit from abuse to the point of safety. This journey is not linear. Every child’s experiences will be individual because a child themselves has no legal agency and their journey is also dependent on decisions made by third parties- their parents, the courts, the social workers, other actors of the state etc. Each pathway involves community & public services and each highlights opportunities for professionals to establish interventions and create strong, supportive relationships with children– pre-school, education, extended family, foster care, social care and medical care. These are key to children achieving positive outcomes. However, within each pathway there remains a myriad of ways children can continue to be victimised and experience further abuse, such as economic abuse, emotional abuse, manipulation, coercion and bullying.<sup>9</sup>

# What is Domestic Abuse?

While Domestic Abuse is not defined in Irish legislation, An Garda Síochána defines it as the physical, sexual, financial, emotional or psychological abuse of one person against another who is a family member or is or has been an intimate partner regardless of gender or sexuality.<sup>10</sup> The term ‘Domestic Abuse’ goes beyond actual physical violence. It can also involve emotional abuse such as the destruction of property, isolation from friends, family and other potential sources of support, threats to others including children and pets; stalking, and control over access to money, personal items, food, transportation, the telephone, internet and social media (HSE Policy on Domestic, Sexual and Gender based Violence, 2010). The Domestic Violence Act 2018 has provided for a new criminal offence of coercive control. This is psychological abuse in an intimate relationship that causes fear of violence, or serious alarm or distress that has a substantial adverse impact on a person’s day-to-day activities.<sup>11</sup>

Coercive control can often be a starting point in an abusive relationship-often with the use of seduction (more information below), therefore, coercive control needs to be repositioned more centrally when developing awareness around Domestic Abuse and implementation of supportive mechanisms within services.<sup>12</sup> It is important also, to recognise and emphasise that victims of Domestic Abuse are and have experienced trauma(s) induced by domestic violence and its effects. “People subjected to prolonged, repeated trauma develop an insidious progressive form of posttraumatic stress disorder that invades and erodes the personality” (Herman, 1997, p. 78). As a result, this directly generates vulnerabilities and trauma responses by the victim. As such, it is paramount agencies operate ‘trauma-informed’ responses into their services deliveries.<sup>13</sup>

In most situations, the abuser uses a range of abusive behaviours to gain and ensure power and control over the other person and these abusive actions often escalates over time. In most cases of Domestic Abuse women and their children are the victims while current/former male intimate partners (husbands, boyfriends) are the perpetrators. Domestic Abuse can however also occur between family members, between same sex couples and be perpetrated by women against men.<sup>14</sup>



### Domestic Abuse tends to follow three phases:

1. Tension-building
2. Violent/explosive
3. Reconciliation/loving

Once abuse has begun, it not only continues, but also over time tends to increase in both frequency and severity. As the abuse continues, the three-phase cycle begins to deteriorate. The tension-building phase becomes shorter and more intense, violent/explosive phase related incidents become more frequent and severe, the reconciliation periods become shorter and less intense. This results in a victim becoming more entrenched over time.<sup>16</sup>

### Types of Abuse

Physical	Sexual	Financial/Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Biting.</li><li>• Punching.</li><li>• Poking/Pinching.</li><li>• Kicking.</li><li>• Pulling hair.</li><li>• Pushing.</li><li>• Burning.</li><li>• Using weapons (knives, etc).</li><li>• Using items as weapons (phone, cups, reckless driving to instill fear/compliance etc).</li><li>• Rape.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sexual assault - forcing unwanted/unsafe/degrading sexual activity.</li><li>• Groping/Grabbing.</li><li>• Sexual harassment - Grooming/forced sterilisation/forced pregnancy.</li><li>• Sexual exploitation - forcing victim to partake in pornographic film-making/forcing victim to watch pornography.</li><li>• Rape/no consent.</li><li>• Rejecting sex and intimacy.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Withholding money/social welfare/credit card.</li><li>• Stealing from or defrauding a partner of money or assets.</li><li>• Preventing partner from working/choosing an occupation.</li><li>• Making social contact awkward so friends feel uncomfortable.</li><li>• Limiting access to transport.</li><li>• Social media monitoring.</li><li>• Locking doors.</li><li>• Social isolation.</li></ul>



## Types of Abuse continued

Emotional/ Psychological	Digital	Coersive Control
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Threatening/ intimidation.</li> <li>• Destruction of personal property.</li> <li>• Shouting/ screaming/name calling.</li> <li>• Stalking/ harassment.</li> <li>• Monitoring.</li> <li>• Embarrassing/ mocking in public.</li> <li>• Criticizing/ diminishing goals.</li> <li>• Excessive possessiveness.</li> <li>• Gaslighting.</li> <li>• Threatening suicide/self-harm to victim.</li> <li>• Using children - undermining parenting/threats to children/ harming the children.</li> <li>• Blaming the victim for how the abuser feels.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sharing/ threatening to share intimate/ private pictures online.</li> <li>• Harassment by sending insulting/ threatening text messages.</li> <li>• Making fake social media profiles.</li> <li>• Monitoring online activity.</li> <li>• Limiting access to digital devices making victim digitally dependent.</li> <li>• Checking internet search history.</li> <li>• Using technology to track whereabouts.</li> <li>• Demanding passwords.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Isolation from friends and family.</li> <li>• Deprivation of basic needs, such as food.</li> <li>• Monitoring the person's time.</li> <li>• Monitoring the person via online communication tools or spyware.</li> <li>• Controlling where a person goes, who they see, what they wear and when they can sleep.</li> <li>• Depriving of access to support services, such as medical services.</li> <li>• Repeatedly putting a person down, such as saying they are worthless.</li> <li>• Humiliating, degrading or dehumanising the person.</li> <li>• Controlling their finances.</li> <li>• Making threats or intimidating the person.</li> <li>• Rigid enforcement of arbitrary and vacillating rules.</li> </ul>

It is a common misconception that perpetrators just 'lost control' when they emotionally or physically abuse their partners. Domestic violence and coercive control is the exact opposite of losing control. Perpetrators know what they are doing and use their abusive tactics of choice to maintain dominance in the relationship.<sup>17</sup>

# What is Domestic Abuse to a Child or Young Person?

*'By understanding a child's view, we can nurture positive changes: correct distorted ideas, encourage helpful coping, build good interpersonal skills, and foster management of intense emotions. And we can support parents as they help their children heal and thrive'.<sup>18</sup>*

'It is shouting, name calling, crying, shattered glass and sometimes punches, bruises and blood. It gets louder and louder, they don't think we can hear it, but we can hear it in our rooms, when we are in bed even if it is in the last corner of the house. It's like a fighting match and we are worried that mam might get killed. When he texts and rings he only asks about mam, I feel like he only cares about mam, not us. It is as if we don't matter.'<sup>19</sup>

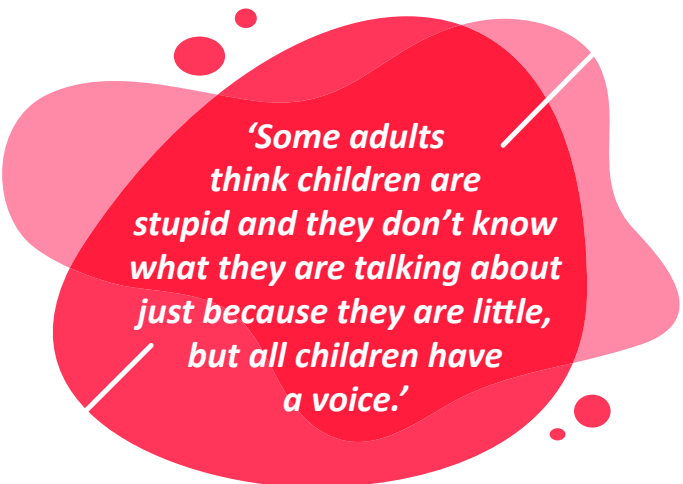
'Sometimes we are told whose side we are on but we don't like it.'

'It's a really bad feeling in our heart, and it feels like it's broken. We feel very very angry, afraid, frustrated, worried, scared, confused, nervous and sad. Sometimes we feel it in our bodies too, we might get weak, our eyes might go black, we get a pain in our belly, our bones start to hurt and sometimes we don't feel like eating a lot. Sometimes we feel like hurting ourselves to make all our problems go away.'

'We find it very hard to stay out of it, we try to stop it but it doesn't work. We want to help mam but we feel like we are not in control. We try to get away and go outside but this can be a very hard challenge. Our little sisters and brothers are relying on us and it is our job to protect them.'

'Our pets are important, it's like they understand what's happening and how we feel.'

'We hope it will pass in a few weeks and things will be back to normal but we are still kind of scared thinking about when it will happen again. If we expect it we will be ready for it, so it won't feel as bad as the last time.'



***'Some adults think children are stupid and they don't know what they are talking about just because they are little, but all children have a voice.'***

## Children's Rights<sup>20</sup>

All children have the right:

- To be safe, cared for and protected from violence, abuse and neglect.
- To be brought up by their parents in a family where it is safe.
- To have their wishes taken into account in matters affecting them.
- To be treated with dignity and respect.

When we talk about the impact of domestic violence on children, we refer to the different forms of violence that affects them. Children experience domestic violence in many ways. They may hear one parent threaten or demean the other, or see a parent who is angry or afraid. They may see or hear one parent physically hurt the other and cause injuries or destroy property. Children may live with the fear that something will happen again. They may even be the targets of abuse. Studies have shown that children who grow up in homes with Domestic Abuse are up to 15 times more likely to be physically and/or sexually assaulted than children who don't.<sup>21</sup>

When the abuse is committed by someone the child loves and trusts, the impact is not only short term (fear, anxiety, sleep and eating disorders, etc.) but it is more profound as it affects the capacity of the child to grow in a safe and protected environment and build positive and secure attachment bonds.

With the correct support most children who are subjected to Domestic Abuse can recover and heal from their experiences. One of the most important factors that helps children do well after being subjected to Domestic Abuse is a strong relationship with a caring, nonviolent parent.

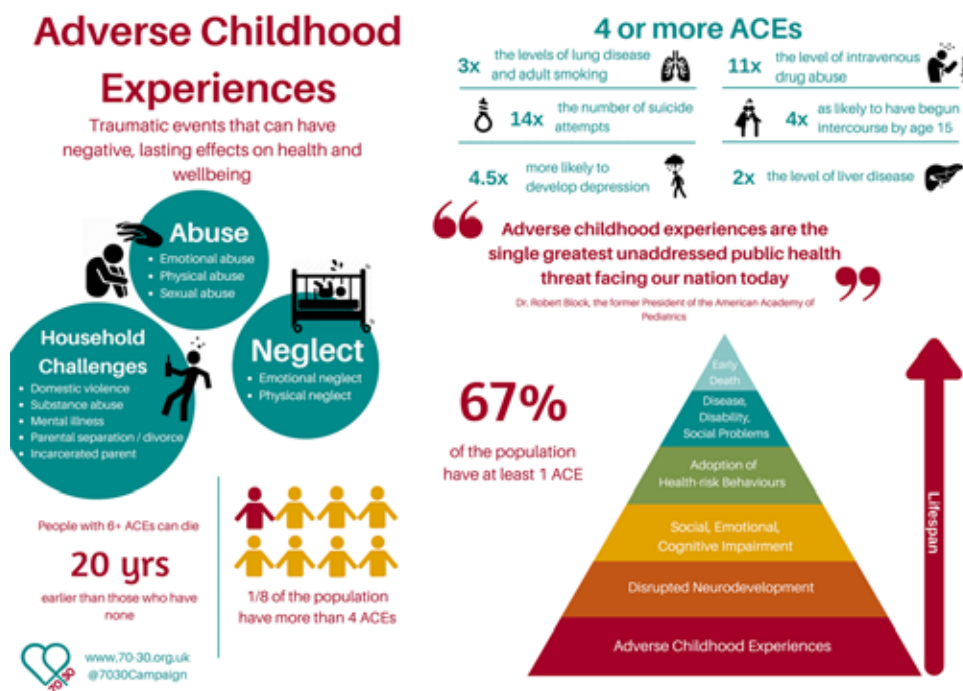


## Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)-Information for Professionals<sup>22</sup>

Growing up in an environment where domestic violence and abuse (DVA) occurs is likely to be a traumatic, stressful and harmful experience. Children growing up in these environments can experience feelings of blame and responsibility, which in turn can have a negative impact on their social development and relationships. An increasing number of studies have identified that certain adverse experiences during childhood can have long-term negative impacts on health and wellbeing. The term adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) is used to describe these and includes experiences that directly hurt a child (e.g. physical, sexual or emotional abuse) or affect them through the environment in which they live. This includes growing up in a household where: domestic violence, parental separation, mental illness, problematic drug and alcohol use is present.

**Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are stressful events occurring in childhood including:**

- domestic violence.
- parental abandonment through separation or divorce.
- a parent with a mental health condition.
- being the victim of abuse (physical, sexual and/or emotional).
- being the victim of neglect (physical and emotional).
- a member of the household being in prison.
- growing up in a household where adults are experiencing alcohol and drug use problems.



*The worst kind of trauma, is trauma that is not acknowledged or responded to.*

## How Domestic Abuse can impact on children?

Children respond differently to an adverse experience and their responses can be traumatic. Their resilience and responses to experiencing Domestic Abuse may vary due to factors such as age, gender and stage of development. Domestic Abuse can impact children physically, emotionally, behaviourally, socially and educationally. These can also interchange and interlink.

Physical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Injuries such as bruises or broken bones.</li> <li>• Self-harm.</li> <li>• Eating difficulties.</li> <li>• Sleeping difficulties or nightmares.</li> <li>• Bed wetting.</li> <li>• Having to leave home, friends, possessions.</li> </ul>
Emotional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling guilty or that it is their fault.</li> <li>• Anger towards abuser, other parent or siblings.</li> <li>• Introversion, withdrawal.</li> <li>• Fear, tension, stress.</li> <li>• Emotional confusion.</li> <li>• Sadness, depression.</li> </ul>
Behavioural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Acting out anger, aggression or becoming passive.</li> <li>• Being over self-disciplined so as not to do the 'wrong thing'.</li> <li>• Being protective, trying to stop the violence- putting themselves at risk.</li> <li>• Trying to protect siblings.</li> <li>• Running away from home.</li> </ul>
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social isolation.</li> <li>• Low self-esteem.</li> <li>• Difficulty trusting others.</li> <li>• Poor social skills.</li> <li>• Being bullied.</li> <li>• Aggression towards others.</li> <li>• May experience difficulties forming and maintaining relationships.</li> </ul>
Educational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Struggling to focus/concentrate on lessons.</li> <li>• Struggle to regulate.</li> <li>• Connection seeking.</li> <li>• Struggling to develop and maintain friendships.</li> <li>• 'Mitching' from school.</li> <li>• Poor school attendance.</li> <li>• Not reaching their academic potential or over achieving.</li> </ul>

*Children and young people who experience domestic violence are more likely to engage in challenging behaviour in school. It is understood that this behaviour is not deliberate, but a reaction borne out of fear, frustration and a hyper alert state.<sup>23</sup>*



Intergenerational effects are also associated with ACEs. This means that when children with an unresolved ACE, become adults, they could engage in behaviour that develops possible ACEs for their own children. In children, ACEs are viewed as a form of trauma that result in a chronic state of stress. When this stress occurs during critical phases of their development, it can result in physiological changes, impacting brain development, immunity, and hormones. In addition, it can prevent them from forming secure attachment bonds, which in turn could impact on their ability to explore their social world and develop relationships. Children who grow up with violence in the home learn early and powerful lessons about the use of violence in interpersonal relationships to dominate others, and might even be encouraged in doing so.<sup>24</sup>

Not all children subjected to Domestic Abuse become abused or abusers in their teenage and adult lives. Many who grow up with violence in the home are actively opposed to violence of all kinds. There is reason to believe that children know that Domestic Abuse is wrong and actively want it to stop. Many children who are present during acts of domestic violence try to help. One study showed that in 15 per cent of the cases when children were present, they tried to prevent the violence, and 6 per cent tried to get outside help. Another 10 per cent actively tried to protect the victim or make the violence stop.<sup>25</sup>

For Domestic Abuse service providers this evidence is very concerning. We know it increases the danger for the children and puts them in harm's way. It is crucial that early and adequate supported safety planning is done with children who are going to be subjected to Domestic Abuse on an ongoing basis.



**ACEs  
can be a  
chapter in a  
child's life;  
Let's work to  
not make it a  
Book.**



## Coercive control<sup>26</sup>

*Bad sights, sounds and experiences take many forms. A hit or slap is obvious to see. Abusive words and interactions cause invisible bruises.*

The children and domestic violence field tends to be grounded in the physical incident model of domestic violence. For example, living with domestic violence is equated with living in 'a violent household' (Jaffe et al., 2012, p. 7), or 'growing up in a violent environment' (Buckley et al., 2007, p. 307). This use of the term 'violent' suggests that physical violence (a) must be present and (b) is the primary cause of the negative impacts that domestic violence can have on children.<sup>27</sup>

This framing renders invisible those children's experiences of non-violent, control-based abuses in their homes. Shifting from the physical incident model to the concept of coercive control can help to provide knowledge and practice that is in line with children's lived realities and support needs. This shift may also help to dispel the myths that domestic violence between adults does not affect children, and that unless children have witnessed physical violence between their parents, then they have not been impacted by Domestic Abuse.

Like the non-violent parent, children in coercive control-based Domestic Abuse contexts may live with narrowed space for action, reduced 'voice' within the family, disempowerment and erosion of their confidence and sense of agency. This suggests that practitioners engaging with children with current or past experiences of coercive control could make empowering children an important strand of their work. Westmarland and Kelly (2013) emphasise the necessity of victims who have suffered from Domestic Abuse gaining 'expanded space for action that empowers through restoring their voice and ability to make choices' (p. 1100). The findings of Emma Katz study (referenced above) suggest that children too would benefit from this. Placing 'empowerment' alongside 'safety' and 'protection' on the children and the Domestic Abuse agenda would represent a positive step forward.

### **What does the most harm?**

- Directly witnessing serious abuse.
- Living with ongoing fear and anxiety for a long time.
- Being isolated and not having access to support outside the family.
- Having repeated disruptions to their lives – having to move homes, change schools, lose contact with friends and relatives several times (even though this may be necessary for safety).
- Confusion caused by denial, secrecy and by adults minimising the impact of abuse in their lives.

*Domestic Abuse must be evaluated based not on what was done by the abusers but on what was feared by the victims. Coercive control is murder with a million pin pricks over many years; no one thinks much of each prick but the victims fear something serious will happen, they just don't know when.<sup>28</sup>*

## Ages and Stages - The Harm<sup>29</sup>

*Domestic Abuse harms all children and young people who live with it.*



### Pre- Natal

- Abuse can present for the first time, during pregnancy and the post natal period.
- Lower birth weight.
- Miscarriage or premature labour.
- Fetal distress and injury.
- Depression, anxiety and stress experienced by the mother which can affect a child's mental health later in life.



### Infants

- Startled in response to loud noise.
- Can be withdrawn and have raised anxiety.
- Can be irritable, wakefulness and disturbed sleeping.
- Can pick up on others stress levels.
- Babies up to 18 months are more likely to be in arms and therefore more likely to be injured during an assault.



### Pre- School

- Trouble with sleeping.
- Nightmares and food issues.
- Not feeling well.
- Stomach aches and headaches.
- More fearful and clingy or afraid of being left by their mother.
- Noticeable change in behaviour i.e. mimicking abusive behaviours, particularly after access.
- Child may regress i.e. toileting, baby talk, looking for a comforter such as a bottle or soother.
- Thinks the violence is caused by something they have done.
- Learn unhealthy gender roles - that boys are 'controlling and aggressive', while girls should be 'agreeable and submissive'.



### School Aged

- Children need extra reassurance and emotional support which can look and feel like attention-seeking behaviours.
- Behaviour in school can change.
- Children can become quiet and withdrawn or display difficult behaviours.
- Children may test your patience and limits and be physically abusive or refuse to do what is asked.
- Some children find it hard to regulate their feelings: they may become angry, sad, withdrawn or pretend to be really happy.
- Sometimes children can have an unusual relationship with food. They may refuse foods. they ate before or they start to comfort eat and may also be picky.



### Adolescents

- Teens can often suffer from low self-esteem, anxiety and lack of confidence.
- Conflicted feelings about the abuse that happened which can lead to increased aggression towards peers, siblings and parents.
- May have angry feelings about the abuse which can manifest as challenging behaviours such as stealing, fighting, drinking and using substances.
- May withdraw from school, friends and family.
- Young people can sometimes suppress their feelings around the abuse and do not want to talk about anything to do with home or family.



### Young Adults

- Adults who experience Domestic Abuse in childhood are twice as likely as other people to be in an abusive relationships.
- Can grow up with an unhealthy idea of how adult relationships work as an adult.
- Young people who have experienced domestic or other childhood abuse can be more likely to misuse alcohol or drugs.
- They may use alcohol or drugs to block or to help them to cope with strong emotions.
- Young people may leave home early, which could put them at greater risk of homelessness.

## Listening to Children and Young People<sup>30</sup>

“Well, when we moved up to live with him, like there was a lot of rules. I couldn’t play out in the garden ... I don’t really know why there was a lot of rules, and if we were sporting [having fun playing] he’d go angry. There’d be fights a lot of the time, but other days he’d be nice and all, but he kinda changed a lot of the time.” Hazel (aged 10).

***“I used to hide under my bed all week. I used to make a little place out of it with all my teddies. He ...always used to buy teddies for us...and I used to store them under my bed and any time I felt sad or when they were screaming and roaring down in the kitchen, I used to hide there.”*** Child (aged 8).

“My ‘relationship’ with my Dad? I don’t have one..I feel like I am a pebble at the bottom of a stream and my Dad is this angry stream bashing me against all the other pebbles.” Sara (aged 13).

***“Don’t assume you know ‘what is good for me’ without asking me. Don’t assume you ‘know me’ without getting to know me. And for God’s sake if I manage to tell you what’s wrong with me, please listen to what I have to say, don’t interpret it, just listen.”*** Eva (aged 16).

“I grew up with it since I was a child, most of my childhood. I think my mother was a ‘clean freak’ ... she was, like, ‘you can’t touch things’ or anything. I can remember things like my father being hit and myself and my sister, just for nothing. My mother controlled us. I remember him being thrown out for no reason. I remember he left. He had to come back for us. He had to [because] if he didn’t come back, she would hurt us. She’d hit us and that kind of thing ... He was stressed over that too. He said to me one night when I was going out, if this doesn’t stop he’d leave, it was getting too much, it was getting tough on him. I mean, nobody deserves to go through that, you know what I mean ... what we went through. We are still affected like. [Sister’s name] suffers from depression ... we are all probably a bit insecure over it like, my father, my sister ... I probably am as well. You mightn’t know it to look at me, but I am.” Alex (aged 17).

“We’d only hear, we wouldn’t see her, we’d just hear her, and it would upset us. Sometimes it was actually quite annoying hearing him as well, because mam was shouting back. We didn’t mind hearing mam, but because we heard him shouting it made us angry ... It made it hard to concentrate at school and all, ‘cos I used to get 10 out of 10 in tests and then, when the fighting started, I only got like 8 out of 10, 7 out of 10. I couldn’t concentrate as much. It would be all in my head and when I’d go to bed, I’d cry sometimes and I’d come down to mam. That was about a year before we left the house.” Denise (aged 17).

“Sometimes, like, I feel like it’s my fault, like why did I never stop it. Like why did I never go down and ... It’s horrible like. It’s just, what if I went down ... he would have stopped and, do you know, things like I remember the feeling and I still remember like I couldn’t go down downstairs. Like what if he did it to me or something. It was horrible ...” Jennifer (aged 16).

“I grew up to half-hate him, half-love him, you know. Sometimes when I look at him now, I say to myself, ‘Who do you think you are? Marrying some woman and then thinking you can push her around and abuse her.’” Denise (aged 17).

*What advice would you give to other kids?*

“Some mummies and daddies split up, but it gets easier — it gets easier for mammy, she’s happier now.”

*How do you know?*

“Well, she says it.”

*And how do you know she used to be upset?*

“She used to go up to her room and cry and I’d go up after her to check if she was Alright”.

*What would you do?*

“I’d give her a hug.” Sean (aged 7).

**Clare Haven staff received disclosures from children and young people in 2020/2021, that Children and Young People were subjected to<sup>31</sup>**

- Sexual Assault.
- Physical Assault directed at them.
- Physical Assault while endeavouring to protect their mother or other siblings from assault.
- Verbal assault – including bullying, being sworn at, being threatened.
- Manipulation.
- Being directed to lie to authority figures or not tell authority figures what occurred.
- Emotional abuse.

**Also in this time Clare Haven staff noted Unhealthy Coping Mechanisms that the children and young people engaged in including but not limited to**

- Taking on a caring role for younger siblings.
- Wishing they themselves were dead.
- Consuming alcohol.
- Consuming illegal drugs.
- Challenging behaviour in school.
- Early school leaving.
- Challenging behaviour in the home.
- Consuming pornography.
- Large amounts of time spent on games consoles.
- Verbal and physical assault perpetrated against their mother.
- Anti-social behaviour in their community.
- Self-harm.



## Parenting through Domestic Abuse<sup>32</sup>

Domestic Abuse is one of the most difficult situations parents and children can face. It challenges our beliefs and values about family life. The secrecy and stigma that surround Domestic Abuse makes it difficult for people who experience it, to seek help and support. The occurrence and prevalence of domestic violence in the home can have a detrimental impact on the development and well-being of children, and the parenting capacities of the victims of violence, and indeed its perpetrators.

The vast majority of parents, both Mothers and Fathers, want the best for their children and work very hard to meet their needs. In most situations parents are rightly seen as responsible joint carers and equal partners in the family unit. However, where there is Domestic Abuse, it is not an equal partnership. In abusive relationships, one partner uses abusive tactics to control and undermine the other. This can affect many aspects of family life, including parenting.<sup>33</sup>

Although an abused parent might try to shield their child, they cannot protect them from the negative effects of the abuse. In families where there is Domestic Abuse, both mothers and fathers generally underestimate how much children see, hear and feel. In many studies it has been shown that children are either in the same or the next room in over 60% of cases when Domestic Abuse occurs. Many more children see the aftermath of violence, including emotional trauma, physical injuries or damage to property.

A parent who is abusive to their partner is also abusing their children emotionally, even if they are not physically abusive to them. Emma Katz argues that 'although the concept of coercive control is increasingly being applied to women's experiences of domestic violence, the field of children and domestic violence is often still primarily grounded in the physical incident model'.<sup>34</sup>

She goes on to offer some key messages to practitioners.

### Key Practitioner Messages:

- Children experiencing domestic violence may be affected by more than the physical violence perpetrated by one parent against the other.
- Children may be harmed by non-physical abusive behaviours inherent to coercive control-based domestic violence, including continual monitoring, isolation and verbal/emotional/psychological and financial abuses.
- Responsibility for the impacts on children of coercive control-based domestic violence should be placed with the perpetrator (usually Fathers/Father-figures) and not with the victimised parent (usually Mothers).

As practitioners, it is important that we broaden our perspective to include understanding the effects of 'Non-Violent Behaviours' on children and young people rather than just through the lens of a 'Physical Incident Model'. It is also very important that we view children and young people as individuals in their own right and not subsidiaries of their parents. Children experiencing Domestic Abuse have unique wants and needs that not only differ from their parents but from their siblings, too. One child may be acutely aware of the abuse, and may take on the role of family protector. Their sibling may refuse to acknowledge it at all, even when it occurs right in front of them. Another sibling may identify strongly with the abusive parent and start imitating their behaviours. This is a particularly tragic scenario that we see play out so often: the abused parent leaves the abusive parent, only to have their child replace the perpetrator as the violent oppressor in the family.<sup>35</sup>

Most recently it is acknowledged in Safe Ireland's 'No Going Back' discussion report that children are not by-standers, simply witnesses to DSGBV in their homes, nor appendages to their parents. They are victims of Domestic Abuse and coercive control in their own right. Indeed, they are also perpetrators, sometimes enrolled in coercive control tactics. Their journeys are fraught and difficult.

When parenting in an abusive relationship, it is important to remember that the abused parent is only responsible for their own behaviour and are not responsible for the behaviour of the abusive partner. They do not have to hide or justify the abuse in any way. Sometimes abused parents feel it is better to minimise the extent of the abuse in the belief that this will protect the children from knowing what is happening. However, as stated above, research has shown, this is not the case. Often children are aware of much more than their parents believe they know and to deny this reality can confuse them and undermine their trust.

Domestic Abuse can make parenting positively, very difficult. Parents who are abused often try very hard to continue to look after their children and to protect them as much as possible, often even at risk to themselves. However, physical injuries, stress, fear, emotional confusion and exhaustion can all affect how the abused parent responds to their children's needs. Attention may be focused on trying to manage their own feelings and trying to anticipate the mood and responses of the abuser. This can mean they are less able to give time and attention to the children.

In some situations, parents may use medication, alcohol or other drugs to cope and years of ongoing abuse can affect their mental health. This can also lessen their capacity to take care of their children. It is now widely understood that supporting and protecting the abused parent is often the best way to protect children.

## A note about shame and blame<sup>36</sup>

Shame is a common emotion in Domestic Abuse. It is a tool of power and control that is often wielded by abusers. It is often directed at the abused parents' sense of themselves and as parents. Abusers may tell the abused parent that they are shameful, that they are bad people and bad parents. Parenting in particular is often targeted by Domestic Abusers, who knock the abused parents' confidence and challenges their sense of parental competence.

Abused parents face multiple barriers to separating safely from perpetrators, including the likelihood of escalating abuse from perpetrators, lack of alternative housing and emotional abuse by perpetrators that convinces the abused parent that separation is not viable (Thiara and Gill, **2011**; Elizabeth, **2003**). Rather than needing to be blamed or pressured, abused parents require effective supports from professionals and services to free themselves and their children from perpetrators' coercive control.

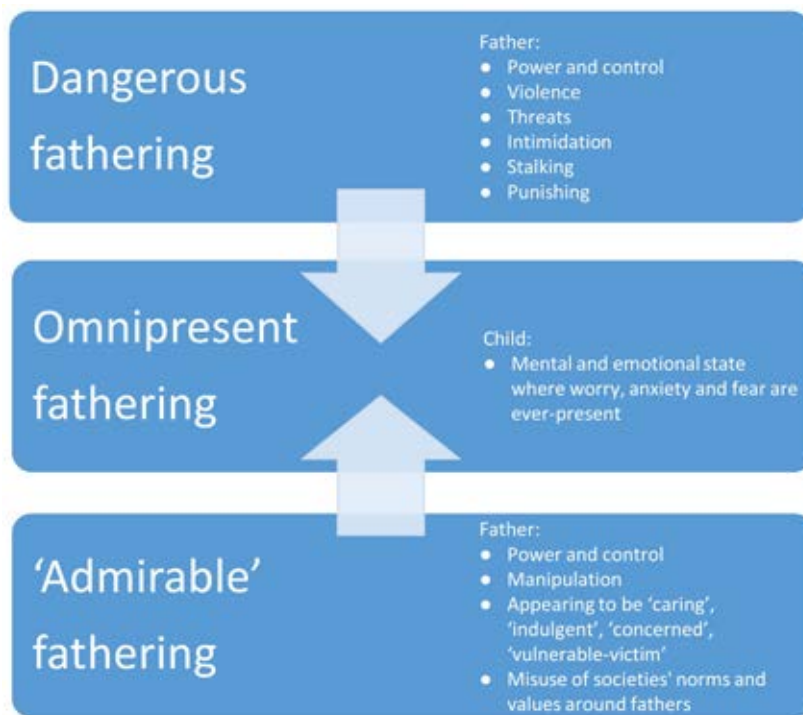
The guiding principle here, is that shame cannot be and should not be an element of a successful support framework for abused parents and their children during and after Domestic Abuse.

## Separating Parents<sup>37</sup>

It is widely researched and documented that violence often escalates after separation and that contact between perpetrators and children/young people can be used to continue the abuse. This makes co-parenting very challenging and can be confusing for children. Research carried out in May 2020 by Emma Katz et al explores and provides knowledge on how perpetrators as former partners, can still use coercive control against their children post separation. 29 young people from Finland and the UK give an account of their experiences post separation. The data gathered and analysed produced three themes which were drawn from the young people's experiences themselves:

1. dangerous fathering that frightened children and made them feel unsafe.
2. 'admirable' fathering, where fathers/father-figures appeared as 'caring', 'concerned', 'indulgent' and/or 'vulnerable-victims'; and
3. omnipresent fathering that continually constrained children's lives.

As you can see from the diagram below these can interchange throughout the post separation journey.



The research also highlights that perpetrators could also direct performances of 'admirable' parenting at professionals and communities in ways that obscured their coercive control. Perpetrators often create a charming public persona, making it difficult for victims to feel they could seek help or be believed. And even when they do speak out, they see how the perpetrator uses their manipulative skills to groom the professional and bring them over to their way of thinking through their presentation and gas-lighting.

The authors go on to offer key messages for practitioners.

### Key Practitioner Messages

- Children and young people can be direct victims/survivors of coercive control and they can experience it in much the same way as the adults do- feeling confused (feeling both love and hate toward the perpetrator and/or the abused parent) being afraid, living constrained lives, and being entrapped and harmed by the perpetrator.
- Coercive control can harm children and young people emotionally/ psychologically, physically, socially and educationally.
- Child contact can provide the control-perpetrating parent with opportunities to continue the abuse of their children and ex-partners. In that regard, robust measures are required to deal with coercive control perpetrating parent/ parent-figures, in order to prevent them from using parent-child relationships to continue imposing coercive control on children and ex-partners.

## Managing/Navigating parent/child relationships Child/Young Person-Perpetrator Parent Relationship

The findings from the research referenced above, also imply the need for a more sophisticated understanding of the relationship that children may, or may not, have or want to have with the perpetrator parent/parent figures. Relationships with perpetrator parent/parent figures are especially complex when children suffer from coercive control but at the same time miss their perpetrator parent/parent figures, which may be the case especially with younger children (Nikupeteri and Laitinen, 2015; Peled, 2000). Children may become confused by perpetrator parent/parent figures' contradictory 'Jekyll and Hyde' behaviours (Enander, 2011) and find it hard to comprehend and verbalise their experiences (see Øverlien, 2013; Thiara and Gill, 2012).

In the research, it is suggested that professionals should be concerned when children of coercive control-perpetrating parents, express views that are pro-perpetrator parent or pro-contact with perpetrator parent and should investigate whether children's views have been distorted by the perpetrator parent.

As practitioners, we are experienced in recognising and interpreting an adult victim/survivor as having been manipulated when they say: 'it's not his fault that he gets angry', 'it's not that bad' or 'I love him'. Yet we tend to see children and young people's perceptions as authentic and unproblematic when they make similar kinds of statements (Bancroft et al., 2012). To determine if children's perceptions have been manipulated by perpetrator parent (McLeod, 2018), professionals – for example, social workers, family court judges, teachers or the Gardaí – need to be knowledgeable about the complexity of children and young people's experiences of coercive control. This is especially important in light of adults' responsibilities to help children and young people to realise their rights for secure living environments and abuse-free lives.<sup>38</sup>

It is suggested that children should be given detailed, age-appropriate information about coercive control before they make decisions or express their views to family courts about having contact with a coercive control-perpetrating parent. Specialist Domestic Abuse services, such as Clare Haven Services are well-positioned to provide this information to children- resources that are focused on giving children and young people the tools to understand:

- The dynamics and tactics of coercive control.
- Positive uses of power and negative uses of power by a parent.
- Healthy and unhealthy parenting behaviours.

They are further well positioned to support the necessity of:

- a. Identifying and supporting children and young people as direct victims/survivors of coercive control;
- b. Prioritising their rights to be free of this abuse;
- c. Developing much more robust responses to coercive control-perpetrating parent/parent figure.



## Child/Young Person - Non Violent Parent Relationship

Parenting alone having left an abusive relationship can involve grappling with issues that are especially challenging as they are specific to Domestic Violence and Abuse. Recent research from NUI Galway reported that 100% of women interviewed still experienced abuse post separation and this impacted their ability to parent consistently.<sup>39</sup> Living with Domestic Abuse takes a toll on all family members. Children may still feel afraid, even if the danger appears to be past. But with the nonviolent parents help, they can find ways to cope with stress, be safe, and heal.

A strong relationship with a caring, nonviolent parent is important to help children grow up in a positive way. They can be helped by taking into account, the following:



## Factors that support/protect children

- Having someone to talk to who will listen and understand their feelings.
- Being reassured that the abuse is not their fault.
- Having their self-esteem built up through praise, recognition and achievement.
- Spending time with friends and other adults in their lives who they like and love.
- Taking part in positive activities outside the home like hobbies and sports.
- Having something to care for, e.g., a pet, can be hugely important for children to see beyond their distress.

*"I think after Domestic Violence and Abuse, it's more than being overprotective, it's almost being superprotective. As mothers, we need to accept and allow our children to be their own selves who can lead their own lives. For example, my teenage daughter wanted to go to a friend's house for a couple hours after school – I know the house and we have mobiles to keep in contact but I was still so wound-up with worry. She turned to me in the car and said, "You have to stop – you have to let go!" I realised then that she was actually fine and it was me who wasn't fine: I was putting fear into her and needed to stop putting all my anxieties into her world too. Letting go of your children as they grow up can be tough – we must trust them to do their best, as they trust us that we're also trying to do our best."*<sup>41</sup>



# Healthy Relationships

It is everybody's right to feel safe and be treated with respect and love in an intimate relationship. No one should live in fear. In any abusive relationship, the responsibility for the abuse is always with the abuser.

A healthy relationship will have some key elements:



## A healthy relationship for teenagers and young people

Teenagers and young people experience intimate partner abuse and control too. This is often referred to as 'teen dating abuse'. Where a practitioner encounters a young person they suspect may be experiencing or perpetrating dating abuse there are ways to support the young person to recognise what is occurring and to end the relationship safely. Linking the young person who is experiencing abuse with services such as the Children and Young People's Support Service in Clare Haven Services on 065 6822435 where they can receive support, empathy, understanding and practical advice if required. Perpetrators should be linked with MOVE Ireland.

## Is my relationship healthy?

Can the young person agree with these statements?

- I make my partner feel safe.
- I listen to my partner.
- I value their opinion.
- I am truthful with my partner.
- I try to understand how my partner feels.
- I trust my partner.
- I like that they have other friends.
- I treat my partner as an equal.
- I respect my partner's family.
- I understand their need for alone time.
- I accept my partner as they are.
- I respect my partner's right to say no- to meeting up if they have other plans, to sexual contact, and to sharing of images.

## Red flags within teenagers' relationships

If these statements resonate with the young person then these are signs that there is violence and abuse within the young person's relationship.

- I try to control my partner.
- I get violent.
- I quickly lose my temper with my partner.
- I always blame my partner.
- I am sexually demanding- pressurising my partner to go further sexually than they are comfortable with. (This also includes non-physical behaviour such as pressurising a partner for intimate pictures and sharing intimate pictures with others.)
- I keep my partner from seeing their friends and family.
- I make all the decisions in the relationship.
- I embarrass my partner in front of others.
- I make my partner cry.
- I criticise my partner's clothes/ interests.
- My family or partner's family and friends are concerned about our relationship.
- I have interfered with contraception – to cause pregnancy or STD's intentionally.
- Love bombing.

## Consent<sup>44</sup>

Some questions to encourage a young person to reflect on when thinking about consent:

- What would I be OK with?
- Do I really want to do this or am I being pressured by others?
- How far am I willing to go?
- Will it make me happy?
- If I am uncomfortable with what is happening am I able to say “STOP”?
- If someone says “Yes” “No” or “Stop” to me, can I accept that?
- I understand that “No” means “No” and only “Yes” means “Yes”?
- Will I be OK about it when I see that person again or when I go to school next week?
- Am I doing it so I can boast to my friend or do I really enjoy what I am doing?

### How do I know if someone else consents?

You don't, unless you ask them. It's important to check in that they are OK. If both parties respect each other then you will both be more relaxed and it will be more fun.

### Things you might ask are


- Are you ok with this?
- Are you ok if we take it further?
- Do you want to slow down?
- They might give a “Yes” or “No” or even “Maybe” answer. If your answer or your boyfriend/ girlfriend's answer is a maybe, it's important that you wait until both of you are ready. Remember only “Yes means Yes”.

### They are not into it if they do any of the following

- If they say “STOP” or “NO”.
- If they are struggling or trying to push you away.
- If they are frozen to the spot.
- If they are not really responding to your advances.
- If you have to push them - physically or emotionally into doing something.







**Remember  
we are not mind  
readers so it's  
important to check  
in that everything  
is OK.**

The age of consent for sexual intercourse is 17 for boys and girls.

### Coco's Law

Coco's Law creates two new offences which criminalise the non-consensual distribution of intimate images:

- The first offence deals with the distribution or publication of intimate images without consent and with intent to cause harm. The penalties applicable can be an unlimited fine and/or 7 years imprisonment.
- The second offence deals with the taking, distribution or publication of intimate images without consent even if there is no specific intent to cause harm. This offence will carry a maximum penalty of a €5,000 fine and/or 12 months imprisonment.

### Safe ways to end a relationship that makes you feel unsafe or uncomfortable<sup>45</sup>

- If you don't feel safe, don't break up in person. Breaking up over the phone or by email may be the safest way.
- If you break up in person, do it in a public place. Have friends or your parents waiting nearby. Keep your phone with you.
- Try not to feel like you have to make the other person understand your reasons for breaking up. You can state your reasons without having to justify or debate.
- Let your family and friends know that you are ending your relationship, especially if you think your ex will come to your house or try and approach you when you are alone.
- If your ex comes to your house when you are alone- don't open the door. If you feel afraid, call the Gardaí or a family member who maybe nearby.
- If your ex approaches you in public and causes you to feel afraid- by shouting, intimidation, name-calling or manipulating you, call the Gardaí or a family member who may be nearby.
- When an unhealthy or abusive relationship ends- this does not mean that the abuse or control will end. It can sometimes result in an escalation of abuse and attempts to control. Should this occur- create a safety plan with the support of a service like Clare Haven Services 065 6822435 and a family member.



## Domestic Abuse and our Response

### How can services/agencies support?

According to the American Psychological Association, resilience in children and young people enables them to thrive in spite of their adverse circumstances. It involves behaviours, thoughts, and actions that can be learned over time and can be nurtured through positive and healthy relationships with parents and other caregivers and adults who guide them in healthy problem-solving strategies.<sup>46</sup>

Schools, early years' services, youth workers etc. are very well placed to form strong connections with children and young people who have experienced or may experience abuse.


According to a study Jigsaw and UCD carried out in 2019, 76% of young people had at least one adult they could talk to when they needed support. Having this person in their lives was linked to better overall mental health.

### What difference does One Good Adult make?

Young people who reported having one good adult tended to have:

- Increased self-esteem.
- More success in school life.
- Better mental health.
- More likely to seek help.
- Less risk taking behaviours.

*Not having One Good Adult was linked to higher levels of distress, anti-social behaviour and increased risk for suicidal behaviour.*



One Good Adult  
is crucial to helping  
young people do  
well and to  
flourish.

### At a micro level within organisations<sup>47</sup>

- Check in with children and young people- the small moments before and after classes, during snack or lunch and at activity times are all opportunities for building connections with children. Warm genuine greetings and *attempts to connect* can have a huge impact. These are the foundations for establishing strong relationships where children and young people feel comfortable sharing their worries with adults. Be the One Good Adult.
- Education for children and young people around healthy relationships. BodyRight etc. Talk to Clare Haven Services who provide such programmes on 0656842646.
- Be aware of where SHPE or RSE classes may highlight differences in families' experiences of conflict resolution.
- The Stay Safe programme for example focuses on sharing worries with a safe adult.
- Be aware of the language used by children to describe Domestic Abuse: 'Mammy and Daddy were fighting last night', 'Daddy was angry/cross yesterday.' Use these opportunities to open communication with the child, if not in the moment then a few minutes later when the other children present are occupied.

This could look like ‘Mary, you mentioned that Mammy and Daddy were fighting this morning before school. What does this look like in your house?’

- It’s important to listen for what they can’t do (as well as what the abuser is doing). E.g., they can’t see friends, they can’t do X in their house etc.
- Never ignore a disclosure made by a child. If you are unsure whether or not a disclosure has been made, please contact the Duty Social worker for guidance.
- Challenge assumptions about gender, power and equality with children and young people of all ages.

## Responding to a child who discloses abuse – suggested guidelines<sup>48</sup>

Remember, a child may disclose abuse to you as a trusted adult at any time during your work with them. It is important that you are aware and prepared for this.

- Be as calm and natural as possible.
- Remember that you have been approached because you are trusted and possibly liked. Do not panic.
- Be aware that disclosures can be very difficult for the child.
- Remember, the child may initially be testing your reactions and may only fully open up over a period of time.
- Listen to what the child has to say. Give them the time and opportunity to tell as much as they are able and wish to. Validate the child’s emotions around what they have disclosed- ‘it’s not OK that this has happened to you’.
- Do not pressurise the child. Allow him or her to disclose at their own pace and in their own language.
- Conceal any signs of disgust, anger or disbelief.
- Accept what the child has to say – false disclosures are very rare.

It is important to differentiate between the person who carried out the abuse and the act of abuse itself. The child quite possibly may love or strongly like the alleged abuser while also disliking what was done to them. It is important therefore to avoid expressing any judgement on, or anger towards, the alleged perpetrator while talking with the child.

It may be necessary to reassure the child that your feelings towards him or her have not been affected in a negative way as a result of what they have disclosed.

## When asking questions

Questions should be supportive and for the purpose of clarification only. Avoid leading questions, such as asking whether a specific person carried out the abuse. Also, avoid asking about intimate details or suggesting that something else may have happened other than what you have been told. Such questions and suggestions could complicate the official investigation. Avoid using Domestic Abuse loaded language when asking questions like ‘are you being emotionally abused?’ because the child won’t see it in those terms and when they hear Domestic Abuse loaded language will probably assume it’s not relevant to their experiences.

## Confidentiality

Do not promise to keep secrets.

### At the earliest opportunity, tell the child that

- You acknowledge that they have come to you because they trust you.
- You will be sharing this information only with people who understand this area and who can help. There are secrets, which are not helpful and should not be kept because they make matters worse. Such secrets hide things that need to be known if people are to be helped and protected from further ongoing hurt. By refusing to make a commitment to secrecy to the child, you do run the risk that they may not tell you everything (or, indeed, anything) there and then. However, it is better to do this than to tell a lie and ruin the child's confidence in yet another adult. By being honest, it is more likely that the child will return to you at another time.
- Think before you promise anything.
- Immediately following any disclosures, you must record in writing any descriptions of what was said, the child's demeanour as you have observed it.

### At a macro level within organisations<sup>49</sup>

- Ensure safeguarding policies and procedures are robust and regularly revisited.
- Practice a Trauma Informed Approach, including staff training, review of policies etc.
- Offer staff training around understanding Domestic Abuse and ACEs
- Support staff to recognise the many ways Domestic Abuse can present in children.
- Signpost parents to appropriate support and courses.
- Ensure all relevant staff are aware of protection/ safety orders and understand what they mean within the school/ service context.
- Effective pastoral care for vulnerable children.
- Ensure that there are awareness raising information and support numbers in bathrooms.
- Create a service/school environment where staff demonstrate effective conflict management, and use restorative approaches when conflict arises. This can help children and young people avoid repeating family patterns of behaviour.
- Promote gender equality and challenge gender stereotypes across all curriculum subjects & areas and throughout conversations from the early years to secondary school aged children.
- Ensure that where parent teacher meetings or communications etc. require the attendance of both parents, that arrangements are made for parents to attend separately and that both parents are not required to present at the same time.
- Be aware of institutional grooming and how it can present in various ways.
- Establish good working relationships with the support agencies in your locality- Tusla Duty & Intake Team, Clarecare, Clare Haven Services, and Community Gardaí etc.

## Top Tips to Remember

*The Family Justice Young People Board (FIYPB) have devised some top tips for professionals working with children and young people who have been subjected to and affected by Domestic Abuse.<sup>50</sup>*

1. Make sure that the child/young person knows that it is not their fault and they are not responsible for the protection of others.
2. Focus on the child/young person's experience, not just that of their parents.
3. Ask the child/young person if they feel safe and if not, what will make them feel safe.
4. The child/young person may not have seen a specific incident, but they may have heard it or have been exposed to the after effects. Remember this can be just as terrifying for a child/young person.
5. Recognise that many children and young people will be very worried and scared about the parent who is the victim of domestic violence and may want to protect them. This could mean putting themselves in harm's way.
6. Realise that the child/young person may be able to recognise the warning signs before abuse happens and they may need advice as to how to assess support at this point rather than after an incident has taken place.
7. Understand that the child/young person may not recognise a parent's (perpetrator's) actions as abusive and they may want to protect them.
8. Just because a child/young person does not permanently live in the situation does not mean that they are not exposed to Domestic Abuse or affected by it. Understand that the impact on the child/young person may have a long-term affect.
9. Be aware that the way parents act in front of a professional is not always the same as how they are at home with the child/young person.
10. Be aware that some children and young people may be embarrassed about what is happening or what has happened.
11. Let the child/young person fully express their emotions, including what they think, feel and want to happen.
12. Explain to the child/young person the different types of abuse and talk about what a healthy relationship should be like.
13. Encourage the child/young person to get support, make them aware of the services available to them and help them access the support. Each child/young person needs to know whom they can contact if they feel scared.
14. Think about any other children or young people who are in a new relationship with the violent parent (e.g. step-children).
15. A child/young person could be experiencing abuse within their own personal relationships, not just in their family.
16. Do not assume that a child/young person will fully understand what confidentially means, make sure they know what information is confidential and what you will need to share and with whom. Also consider what is the impact likely to be on the child/young person as a result of you sharing the information.

## Safety Planning<sup>51</sup>

Having a safety plan worked out in advance can help a woman and her children survive in the home safely. Safety planning with children and young people should be carried out *after* discussion with the Mother. This can be helpful because the Mother may have suggestions of safe people for the child to speak to, and safe places to go when there is hurting at home or things that may not be a good idea to suggest.

### Safety planning in the abusive home

Often children and young people will have identified their own coping strategies or methods to keep safe. These should not be discounted but may need adjustments to ensure their safety. It's therefore important to take an inventory of a child's strengths before coming up with a plan.

### Things to consider when creating the plan:

- Encourage children or young people to remove themselves from the abusive situation safely.

### Questions to consider might include:

- Is there a next door neighbour the child or young person could go to?
- Is there an extended family member they could call to visit?
- If not, is there a place that they feel safe within the home?
- Perhaps there are younger siblings that could go with them?

As adults, we can think that a child might feel safest in their bedroom, however it is best to discuss this with the child or young person. The safe place needs to feel safe to the child.

An activity where you draw a map of the home with the child might be useful. This activity also helps to discourage the child from choosing dangerous rooms to hide in for example the kitchen.

- Children and young people should never be encouraged to engage or intervene during an abusive incident. This is an extremely important message to convey and can often go against a child's instinct. With an older child or young person, we can explain our reasoning behind asking them not to intervene.
- If there is shouting and the child or young person wants to distract themselves, is there an activity they like to engage in? The children are the experts here and will often suggest- TV, headphones and music, reading, hurling in the garden etc.
- Children or young people should not be pressured into feeling responsible for keeping themselves, their Mother and/or their siblings or pets safe.

- Discussing 'safe people' with the child or young person is a key element of safety planning. Supporting children to 'break the silence' and talk to a safe adult about hurting they might be experiencing at home is important. The children may identify their own 'safe people.' Mothers may also identify adults that they feel their child could talk to. Safe People should be adults (Over 18) and outside the immediate family or household. For example, it might include a teacher or Aunt. It wouldn't include an older sibling who lives in the home. Children may choose their own safe people but might be open to being guided to include a teacher or sports coach for example. The safe hands activity is useful when supporting children and young people to identify safe adults. It is important to never promise a child to keep a conversation confidential or secret.
- Where a child has a mobile phone or access to a phone- including this in the safety plan can be useful. Children should be shown how to call 999 in an emergency. What constitutes an emergency should be clearly explained- any time the child thinks that someone has been or there is a risk that someone could be hurt or if the child doesn't feel safe. It could also be pre-arranged between the Mother and young person that if the young person leaves the home to go for a walk during a verbally abusive incident, the Mother may call when it is ok for the young person to return home.

### Safety planning if leaving the home:

Typically, the decision to leave the family home comes from the Mother. The Mother will be supported to create a safety plan that involves having important documents, clothes, medicines etc. prepared in advance sometimes with the support of a frontline worker.

- When a Mother has decided to leave the family home with the children- it is unlikely to be safe to tell a young child in advance. Once the Mother & children are leaving the Mother should share certain details- such as they are going to a safe place where there will be no hurting with actions or words, that they will remain together.
- Sharing the specific location or address with very young children or young people may pose an additional safety risk because they may not understand the importance of not sharing this information with the abusive parent.
- Ensuring to take a child's comforter or teddy along with other special items (tablet or charger for older child) can make the transition easier on the children and young people.
- Tasking an older child or young person with something to carry or care for while leaving the home can be a helpful way to keep them focused. An example might be to carry their own special teddy or to carry a small bag pack.



# The role of some Frontline Workers

## An Garda Síochána

Domestic Abuse reaches every town, estate and rural location in Ireland. It is the one call that every member will respond to regardless of their posting. Research has shown victims will endure over thirty incidents of Domestic Abuse prior to a police service being notified or seeking help. An Garda Síochána is aware that how an approach is undertaken, can validate the victim or re-affirm the position of the abuser.

Each member of An Garda Síochána is trained to be professional, robust and empathic in their response to Domestic Abuse and there are times when victims and investigations require a more skilled and expert approach. This is delivered through the newly established Divisional Protective Service Units. The vision for the DPSUs is to become a centre of excellence and to ensure best practice in the monitoring and investigation of these serious crime offences. This is achieved by having a victim centred policy at its core. All Garda members have been selected because of their commitment, experience and passion for this field. This unit is tasked with investigations into specific crime including Domestic Abuse (coercive control), sexual crime, online child exploitation, trafficking, organised prostitution and victim liaison. The contact number for the Clare DPSU is 065 6890132 and the email address is **clare.dpsu@garda.ie**. An Garda Síochána believe that, coupled with targeted and specific training, each Garda member will be proficient in dealing with the most vulnerable of victims recalling the most harrowing of incidents.

An Garda Síochána in County Clare is dedicated to working with victims of Domestic Abuse. Anyone who wants to report or discuss an incident of Domestic Abuse can phone 112/999 or their local Garda Station. In addition, we have a dedicated Victim Liaison Service in Clare and they can be contacted on (065) 6848194.

In the event that a person discloses that they do not feel safe remaining in their family home, Gardaí will work with them to ensure that they are brought to a place of safety. This could be to the home of a family member or friend. Clare Haven Services provide a refuge service and they can be contacted at any time day or night to establish if they have room available. Gardaí will also supply details of relevant support services and will follow up with the victim after the initial call. On responding to Domestic Abuse calls Gardaí engagement with child victims is paramount to ensure they are safe and well. In the majority of cases, Gardaí will be told that the children are asleep in bed but the reality is that no child is asleep while there is fighting within the home. Engaging with children is one of our responsibilities under the Children First Guidelines. Gardaí will not question children about the incident they are responding to.

Gardaí will introduce themselves, offer reassurance and explain they are there to keep them and their parents safe. If any Garda action is required especially an arrest, even if it is of the violent parent, Gardaí will explain this to the child(ren). There are many studies which have cited that child victims believe they are invisible to police on responding to Domestic Abuse calls but An Garda Síochána in Clare want to assure children that we are here to listen, hear and act.

A Domestic Violence Liaison Sergeant is also assigned to each area in County Clare and offers the following:

- To meet victims of Domestic Abuse and offer support, advice and guidance.
- Investigate reports of domestic crime.
- To ensure a seamless referral of victims to other support agencies in County Clare.
- Engage with professionals to offer advice & guidance.

Area	Garda Station	Domestic Violence Sergeant	Telephone / Email
Ennis	Ennis	Sergeant Catriona Holohan	(065) 6848100 catriona.j.holohan@garda.ie
Kilrush	Kilrush, Ennistymon, Lisdoonvarna and Lahinch Garda Stations	Sergeant Bernadette Kelleher & Sergeant Francis Corey	(065) 9080550 bernadette.m.kelleher@garda.ie Francis.J.Corey@Garda.ie
Shannon	Shannon, Sixmilebridge and Newmarket On Fergus Garda Stations	Sergeant Ann Marie Starr & Sergeant Tracey Stanley	(061) 365900 ann.marie.starr@garda.ie & tracey.e.stanley@garda.ie
Killaloe	Killaloe, Tulla and Scariff Garda Stations	Sergeant Deirdre O Doherty	(061) 620540 deirdre.b.odoherty@garda.ie

## Tusla Social Worker

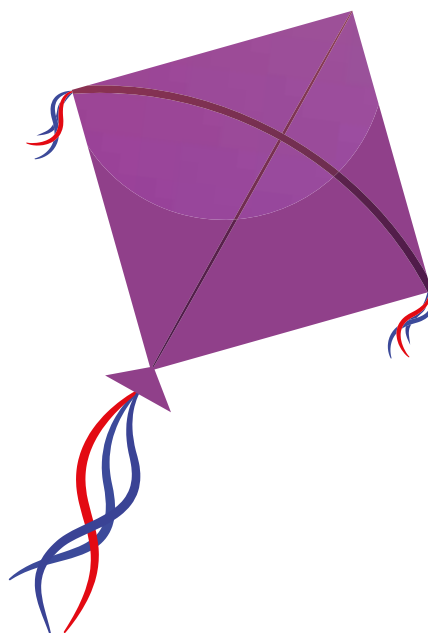
When there are children living in a home and there are concerns that Domestic Abuse may be occurring, a referral is sent to the Tusla Duty Social Worker. The role of the Duty Social Worker is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of the children living in the home. A lot of parents have a fear that if social workers become involved, the only result is their children will be taken into care. This only happens when it is absolutely necessary to ensure the physical and emotional safety of the children. If children are received into care, reunification takes place when it is safe to do so. Most of the time, social workers complete their work while children are still in their parent's care.

Social workers will work together with a family to come up with the best plan or plans to keep the children safe. This will often involve family members or friends who can be contacted either by a parent or the children (if they are old enough) to talk about any worries they might have, and make arrangements for a place of safety if an incident occurs. This will also involve working with the perpetrator to help them to identify what triggers the behaviour and what they can do to prevent them from engaging in abusive behaviours. Social workers also provide families with support in accessing necessary services, including counselling, Domestic Abuse support services and legal services.

### **Please Contact:**

Social Work Department Ennis – Tel: (065) 6863935 or email **[claredutysocialwork@tusla.ie](mailto:claredutysocialwork@tusla.ie)** if you are concerned about a child's safety. You can also contact TUSLA Mid-West (Clare, Limerick North Tipperary) Tel: (061) 588688 **[www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)**

Additionally, you can download a Child Protection Welfare Report (CPWR) form which can be found on the website **[www.tusla.ie](http://www.tusla.ie)**. Additionally, you can register on the Tusla Portal, create an account and submit online.



## Clare Haven Service's Children & Young People's Supports Coordinator

Where a client with children calls our helpline, meets with our client support workers to discuss the abuse her family is experiencing or accesses Refuge, the Client support worker will refer the woman to the C&YP Supports Coordinator. Through focusing on the individual needs of each child, a plan is developed between the C&YP Supports Coordinator and the Mother to support the child or young person.

### **This plan can involve:**

- Safety planning with the child or young person.
- Supporting the child or young person around the abusive experiences they disclose, acknowledging the abuse they have experienced, letting them know that they are not alone in having experienced this and that it is not ok that they have lived with this hurting and fighting.
- Facilitating the child to attend CHS provided child counselling, CHS provided play therapy, CHS provided therapeutic horse riding, ISPCC e-pilot, CHS one to one supports, to receive CHS calming boxes or to attend in-house programmes including summer supports.
- Referral for the Mother to CHS provided Insights for Mothers.
- Supporting Mothers to recognise the impact that Domestic Abuse has had or is having on her child.
- Supporting Mothers to liaise with the child's school, early years' or school aged care service and to share with them the child's experiences of Domestic Abuse and how that may impact their time in schools/ services.
- Supporting Mothers to engage with Tusla social workers where there are child protection concerns.
- Supporting Mothers to speak to their child about the hurting and fighting that occurred in the home and how to talk to their child about separation or the changes that are occurring within their family.
- Supporting Mothers to safely plan access drop-offs and collections.
- Supporting Mothers in identifying temporary school placement in the locale of the refuge while she is there.
- Supporting a Mother in preparing for court in relation to access, maintenance and potential custody.
- Acting as a witness in court.
- Participating in Network Meetings and Case Conferences as part of Child Protection Processes.
- Accompanying Mothers, children and young people to services as a third party empathetic support.
- Referrals for the child and Mother to TLC kidz programme.
- Referral for the Mother to other support agencies including Clarecare or programmes in the Family Resource Centres.

This role entails other elements such as delivering in school, in community and in-house interventions, education and prevention programmes. Liaising with and delivering information sessions to other service providers and agencies.

## The TLC Kidz Project Coordinator

The TLC Kidz Project Coordinator, supports children and Mothers who have experienced Domestic Abuse. The Project delivers the TLC Kidz group work programmes concurrently for children and their Mothers. The group work programmes are delivered by professionals working in a number of different agencies and different disciplines across the Limerick and Clare areas and span over 12 weeks.

### The purpose of the programme is to

- Provide children with the opportunity to process and understand the violence and abuse they have experienced;
- To give children who have been exposed to Domestic Abuse a voice, and to validate children's experiences;
- To provide Mothers with the skills to respond to and support their child to express their feelings in a healthy way;
- To provide Mothers with an opportunity to explore how their children may have been impacted by the Domestic Abuse.

### Programme Objectives

- To raise awareness of Domestic Abuse and its impact on children;
- To increase capacity of organisations and service providers to identify and respond to Domestic Abuse and its impact on children;
- To link children with an appropriate response to their needs with regard to their exposure to Domestic Abuse.

### Programme Referral Criteria

- The programme is open to children between the ages of 6-16 (in appropriate groups) depending on availability;
- Open to children from Clare;
- Separation has occurred and the perpetrator no longer resides at the family home.



## Clarecare Family Support Services

The Clarecare Family Support staff team offer individual support for children and young people to support their understanding and management of emotional and behaviour issues, including experience of Domestic Abuse, that may be causing them difficulty at home, school or in their relationships with others.

Individual and group supports offered to parents through the Circle of Security Parenting Programme, help parents understand and respond to the signal's children give about what they need emotionally and helps parents look beyond children's behaviour to discover what need the child may be communicating. This is particularly important for children who have experienced trauma including Domestic Abuse. Circle of Security promotes better relationships and more secure attachment between parent and child/children.

Women/parents who access the Clarecare Family Support Services are referred to the Clare Haven supports where support in relation to Domestic Abuse are needed. Clarecare Family Support Service staff also co-facilitate and refer to the TLC Kidz recovery group for Mothers and children who have experienced Domestic Abuse. For further information on these services contact Clarecare by phone at 065 6828178 or email us at [parentsupportline@clarecare.ie](mailto:parentsupportline@clarecare.ie) or visit our website [www.clarecare.ie](http://www.clarecare.ie)



If a child is in  
**immediate danger**  
contact Gardaí at **112/999** or  
**[www.garda.ie](http://www.garda.ie)**



# Domestic Abuse and the Law

## UN Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>52</sup>

One of the most basic human rights principles is the right to live free from the threat of violence. Article 19 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which came into force in September 1990, guarantees this right to every child, and obliges States to take appropriate measures to protect the child from all forms of violence.

## Istanbul Convention<sup>53</sup>

Istanbul Convention requires all measures of protection to take into account the relationship between victims, perpetrator, children and their wider social environment. The aim is to avoid a situation where victims and their needs are addressed in isolation or without acknowledging their social reality (Article 18, paragraph 3).

The Istanbul Convention also calls for specialist support for children in such situations (Articles 22, 23 and 26) based on their needs. In line with the Council of Europe Guidelines on Child-friendly Justice, the Istanbul Convention requires State parties to afford child victims and child witnesses special protection at all stages of investigations and judicial proceedings (Article 56). The best interest of the child must be the guiding principle when children come in contact with the law enforcement system.

## Domestic Violence Act 2018<sup>54</sup>

The recently published policy of An Garda Síochána on Domestic Abuse Intervention identifies their key role as ‘the provision of information, support and protection to victims’<sup>55</sup>. In addition, on 1 January 2019, the Domestic Violence Act 2018<sup>56</sup> came into effect. It consolidates the law on domestic violence and provides for additional protections for victims of Domestic Abuse.

A new offence of coercive control of a spouse, civil partner or intimate partner also comes into force under the 2018 Act. Coercive control is a pattern of intimidation, humiliation and controlling behaviour that causes fear of violence or serious distress that has a substantial impact on the victim’s day-to-day activities. If it happened after January 1st 2019, coercive control is a criminal offence in Ireland. Section 39 of the new Domestic Violence Act 2018 sets out that:

A person commits an offence where he or she knowingly and persistently engages in behaviour that

- a. is controlling or coercive;
- b. has a serious effect on a relevant person, and
- c. a reasonable person would consider likely to have a serious effect on a relevant person.



## Childrens First Act 2015<sup>57</sup>

Tusla has a primary responsibility in promoting the safety and well-being of children and as such must always be informed when a person has reasonable grounds for concern that a child may have been, is being abused or is at risk of being abused or neglected. Such child protection concerns need to be supported by evidence that indicates the possibility of harm, abuse or neglect.

In the case of Domestic Abuse, initial referrals are generally made by the Gardaí (called to attend an incident, where there is a child/children present within the household) to the local Duty Social Work team. Where the Garda attending believes there is an immediate risk to the child they will issue a Section 12 which will in turn enable the duty social worker to access an out of hours bed. Specialist Domestic Abuse services also provide initial child protection/welfare referrals.

Where it is suspected that a child is at risk there must be a report made under Children First. The term “Children First” was originally used in relation to Children First: National Guidelines for the Protection and Welfare of Children, first published in 1999 and reviewed and updated on a number of occasions since then, most recently in 2017. Since the enactment of the Children First Act 2015, the term is now a generic term used to encompass the guidance, the legislation and the implementation of both. Children First relates to the recognition of child abuse and neglect, the reporting of same to Tusla - Child and Family Agency, and the best practice which organisations should adhere to, to keep children safe while availing of their services. Non-statutory obligations for all persons coming into contact with children are set out in the Children First Guidance, and the Children First Act 2015 sets out additional statutory obligations for defined categories of persons (Mandated Persons) and for organisations providing relevant services to children.

Society has a duty of care towards children and everyone should be alert to the possibility that children with whom they are in contact, may be being abused or be at risk of abuse.<sup>58</sup>

Additionally, a joint working protocol for An Garda Síochána/Tusla Child & Family Agency was introduced into practice to ensure that:

- The safety and welfare of the child is promoted.
- Everything possible is done to assist the criminal investigation.
- Everything possible is done to assist the child protection and welfare assessment.
- There is an effective flow of relevant information between both agencies.
- Decisions and actions follow consultation with and between both agencies.<sup>59</sup>

## Am I a Mandated person?<sup>60</sup>

For further information and advice, please visit  
<https://www.tusla.ie/children-first/mandated-persons>

Schedule 2 of the Children First Act 2015 specifies the following classes of persons as Mandated Persons for the purposes of the Act:

1. Registered medical practitioner within the meaning of section 2 of the Medical Practitioners Act 2007.
2. Registered nurse or registered midwife within the meaning of section 2(1) of the Nurses and Midwives Act 2011.
3. Physiotherapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
4. Speech and language therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
5. Occupational therapist registered in the register of members of that profession.
6. Registered dentist within the meaning of section 2 of the Dentists Act 1985.
7. Psychologist who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in the register (if any) of members of that profession.
8. Social care worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register of that profession.
9. Social worker who practises as such and who is eligible for registration in accordance with Part 4 of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 in the register (if any) of that profession.
10. Emergency medical technician, paramedic and advanced paramedic registered with the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council under the Pre-Hospital Emergency Care Council (Establishment) Order 2000 (S.I. No. 109 of 2000).
11. Probation officer within the meaning of section 1 of the Criminal Justice (Community Service) Act 1983.
12. Teacher registered with the Teaching Council.
13. Member of An Garda Síochána.
14. Guardian ad litem appointed in accordance with section 26 of the Child Care Act 1991.
15. Person employed in any of the following capacities:
  - a. manager of domestic violence shelter;
  - b. manager of homeless provision or emergency accommodation facility;
  - c. manager of asylum seeker accommodation (direct provision) centre;
  - d. addiction counsellor employed by a body funded, wholly or partly, out of moneys provided by the Oireachtas;
  - e. psychotherapist or a person providing counselling who is registered with one of the voluntary professional bodies;

- f. manager of a language school or other recreational school where children reside away from home;
  - g. member of the clergy (howsoever described) or pastoral care worker (howsoever described) of a church or other religious community;
  - h. director of any institution where a child is detained by an order of a court;
  - i. safeguarding officer, child protection officer or other person (howsoever described) who is employed for the purpose of performing the child welfare and protection function of religious, sporting, recreational, cultural, educational and other bodies and organisations offering services to children;
  - j. child care staff member employed in a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991;
  - k. person responsible for the care or management of a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.
16. Youth worker who:
- a. holds a professional qualification that is recognised by the National Qualifications Authority in youth work within the meaning of section 3 of the Youth Work Act 2001 or a related discipline, and
  - b. is employed in a youth work service within the meaning of section 2 of the Youth Work Act 2001.
17. Foster carer registered with the Agency.
18. A person carrying on a pre-school service within the meaning of Part VIIA of the Child Care Act 1991.



## Impact of Court

At the heart of every court report concerning issues of child contact, should be the child's experience. Understanding the complexity of cases involving Domestic Abuse helps practitioners focus on the impact it can have on children, who should be considered equally as the victim.

When making determinations of a family's circumstance in a court context, it is also important to note that coercive and controlling behaviour can continue and also manifest itself post separation as discussed earlier on pg. 21. It needs to be acknowledged that the family court can, at times, be used by perpetrators as an extension of coercive and controlling behaviour.<sup>61</sup>

There is a move internationally towards criminalising controlling and coercive behaviour in family and intimate relationships (Stark and Hester, 2019). However, so far these efforts have focused on situations with adult perpetrators and adult victims. Emma Katz study discussed earlier, suggests that there is a need for such laws to acknowledge that coercive control can also be perpetrated by a parent against a child under 16 years old. It advises that children's experiences as victims and survivors of coercive control gain greater recognition generally, but also in a court context.

The recent Joint Submission to the Family Justice Oversight Group by the Children Living with Domestic and Sexual Violence Group<sup>62</sup> highlights conflicts between the systems tasked with making legal decisions around children and young people in the context of Domestic Abuse. The report goes on to say that families in Domestic Abuse proceedings, can be simultaneously involved in the Criminal Court, in the Family Court and in the Child Protection system. The report states, the 3 systems perform different functions and work with different aims and priorities, often resulting in a lack of common focus on the safety of the child. This interaction is often problematic according to the report.

### Some examples highlighted are:

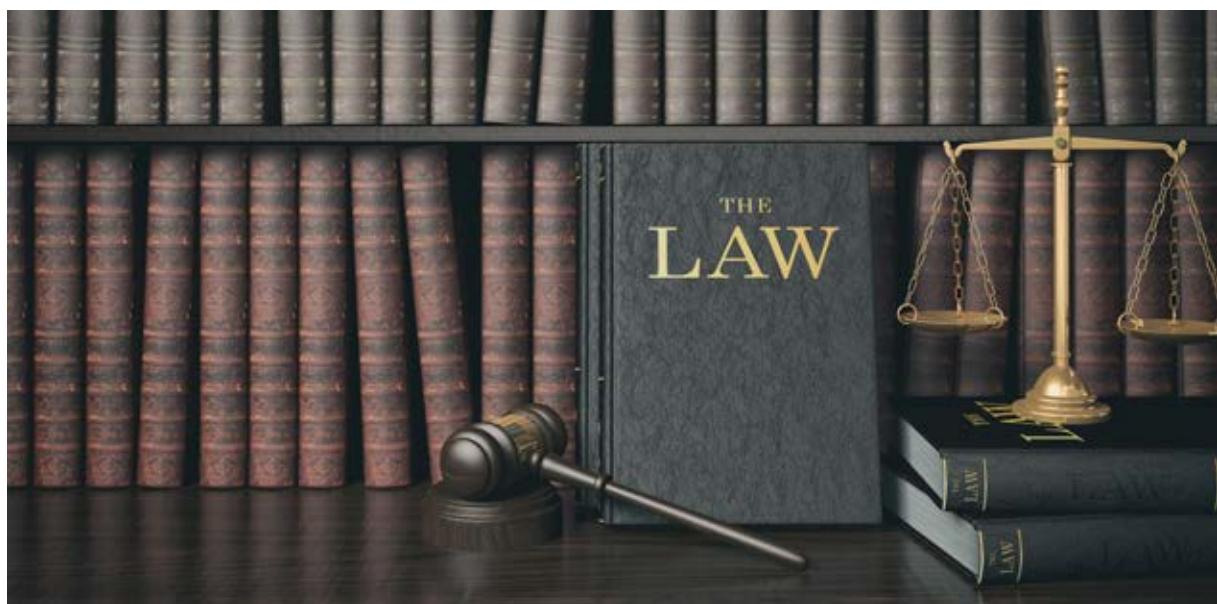
- Child protection system and Family Court may work in opposite directions: Child Protection Practice requires that where there is conflict between protecting children and respecting the needs and rights of parents, the child's welfare must come first. Child protection therefore may require a Mother to protect her children by leaving an abusive partner. However, in Family Law Proceedings the parental rights of the abusing partner may supersede the safety of the child resulting in the Family Court granting unsupervised access to the abusive partner and insisting on co-operation from the mother with that order.
- Child abuse allegations that are not **proven** in the Criminal Justice system may be characterized as malicious **false** allegations in Family Law proceedings: a Mother may report child physical or sexual abuse by the Father to Tusla and / or the Gardaí, however these allegations are notoriously difficult to prove and criminal proceedings may not be successful. The abuser then uses the lack of conviction to argue the Mother is vindictive and her concerns should not be listened to in the Family Court.

- Proceedings, including **convictions**, of an abuser in the criminal justice system for violent offences against their partner may be deemed irrelevant in Family Law Custody and Access proceedings because the offence was not committed against the child. This fails to recognise the damaging emotional impact on the child, of experiencing the protective parent being abused.
- Studies show that adult partners who are abusive are also at increased risk of abusing their children. Yet the more a Mother seeks protection for her children and herself through the criminal justice and child protection systems, the more she could be made out to be revengeful, intractable and unreliable in Family Law proceedings: ironically, the more proceedings she is involved with the less credibility she has in the Family Law court.

The result of these problematic and contradictory interactions is that the risks posed by the perpetrator to the children and the non-abusive parent are minimized, and unsafe child custody and access arrangement are made that continue, and possibly escalate, the abuse of both.

The advice from the Joint Submission Group is that research in this area is urgently needed to understand these dynamics and patterns. They further advise that the Family Justice Oversight Group should consider how to improve linkages and collaboration between the Family Law court, the Criminal Court and Child Protection, in order to centre the safety and wellbeing of the child and support the non-abusive parent in all proceedings.

A report by Women's Aid in 2020 says the family law system is "failing to adequately protect children and their Mothers when considering custody and access arrangements". It states that It is critical that longer-term reforms are introduced with a view to building a "victim-centred family law system that prioritises the safety of women and children subjected to abuse".<sup>63</sup>





## Court Orders

Outside of criminal prosecutions, Irish legislation such as the Child Care Act 1991 and the Domestic Violence Act 2018, outline several legal protections which may be available to those who have experienced DSGBV.<sup>64</sup>

These include:

**Safety Order** - prohibits a person from using or threatening violence towards the applicant and/or their children. It does not oblige the violent person to leave the family home, but if the parties live apart, they are prohibited from watching or being near the home. This order can last up to 5 years.

**Protection Order** - temporary safety order that can be granted while a person applies for a safety and/or barring order. It has the same power as a safety order and lasts until the full court hearing of the safety/barring order.

**Barring Order** - prohibits a person from using or threatening violence towards the applicant and/or their children. It also requires the violent person to leave and stay away from the applicant's place of residence and/or dependent children. This order can last up to 3 years.

**Interim Barring Order** - temporary barring order that can be granted when a person applies for a barring order. It is only granted in exceptional circumstances and lasts until the full court hearing for the barring order. If granted, the full hearing must take place within 8 days.

**Emergency Barring Order (Section 9, Domestic Violence Act, 2018)** - An emergency barring order requires the abusive person to leave the home, and prohibits the person from entering the home. This is an immediate order where there are reasonable grounds to believe there is an immediate risk of significant harm to you (the applicant) or a dependent person.

**The Children and Family Relationships Act 2015** requires that legal proceedings relating to guardianship, custody, upbringing, or access to a child facilitate the free expression of that child's views. If the child is unable to freely express an opinion, the court may order an expert report on any question affecting the welfare of the child and/or appoint an expert to find out and convey the child's views.

Two further significant pieces of legislation introduced in 2017 and, subject to amendments, are:

**Domestic Violence Act, 2018** - this follows on and updates the Domestic Violence Act, 1996.

Changes include:

- Introduces factors that a court shall consider all partners in an intimate relationship are eligible for Safety and Protection orders, with no need of cohabitation.

- Making the court process easier for those who have experienced DSGBV, e.g. by allowing them to be accompanied by a person of choice *and* a legal representative.
- New provisions to become more child-centred and seek the views of the child when barring and safety orders are sought on their behalf.
- Creating an offence for forced marriage.
- New offence of coercive control.
- Continuing to allow Tusla to make applications for orders on behalf of those experiencing DSGBV.

**Mediation Act, 2018** - this mandates the consideration of mediation in family law cases as a faster and lower cost alternative to court proceedings. The Bill currently excludes cases under the domestic violence act, e.g. applications for emergency barring orders. However, there are concerns it may lead to clients who have experienced DSGBV being pressured into attending mediation to settle disputes over other family matters, e.g. custody of children. Mediation is most effective when there is a transparent balance of power between the parties; it becomes ineffective where one party is intimidated and threatened by the other. Inappropriate use of mediation in separating families with a history of Domestic Abuse can lead to the abused party agreeing to dangerous and/or disadvantageous outcomes out of fear of the perpetrator.<sup>65</sup>

***What these orders mean for Schools, Early Years' Services, Youth Workers and other Services***<sup>66</sup>

- Where Domestic Abuse orders are acquired in court, Mothers are encouraged to make the school/early years' service aware of the contents of the order.
- The management at the child's school, crèche, or after school service etc. should make **relevant** staff members aware that the order is in place, the contents of the order and what it means to them and the child.
- A dependent is a child of the Mother's or a child in her care. The order covers any children the Mother may have, even with different partners.
- None of the above orders prevent an abusive parent from collecting their child. However, they prevent an abusive parent from using violence/ threatening to use violence, or putting the dependent in fear.
- In practice this means that should an abusive parent present to collect a child and the child exhibits fear, then the professional should *call the Gardaí* and the child's Mother immediately.
- Fear can present in many ways- the child could cry, they could state they are afraid, they could freeze or try to run away. Professionals should observe the child or young person closely for any signs of distress.
- Where practitioners observe an altercation occurring during drop-off/ collection times and they are aware there is an order in place, they can call the Gardaí.

## Challenging the Myths and Facing the Reality<sup>67</sup>

**Myth: Domestic violence is usually a one-time event, an isolated incident.**

**Reality:** Domestic violence is a pattern of abusive behavior that happens over and over and escalates in severity/dangerousness over time.

**Myth: Perpetrators are violent in all their relationships.**

**Reality:** Most perpetrators do not use violence in other non-intimate relationships to resolve conflict. "Perpetrators' typically present a different personality outside the home than they do inside, which complicates a victim's ability to describe their experiences to people outside the relationship." (K.J. Wilson, Ed.D., When Violence Begins at Home, 1997.)

**Myth: Pregnant women are not victims of domestic violence.**

**Reality:** In a survey conducted by the Rotunda hospital found that 1 in 8 women surveyed were being abused by their partner. It is also known that 30% of women who experience domestic violence are physically assaulted for the first time during pregnancy.<sup>68</sup>

**Myth: Domestic violence only affects the adults in the household.**

**Reality:** According to an American Bar Association report, experts estimate that between 3.3 and 10 million children witness domestic violence annually. The report cites numerous links between serious emotional and psychological problems from exposure to domestic violence:

- Depression, hopelessness, and other forms of emotional distress in teenagers are strongly associated with exposure to domestic violence.
- Infants often fail to thrive.
- Children may exhibit bed wetting, sleep disorders, violence towards other children, stuttering, and crying.
- Children exposed to domestic violence, can have a tendency to identify with the aggressor and can lose respect for the abused parent.

**Myth: Victims of domestic violence grew up in abusive families.**

**Reality:** Many individuals who find themselves in abusive relationships did not grow up in violent households. Sometimes victims that experience non-physical abuse in their relationship, such as economic or emotional abuse, may not easily recognize that these forms of abuse can escalate into physical or sexual abuse.

**Myth: There is no correlation between animal abuse and Domestic Abuse.**

**Reality:** Domestic Abuse as well as serial and mass criminal violence often involves animals. For families suffering with Domestic Abuse, the use or threat of abuse against companion animals is often used for leverage by the controlling/abusive member of the family to keep others in line or silent. It is estimated that 88% of pets living in households with Domestic Abuse are either abused or killed. Of all the women who enter shelters to escape abuse, 57% have had a pet killed by their abuser. (“The Link between Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence,” American Animal Hospital Association, 2003)

**Myth: Domestic Abuse is a ‘crime of passion’, a momentary loss of control.**

**Reality:** Domestic Abuse is rarely about losing control, but taking control. Abusers rarely act spontaneously when angry. They consciously choose when to abuse their partner: when they are alone, and when there are no witnesses (if there is a witness, then usually they are a child). They have control over whom they abuse.<sup>69</sup>

**Myth: He can be a good father even if he abuses his partner – the parents’ relationship doesn’t have to affect the children.**

**Reality:** An estimated 90% of children whose mothers are abused witness the abuse. The effects are traumatic and long-lasting. When a child witnesses Domestic Abuse, **this is child abuse**. Between 40% and 70% of these children are also direct victims of the abuse which is happening at home.

**Myth: Domestic Abuse is a private family matter, and not a social issue.**

**Reality:** Violence and abuse against women and children incurs high costs for society: hospital treatment, medication, court proceedings, lawyers’ fees, imprisonment – not to mention the psychological and physical impact on those who suffer it.

Domestic Abuse happens every single day all over the world, and affects women of all ages, classes and backgrounds. It is a serious, widespread crime. Despite this, Women’s Aid and other organisations are still campaigning to ensure that survivors’ voices are heard. When society describes Domestic Abuse as a ‘private family matter’, we minimise, condone and permit it.

**Myth: Men who abuse their partners saw their fathers abuse their mothers.**

**Reality:** Domestic Abuse is prevalent throughout society, and because of this many people have grown up living with Domestic Abuse. Most of these people will never perpetrate Domestic Abuse in their own relationships, so it is never an excuse – and some of our most passionate supporters are child survivors of Domestic Abuse.

*“We all have the responsibility to decrease stigma by talking about Domestic Abuse. We should all be able to recognise the subtle signs that a colleague or friend may be in a coercive and controlling relationship.”<sup>70</sup>*

# Interviews on the Frontline

## Early Years Practitioner

*"Children can be withdrawn. They present extremely lethargic throughout the day. Loss of appetite. Children will be frequently absent, cry and seem extremely tired even on arrival. Children can be highly anxious and scared."*

## Secondary School Deputy Principal

*"Acting out, poor academic performance, socially withdrawn, lack of support structure as often no primary educator in the household. Fear, withdrawn, acting differently to their normal behaviour."*

*"Children don't trust the services so we need to enlighten children that it's ok to report domestic problems. Schools need to be aware of how the system works in order to reassure/inform the children that they work with."*

*"Schools could be supported better to recognise signs of Domestic Abuse and supports provided to reassure children and encourage them to come forward."*

## Development Worker Parenting Programs

*"I think over the past few years there has been more parents referring to experiencing domestic violence in the home and on parent support line we are hearing about it more."*

*"Children acting out aggressively or becoming very withdrawn, school refusal at times and having difficulties regulating their emotions. Parents then finding behaviours difficult to cope with and having difficulty bonding with teens acting out. Family can be chaotic and lack structures/routines as a result. Young person can find it difficult to maintain relationships, gets into trouble, needs therapeutic interventions."*

## Primary School Principal

*"Can happen in any Family. It may not be as obvious in some families than others, but it's across society. School can be the only bit of respite for a child living in such a tense environment and throughout Covid19 lockdowns, it may have left children without that outlet for respite."*

*"Victim parents can present as defensive, on edge, secretive and guarded. Often, they are trying to hold it together for the kids and keeping the family together. They can often be very isolated"*

*"Children can present with poor school attendance and refusal, poor academic performance, poor attention/concentration. They may find it difficult to develop and maintain friendships with peers. Their eyes can appear glazed over and suspicious looking. In that regard, the academic needs of a child are secondary and the Care of the child has to be first."*

*“Increased awareness and knowledge is needed through in-school talks or workshops. To keep people safe guidance is needed on how not to inflame an already difficult situation. We need to know the signs, what to look out for and what we can do to help”*

## Youth Worker

“It affects the family by impacting on issues such as mental health, emotional issues, physical suffering and possible financial struggles. Behavioural issues, low self-esteem, struggles with relationships, anxiety and fear.”

“DV is a universal problem and can affect anyone.”

## Solicitor

“Throughout my time covering this area of law, Domestic Abuse (DA) has been highly prevalent as one of the main factors in relation to how a case ultimately comes before the court for a protective order pertaining to the subject child. I would list this factor as a significant cause for concern in child protection cases, and is often interlinked with difficult socio economic factors for the family, mental health and addiction. Children witnessing DA between their parents which would be deemed emotional abuse and experiencing physical abuse themselves is unfortunately a very common theme throughout these cases and I would estimate these concerns appear in over half of the child protection cases I am involved in.”

“From a child protection perspective, the impact DA is very apparent. The social work department often do not hear about the full extent of DA concerns until the children are removed from the place of abuse and the children make further disclosures. In terms of the parents, my experience has been that often the mother (who is predominantly the victim of the abuse) will be aligned to the father under coercion and will often not co-operate fully with the social work department and support services out of fear of reprisal.”

“The children are often coached not to disclose any information to the support services. They can present as extremely guarded out of fear that the social support services might remove them from their family unit. The older children in a family experiencing DA often assume the responsibility of the parent of their younger siblings. The children often fall behind their peers at school and their school attendance can decline significantly”.

“From a legal perspective, during the course of child care proceedings, the child’s voice is paramount and having a court appointed advocate (Guardian ad Litem) is invaluable for the court to consider the child’s experiences.”



## Social Care Worker

“It limits their ability to fully avail of opportunities. their fight or flight response is readily engaged in everyday situations. It affects their ability to thrive in life when they are constantly stuck in crisis mode. It can affect the mother’s ability to parent children when they may view her as a victim. Long after the actual DA has stopped the impact of trauma is still evident. It takes a long time to recover from.”

“It takes a long time for them to feel safe after the DA has stopped. It can take a long time for them to believe that the people around them are going to keep them safe. They may re-enact the violence at home with siblings or non-violent parent or when faced with conflict outside the home. They are extremely sensitive to correction and may perceive it as criticism to be ignored or challenged. Flight or fight response.”

“More training in how to speak to and work with a family who has experienced Domestic Abuse. Being mindful of not being confrontational with children and parents but still being able to address issues. Training on how long it can take to work through trauma. We had a talk from Clare Haven that was excellent in telling us their work that they do and the realistic expectations to have of families.”

“I think when we are working with families we need to be conscious not to use urgency as a means to “get things done”. I think we should be aware of how triggering urgency can be and the importance of keeping everything in perspective and planned responses.”

## School Completion Programme (SCP) Coordinator

“The number of cases coming to our direct attention has increased especially in the last two years. I feel this will increase more over time due to a number of factors such as Post Covid, unemployment, financial strain, substance abuse and cultural/ values of different nationalities and a negative attitude towards women in some communities.”

“In my opinion any family member especially children/young people experiencing Domestic Abuse is subject to low self-esteem, high risk of self-harm, increased risk of early school leaving, high risk of substance misuse and mental health issues and are very much at risk of getting involved in crime at a young age”.

“Many of the young people I have worked with who have experienced or witnessed Domestic Abuse look for answers and ways of preventing the abuse occurrence. Unfortunately, some of my past students themselves experienced abuse as young adults in negative relationships as it mirrors the only relationships they know to be normal. The cycle of abuse when experienced as a young child can become the normal expectations of relationships and therefore continuing.”

“Early intervention, workshops even in primary school highlighting “saying no”, “stop”. Informing the young people of their rights and opportunities available to them, increasing the value of ones-self-worth and developing confidence. Also in Secondary the ideology around “consent”, conflict and services available to families/people in need.”

## Family Support Worker

“80- 85% of current cases have experienced Domestic Abuse. Mental Health difficulties on family members, Physical and emotional distress, ongoing anxiety issues, family relationship issues, homelessness, financial issues, anxiety, Fear, behavioural issues, eating disorder, self-harm, low self-esteem, poor social skills, difficulty maintaining relationships.”

“Holistic approach of support to the family. TLC Kidz + NVR Programmes accessible county wide. On-going training”

“Domestic Abuse can happen to anyone regardless of gender, class, ethnicity, race, sexual orientation and is not specific to vulnerable families. Since the onset of Covid 19, there has been a significant increase in Domestic Abuse which has impacted negatively on families. Domestic Abuse does not discriminate.”

## Referrals Coordinator

“Children are experiencing difficulties in regulating their emotions. Mothers are hyper vigilant and struggle to see their child’s behaviour as possibly emanating from their experiences of living in a home where domestic violence was a feature because perhaps it was when they were much younger”

## Social Work Team Leader

“DA is very prevalent in our work. We have regular primary referrals submitted by agencies like the Gardaí, Schools and Clare Haven Services. There are weekly occurrences of referrals relating to DA. It’s not just about that one incident though- there is always a history.”

“Some children and young people are able to share the impact. They know the triggers, can see it coming and learn to avoid. Other are not as able to express the impact. They may have fear around going against their parents and worry that they could be taken away from the family unit. A Social Worker may worry about children being coached particularly where a child looks at a parent before they answer. In terms of general signs, some children may act out and display poor behaviours, poor emotional regulation, use violence to settle conflicts. Other children may present as withdrawn, there may be a change in the child’s engagement, mood, presentation in the classroom.”

“Partnership working is really significant in supporting children living with DA. When submitting a referral, the more detail on the impact and worry you have for the child or young person, the better. If you are not sure, pick up the phone - the consultation process is always open. Even where a child has not made a disclosure, there could be several other referrals relating to that child you are unaware of. This could help Social Work to build up a picture or see a pattern in the child’s lived experience.”

## Gardaí

*“On a daily basis Domestic Abuse Incidents which occurred in the previous 24hrs are reviewed for the purposes of identifying-*

***The Victim*** - *What was the nature of the incident? Verbal, emotional, physical, sexual abuse? Is the injured party a repeat victim? Were children present? Are children associated with either party? What additional supports does the victim need?*

***The Offender*** - *Is the offender a repeat offender? Are there repeat victims associated with the offender i.e different victims from different relationships? Is the offender before of the courts on any matters? Have they access to access to firearms?*

*All these factors are considered when assessing the incident, the risks associated with both parties and what immediate tasks which are outstanding e.g. Call backs, Should incident be escalated to the Clare Domestic Abuse Intervention Team, is an interagency strategy meeting warranted.”*

*“Domestic Abuse impacts the entire family unit and can have long lasting negative effects. It can cause the breakup of the family unit and in certain circumstances cause siblings to take the side of the victim or offender. The impact on families can be negative and severe. Quality of life is often evidently not there and an obvious air of fear can surround a house hold where it occurs. This fear, I believe can cause a lack of cooperation by victims with Gardaí. The fear of repercussions for cooperating with Gardaí and fear of breaking up of the family.”*

*“From a child’s perspective DA impacts on them in a variety of ways - from witnessing the actual DA incident, to being present in the house and listening to the DA. This is very traumatic for children. It causes an increase in their anxiety, sense of fear of what is going to happen next, it may change their role in the family to being that of the protector and provider i.e. looking after the victim and their siblings. In addition, it can impact them in their daily lives, i.e. at school, with their friends. Of particular relevance is the fact that children can become desensitised to DA and see it as being normal. When they get to adulthood they may become DA offenders also thereby continuing the cycle of abuse.”*

*“Extended family may not be available to assist, requiring Gardaí to seek assistance from other state bodies. On these occasions if late at night or at weekends other bodies may not be able to respond immediately leaving the child in the care of Gardaí until arrangements can be made. To that end I believe that Garda Stations could be provided with care packs for children who may have to stay with Gardaí for some time before arrangements can be made. Packs could contain small things like colouring books and crayons, small cuddly toys, blanket etc to help distract and comfort a child.”*

*“I believe a central repository for information on DA which all agencies feed into would be beneficial. This central repository can then be used by all agencies with a view to provide a quality, victim centred service.”*

## General Practitioner

*"The long term effects of Domestic Abuse during lockdown may yet to be seen. I have seen a massive increase in adolescent anxiety, most of these patients are supported by parents but some are not. I fear that isolation and lockdown in potentially abusive situations may have triggered anxiety in some of these kids."*

## Social Worker

*"Domestic Abuse is very prevalent and I would say that 50% of my caseload would have current or a past history of Domestic Abuse. A number of children I work with have said they can't pay attention at school because they are worried about what's happening at home to their parent or other siblings."*

*"For children, the role modelling they receive will affect their development, how they express emotions, how they regulate, how they communicate. It's not just living with Domestic Abuse but it's also the after effects of the trauma they experience. This frames the child's way of interacting with life as they grow. Being safe and Feeling safe are two very different things, it can take years for a child to Feel safe again."*

## Advocacy Worker

*"Fear, worry, anxiety, depression, hypersensitivity, illness, low self-esteem, self-blaming."*

*"Withdrawal, fear, anxiety, worry, poor concentration, anger/ 'lashing out', over protectiveness of parent (usually mother), taking over parenting role of siblings."*

*"Ongoing / up to date training is always beneficial – having access to legal advice around DV issues, continuing to strengthen links between agencies (Clare Haven Services/Gardaí /Clare County Council etc)."*

## Refuge Support Worker

*"There has been a significant increase in the calls from women seeking supports and refuge from violent and abuse within their homes. There was also a rise in the level of violence reported- an increase of assaults with weapons and strangulation for example. Places of respite for women and children were closed for long periods of time- coffee shops, libraries, even walking around shops. These are things that women often use as reprieve from the violence, control and abuse at home. When women and children were forced to spend 24 hours a day with their abusers, it meant the abuse was nonstop. Women and children were also less visible within the community and so could go days without needing to be out in public."*

*"Each member of the family can react differently though they may have been present during the same incidents. The children's lived experiences of the same assaults can be very different. Children can be very confused and have many conflicting emotions. Anger, hurt, fear, worry for themselves, their Mother, their pets; but also love and worry for the abusive parent. Separating the abusive behaviours from the person is very important when talking to children and young people about hurting and fighting. Focusing on the hurting not being ok and not criticising the abusive parent helps here."*

*“Children can be directly physically injured during an assault or incident either intentionally or through intervening to protect a Mother/ sibling/ pet. Children can also be injured when objects are thrown/ kicked or broken. Very young babies are particularly at risk because they tend to be in their parents’ arms at the time of the assault. Children are adversely impacted by experiencing verbal and emotional abuse and control. Exposure to Domestic Abuse from a young age impacts the way a child’s brain develop. It can lead to hypervigilance, chronic fear and anxiety and negative mood. It impacts a child’s ability to regulate their emotions. It affects their understanding of conflict resolution. They learn that hurting and fighting are ways to communicate.”*

*“Children become isolated either intentionally by the abusive parent- either intentionally or indirectly by feeling ashamed or embarrassed to bring friends home where they may witness abuse. Experiencing Domestic Abuse can impact upon sibling relationships. Children can blame each other for ‘setting off’ the abuser. Children often experience loss following disclosure of Domestic Abuse. Loss of their home/ belongings/ perhaps temporary loss of their father or siblings/ loss of their neighbourhood- friends and activities/ school/ extended family. Transitioning to a new, temporary home, is a stressful experience. Children may fear being taken away from their parents. Children may fear their parents being imprisoned.”*

*“I think supporting professionals to recognise Domestic Abuse with written resources and upskilling workshops/ webinars is very important. Open lines of communication between DSGBV services and practitioners is important too. If a practitioner is unsure whether what a child is describing is abuse or not, linking with a specialist service, and talking to the Duty Social Worker should be their first steps.”*

*“I believe that all children that experience domestic violence and abuse should receive therapeutic supports- play therapy or child counselling. Mothers often speak to us about their child seeming fine at the moment. It is important to note that a child can present as fine but often the feelings can and will present at a later stage in childhood/ adolescence and can manifest as seemingly unconnected behaviours. Early intervention is key.”*

*“Supporting children to feel safe to disclose abuse is extremely important. Early years and school aged care services, schools, children’s workers etc. are very well placed to support children in this way. Exploring open communication and discouraging secret keeping through the use of books, puppet play and even worksheets are all useful tools.”*

*“Understanding children’s language around Domestic Abuse is also very important. A child may disclose that her parents were fighting last night. Understanding as a professional that this type of language can be used by children to describe abusive incidents is important. Exploring this with a child can allow the practitioner to determine if intervention/ referral to Tusla is required or if the parents were disagreeing over something and resolving conflict in a healthy way.”*

*“Supporting children to recognise that they are not alone in experiencing abuse, is very important. Children often say to us ‘I thought it was just me and our house. I didn’t know it happened for other people.’”*

## Local Support Services

Clare Haven Services	
Tel:	065 6842646
Email:	<a href="mailto:clientcare@clarehaven.ie">clientcare@clarehaven.ie</a>
Website:	<a href="http://www.clarehaven.ie">www.clarehaven.ie</a>
<p><i>Clare Haven provides safe refuge accommodation and support services to women and their children. The refuge is based in Ennis and accepts referrals from the woman herself, statutory and non -statutory agencies, social and medical practitioners and An Garda Síochána. Services can be accessed via the 24hr helpline 365 days a year on (065)6822435. The service offers confidential support and information to women experiencing all forms of Domestic Abuse.</i></p> <p><i>Services provided by Clare Haven Services include:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Confidential support and information.</li> <li>• Emergency crisis response on our 24-hour telephone helpline - (065) 6822435.</li> <li>• Safe refuge accommodation with 6 units for 6 women and up to 21 children.</li> <li>• Transitional accommodation.</li> <li>• Safety planning.</li> <li>• Children and Young People's services - including safety planning, childcare, social work supports, education supports, counselling supports, therapeutic supports, one to one supports, support programmes.</li> <li>• Intervention programmes for women and children who experienced Domestic Abuse.</li> <li>• Prevention Programmes in Schools.</li> <li>• Advocacy.</li> <li>• Support /Outreach service in Ennis, Ennistymon, Shannon, Kilrush, Kilalloe and Scariff.</li> <li>• Accompaniment to legal services including legal aid, Gardaí, solicitors and court.</li> <li>• Remote court support to assist women accessing court orders.</li> <li>• Accompaniment/referral to medical services / social welfare / housing / social work.</li> <li>• Counselling Services.</li> <li>• Children and Young People's services - including safety planning, childcare, social work supports, education supports, counselling supports, therapeutic supports.</li> <li>• Intervention programmes for women and children who experienced Domestic Abuse.</li> <li>• Prevention Programmes in Schools.</li> <li>• Public Awareness in Educational Facilities, Community Groups, Business, Workplaces and through the Media.</li> <li>• Advocating for change.</li> </ul>	



County Clare Family Resource Centres	
Shannon FRC	Shannon Family Resource Centre Tel: (061) 707600 Email: <a href="mailto:shannonfrc@gmail.com">shannonfrc@gmail.com</a>
North West Clare FRC	North West Clare Family Resource Centre Tel: (065) 7071144 Email: <a href="mailto:info@northwestclarefrc.ie">info@northwestclarefrc.ie</a>
West Clare FRC	West Clare Family Resource Centre Tel: (065) 9052173 or (086) 7524377 Email: <a href="mailto:info@westclarefrc.ie">info@westclarefrc.ie</a>
Killaloe/Ballina FRC	Killaloe/Ballina Family Resource Centre Tel: (061) 374741 Email: <a href="mailto:info@kbfrfc.ie">info@kbfrfc.ie</a>
Family Resource Centres provides a range of universal and targeted services and development opportunities that address the needs of families. County Clare has four Family Resource Centres.	

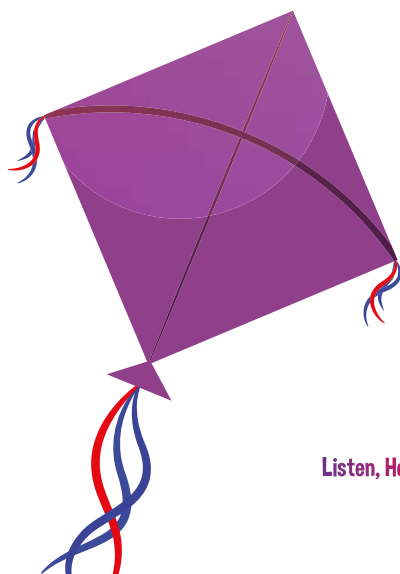
Tusla Child and Family Agency Clare Prevention, Partnership and Family Support	
Address:	River House, Gort Rd, Ennis, Co Clare
Tel:	(065) 6863902
	Tusla's Prevention Partnership and Family Support (PPFS) is a programme of work within Tusla as part of its National Service Delivery Framework.
Website:	<a href="http://www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support">www.tusla.ie/services/family-community-support/prevention-partnership-and-family-support</a>
<p>The PPFS programme focuses on prevention and early intervention and will provide supportive, coordinated and evidence informed supports to achieve positive outcomes for children, young people, and their families. The PPFS Programme seeks to work with families, young people and communities to involve them in key decisions affecting children's lives, while providing services that respond to their needs in an appropriate, proportionate and timely manner.</p> <p>This is achieved in the follow ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Area Based approach to Family support (Child and Family Support Network model (CFSN's) and Meitheal).</li> <li>• Parental Participation <a href="http://www.tusla.ie/parenting-24-seven">www.tusla.ie/parenting-24-seven</a>.</li> <li>• Child and Youth Participation.</li> <li>• Commissioning.</li> <li>• Public Awareness.</li> </ul> <p>Meitheal is a Tusla-led Early Intervention Practice Model designed to ensure that the strengths and needs of children and their families are effectively identified, understood and responded to. The ultimate goal is to enable parents and practitioners to work together to achieve better outcomes for the child.</p> <p>TUSLA support Child and Family Support Networks locally involving agencies/organisations who work to support children and their families. Supporting families and keeping children safe is everyone's business. Families should experience services as easily accessible and integrated at the front line in their own communities. CFSNs will help support this by taking a localised, area based approach.</p>	

Tusla Child and Family Agency Social Work	
Duty Social Worker	River House, Gort Rd, Ennis, Co Clare
Tel: (065) 6863935 Email: <a href="mailto:claredutysocialwork@tusla.ie">claredutysocialwork@tusla.ie</a> Tel: (061) 588688 TUSLA Mid-West (Clare, Limerick North Tipperary) <a href="http://www.tusla.ie">www.tusla.ie</a>	
Website:	<a href="http://www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare">www.tusla.ie/services/child-protection-welfare</a>
<p>Social workers provide frontline services to children and families. Duty Social Workers deal mainly with urgent difficulties with children and young people, and child protection matters.</p> <p>A concern about a potential risk to children posed by a specific person, even if the children are unidentifiable, should be communicated to the Agency.</p> <p>You can report your concern in person, by telephone or in writing to the local social work duty service in the area where the child lives (please see contact details above). Alternatively you can download our Child Protection Welfare Report (CPWR) form which can be found on our website <a href="http://www.tusla.ie">www.tusla.ie</a></p> <p>Additionally, you can register on our Tusla Portal, create an account and submit online.</p> <p>Any concern in relation to children out of hours should be reported immediately to <a href="#">An Garda Siochana</a></p>	

Pieta	
Geographical Area	Pieta Mid-West Limerick Clare Tipperary: (061)484444 National Crisis Helpline 1800 247 24
Name: Job Title/Role: Tel: Email:	Nora Conway Lead Therapist (061) 484444 <a href="mailto:nora.conway@pieta.ie">nora.conway@pieta.ie</a>
<p><b>Outline of your agency's role and service provision</b></p> <p>Pieta provide free counselling to those with suicidal ideation, those engaging in self-harm, and those bereaved by suicide. Staff are fully qualified and provide a professional one-to-one therapeutic service.</p> <p>Pieta offers a free professional one-to-one, in-person, phone or video therapeutic counselling and 24-hour phone and text crisis prevention services to those who are in suicidal crisis. Every week, Pieta therapists deliver approximately 1,000 hours of therapy to people across Ireland.</p> <p>If you or someone you love is suicidal, bereaved by suicide or engaging in self-harm you can call the crisis helpline on 1800 247 247 or text HELP to 51444 (standard message rates apply)</p>	

Clare Court Services	
Address:	Courthouse, Lifford Road, Ennis, Co. Clare. V95 ET3F
Tel:	(065) 6867500
Email:	<a href="mailto:enniscourtoffice@courts.ie">enniscourtoffice@courts.ie</a>
Outline of Service:	<p><b>Opening Hours:</b> Monday to Friday: 10.00-13.00 and 14.00-16:30</p> <p><b>Head of Office:</b> Ms. Josephine Tone</p> <p><b>Accessibility:</b> Facilities at Ennis courthouse include; consultation rooms, public waiting areas, lift, wheelchair access, disabled parking.</p> <p>At present the public office remains closed due to Covid19 restrictions, however all matters continue to being dealt with via phone and email.</p>

Clare Probation Service	
Address:	Block 2, Government Offices, Kilrush Rd, Ennis
Tel:	(065) 684 5952
	(If there is no-one to take your call when you ring please leave your name and number and we will return your call)
<p>The Probation Service is an agency within the Department of Justice and Equality. We work predominantly with those referred to our Service from the Courts. Through our work we aim to help in reducing the level of crime and increase public safety by working with those referred to us, helping them to make changes to their criminal behaviours and make good the harm done by crime.</p> <p>In the course of our work we engage with perpetrators of domestic violence and in the process will have contact with their families and their victims when appropriate to do so.</p> <p>As part of our overall work we collaborate with various relevant services in the local community which includes the domestic violence services.</p>	



## Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (ISPCC)

Geographical Area	County Clare
Email	<a href="mailto:clare@ispcc.ie">clare@ispcc.ie</a>
Name	Sharon McGrath
Job Title/Role	Childline Therapeutic Support Worker
Tel	01 522 4256
Email	<a href="mailto:Sharon.McGrath@ispcc.ie">Sharon.McGrath@ispcc.ie</a>

The Childline Therapeutic Support Service (CTSS) offers one to one support for Young People where they might be experiencing some difficulties which affects their emotional or behavioural day to day life. The work we offer is completely confidential and private, and we build a programme of support for the young person that matches their strengths and needs. Very importantly, we get the young person to help build this programme with us, so they feel a part of the process and partake as fully as possible.

All CTSS work focuses on building upon the young person's psychological resilience, so they can adapt and respond as positively as possible to any difficulties they might be experiencing. This work empowers the young person to understand that they have the capacity to resolve many of their own issues, and where they need extra help, they learn to seek the right level of support. This work is then evaluated to determine the level of change the young person has achieved, enabling the young person to see the effort and positive growth they have developed.

In situations where the young person does not wish to engage with our services, the CTSS can offer one to one parental support work to assist them in supporting their children through their current concern, improving lines of communication, and increasing their children's psychological resilience. As with the young person's work, any parental support will have defined goals and weekly targets with an evaluated outcome.

Should you wish to find out more about the CTSS under 18's service please log on to [www.ispcc.ie](http://www.ispcc.ie)  
Key points:

- The CTSS works with young people up to 18 years of age.
- All work is confidential.
- We work with young people experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.
- The focal point of all CTSS work is building the young person's psychological resilience.
- A 1 to 1 tailor made programme is developed to best suit the young person's needs.
- Specific goals are agreed upon between the support worker and the young person.
- Weekly session work is offered online or face to face.
- All work is evaluated allowing for reflective feedback on the impact of the work completed.

### ISPCC Space from Anxiety Programme:

The Space from Anxiety programme will most benefit young people between the ages of 14-18 years' old who present with low to moderate anxiety. This is an evidence-based digital programme that has been delivered in the UK through the NHS and has shown measurable, positive long-term results. The Space from Anxiety programme now offered by ISPCC is grounded in the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, incorporates mindfulness practice ideologies and is specifically designed to assist young people in reducing the distress associated with anxiety.

There is also a programme for Parents with children or young people with anxiety.

For further information, contact:

Bree Steele  
Digital Support Coordinator  
ISPCC  
115 O' Connell Street  
Limerick  
V94 YH5K  
[Bree.Steele@ispcc.ie](mailto:Bree.Steele@ispcc.ie)  
T: +353 01 5224225  
M: +353 (0)87 1820776

Children's Grief Centre	
Geographical Area Covered:	We support children from all over the country, mainly those who attend the Centre are from Limerick, Clare and Tipperary but we also have children coming from Cork, Galway, Kerry and Offaly.
Name:	Helen Culhane CEO
Tel:	087 9851733
Email:	<a href="mailto:info@childrensgriefcentre.ie">info@childrensgriefcentre.ie</a>
<p><b>Our Mission</b></p> <p>Our mission is to provide support for school aged children and young people affected by loss through death, separation, or divorce. We offer a safe and supportive place for children, young people and their families who are grieving. The service is provided by trained and experienced people.</p> <p><b>Our Aim</b></p> <p>We offer a one-to-one support service, where children are given the opportunity to look at feelings associated with loss and learn that they are not alone. We aim to help children overcome obstacles that prevent them from leading full lives. In addition, the Children's Grief Centre strives to educate the community that grieving is an important part of life and is essential to an individual's ongoing growth and development.</p> <p><b>A Unique Service</b></p> <p>The experiences of children and young people going through difficult life episodes is different to that of adults. This requires a different set of responses, such as those provided by our service. The Children's Grief Centre is the only organisation in Ireland which is uniquely focused on providing those services and supports.</p>	

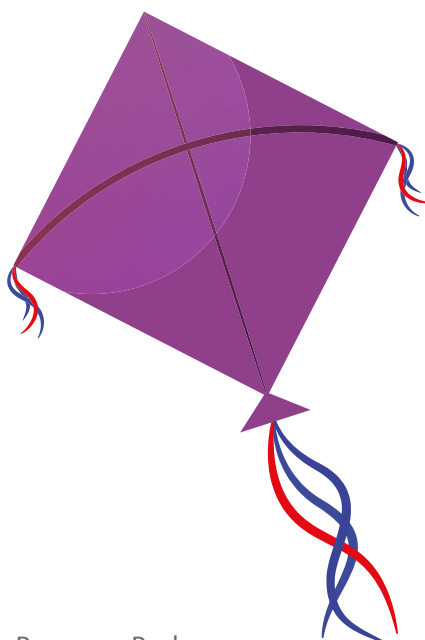
NCCWN Clare Women's Network	
Address:	NCCWN Clare Women's Network, Clonroad Business Park, Ennis, Co. Clare
Tel:	(085)1554800 / (083) 8924700
Social Media:	Facebook.com/ClareWomensNetwork Twitter: @Clare_Women Instagram: nccwn_clare_womens_network
<p><b>About NCCWN Clare Women's Network:</b></p> <p>NCCWN Clare Women's Network supports and encourages the coming together of women's groups and individual women in Clare. Our work is guided by women's equality, inclusion, community development and feminist principles. Our aim is to promote gender equality through our work with women who experience multiple forms of oppression and disadvantage. We work with all women but specifically our focus is on women who experience marginalisation and those from vulnerable communities.</p> <p>NCCWN Clare Women's Network supports women living with domestic violence in a number of ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meet with women in a confidential and supportive setting – including via phone/email/zoom/social media.</li> <li>• Provide women with information on support services relevant to their situation.</li> <li>• Advocate for women in situations of domestic violence.</li> <li>• Educate and inform women around areas of domestic violence.</li> <li>• Hold seminars, training and workshops.</li> <li>• Liaise with other agencies.</li> <li>• Allow space for women to meet and connect.</li> </ul>	

TLC Kidz- Barnardos	
Geographical Area:	Clare
Name:	Valerie Gleeson
Job Title/Role:	TLC Kidz Project Co-Ordinator for Limerick and Clare
Tel:	(086) 0453985
Email:	<a href="mailto:valerie.gleeson@barnardos.ie">valerie.gleeson@barnardos.ie</a>
<p><b>Programme Overview</b></p> <p>The TLC programme is for children and mothers who have experienced Domestic Abuse. The Programme delivers the TLC Kidz group work programmes concurrently for children and their mothers. The group work programmes are delivered by professionals working in a number of different agencies and different disciplines across the Limerick and Clare areas and span over 12 weeks.</p> <p><b>The purpose of the programme is to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide children with the opportunity to process and understand the violence and abuse they have experienced.</li> <li>• To give children who have been exposed to Domestic Abuse a voice, and to validate children's experiences.</li> <li>• To provide mothers with the skills to respond to and support their child to express their feelings in a healthy way.</li> <li>• To provide mothers with an opportunity to explore how their children may have been impacted by the Domestic Abuse.</li> </ul> <p><b>Objectives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To raise awareness of Domestic Abuse and its impact on children.</li> <li>• To increase capacity of organisations and service providers to identify and respond to Domestic Abuse and its impact on children.</li> <li>• To link children with an appropriate response to their needs with regard to their exposure to Domestic Abuse.</li> </ul> <p><b>Referral Criteria</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The programme is open to children between the ages of 6-16 (in appropriate groups) depending on availability.</li> <li>• Open to children from Clare.</li> <li>• Separation has occurred and the perpetrator no longer resides at the family home.</li> </ul>	



Clare Youth Service			
Geographical Area		County wide- Clare Youth Service is the main provider of Youth Work in Co. Clare.	
Tel: Email:		065 6845350 <b>info@clareyouthservice.org</b>	
Job Title/Role		<b>Community Training Centre Manager:</b> Edel McDonough Tel: 085 8511990  <b>Youth Work Manager (Ennis):</b> Jean Tierney Tel: 086 1568650  <b>Youth Work Manager (Rural):</b> Brian McManus Tel: 086 6090051	
<p>Clare Youth Service works to enable young people in Co. Clare develop to their full potential through the co-operative work of trained volunteers and professional staff.</p> <p>A wide range of programmes and activities are offered to Young people across the county.</p> <p>These include but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Youth Led Cafes.</li><li>• Skills and Activity Programmes.</li><li>• Personal Social Development, Development Education, CYS Youth Identity Programme and other Issue-Based Work .</li><li>• Individual support for young people ‘at risk’.</li><li>• Leadership and mentoring programmes.</li><li>• QQI Levels 3 and 4, Leaving Cert Applied (Community Training Centre).</li></ul> <p>The Youth Information Service provides information on a county wide basis to Young People, Parents/Guardians and those that work with Young People on a wide range of topics.</p> <p>Programmes are delivered throughout various projects across the county</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community Training Centre.</li><li>• Drugs Education and Prevention Project (DEPP).</li><li>• UBU Projects in Ennis, Shannon, Sixmilebridge and Newmarket On Fergus.</li><li>• Youth Project in Kilrush.</li><li>• Garda Youth Diversion Projects.</li><li>• Comhairle na nÓg.</li><li>• Youth Information Service.</li><li>• Volunteer led youth clubs.</li></ul> <p>Updates on available programmes can be found on Facebook and Instagram using @clareyouthservice</p>			
Clare Youth Service Carmody Street, Ennis, Co. Clare	The Junction Youth & Community Building, Cloughleigh Rd, Ennis, Co. Clare	Respond! Building Rineanna View, Shannon, Co. Clare	Kilrush Youth Centre, Kilkee Rd, Kilrush, Co. Clare

Clare Citizens Information Service	
Geographical Area:	All of Clare. We have a main office in Ennis and outreach offices in Kilrush and Shannon.  Email: <b>ennis@citinfo.ie</b> <b>shannon.cic@citinfo.ie</b> <b>kilrush@citinfo.ie</b>  Manager: Deirdre Power  Email: <b>Deirdre.power@citinfo.ie</b>
Name: Job Title/Role: Tel: Email:	Anne Marie O'Reilly Information Officer 076 1075260 <b>annemarie.oreilly@citinfo.ie</b>
Citizens Information Phone Service/CIPS:	Tel (076) 107 4000 If you visit <a href="http://www.citizensinformation.ie">www.citizensinformation.ie</a> you can request a call back directly from the top of this page. Just click on the link and enter your details and an information officer will call you back.
<p><b>Outline of your agency's role and service provision</b></p> <p>We offer Information, Advice, Assistance and Advocacy to the General Public. Prior to Covid19 we offered a drop in service. Unfortunately, we have had to cease this service for the foreseeable future but our information officers are available to answer queries over the phone or by email. We do have an appointment system in place however this is for emergency's only and in circumstances where the query cannot be dealt with over the phone. Procedures are in place should an offer of an appointment be necessary.</p> <p>Our opening hours are 9.30am to 1pm and 2pm to 5pm Monday to Friday excluding Public Holidays. We have outreach offices in Shannon and Kilrush.</p> <p>If you have a query or concern, you can contact our office on the above number, give the receptionist a brief description of your query and an information officer will return your call. Our aim is to return your call as soon as is reasonably possible and we strive to reply on the same day.</p>	



Clare Adult Mental Health Services	
Geographical Area:	Co Clare
Tel:	<p>EAST: Ennis Day Hospital (065) 686 3708  SOUTH: Shannon Day Hospital (065) 686 3601  WEST: Kilrush Day Hospital (065) 905 4100  NORTH: Stella Maris Day Hospital (065) 707 5100</p> <p>Older Adult Mental Health Service, Gort Glas, Ennis (065) 6865440</p> <p><b>Gen. Office Opening Hours:</b> 9.00am - 5.00pm</p> <p><b>Outside Office Hours:</b>  In an emergency, a person can be seen on the day of referral by the duty doctor/doctor on call. This often takes place in The Acute Psychiatric Unit, Ennis General Hospital, especially if out of hours.</p> <p>There is a crisis nurse service available out of hours (4.30pm - 3.30am) and contact can be made via The Acute Psychiatric Unit.  Tel: 065 6863208 or Crisis Nurse mobile number: 087 7999857</p> <p><b>Best Contact Times:</b> as above</p>
Job Title/Role: Tel: Email:	<p>Agency representative: Martina Kilcommins  (065) 6863710  <b><a href="mailto:martina.kilcommins@hse.ie">martina.kilcommins@hse.ie</a></b></p>
<p><b>Outline of agency's role and service provision</b></p> <p>The overarching aim of the service is to provide a comprehensive and holistic recovery oriented treatment programme for the community within the sector. It provides intensive mental health care to adults aged 18- 65 years in the community who fulfil the criteria for acceptance by the sector multi-disciplinary team. For the purpose of delivery of services, the service is sectorised: North, South, East and West with a day hospital/ Mental Health Centre attached to each sector. Referrals are generally made to the day hospital team of the sector by a woman's General Practitioner. A woman has access to a multidisciplinary team of professionals as appropriate following a referral by her G.P. and following discussion at the weekly team meeting. In an emergency, a woman can be referred by her G.P. to the psychiatrist on call who will enlist the appropriate team members as needed.</p> <p>There is also an Older Adult Mental Health Service which serves the whole county. This service is for people over 65. Referrals are generally made by the person's General practitioner to the team's headquarters in Gort Glas, Ennis.</p> <p>Screening and assessment of new and re-referrals for possibility of domestic violence is a routine part of the mental health assessment thus placing mental health difficulties in context when formulating a diagnosis and treatment plan. Various interventions may be offered including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information and support in accessing frontline services that deal with violence against women.</li> <li>• Counselling, psychotherapy and medical management as appropriate.</li> <li>• Admission to acute admission in hospital if required.</li> <li>• Documentation in case notes.</li> </ul>	

Clarecare Services	
Address: Tel: Email: Website:	Clarecare Services, Harmony Row, Ennis, Co Clare (065) 6828178 <b>parentsupportline@clarecare.ie</b> www.clarecare.ie
Outline of the Service	<p>Clarecare Family Support Services provide a broad range of family support services for children and families throughout Co Clare. These include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent Support Line. Our team are offering parents and carers a listening ear, parenting tips, guidance and sign posting to other relevant services. The service is available on Monday, Wednesday &amp; Friday, 10am-1pm.</li> <li>• Individual support for children and young people to support their understanding and management of emotional and behaviour issues that may be causing them difficulty at home, school or in their relationships with others.</li> <li>• Parenting Programmes to support parents. These include evidence based programmes such as Parents Plus, a series of facilitated programmes on positive communication and behaviour management; the Incredible Years, a model of early intervention through Parent, Teacher and Child training programmes and The Circle of Security (COS) parenting programme which promotes attachment security in parent-child relationships. We also deliver Parenting when separated groups.</li> <li>• The Advocacy Service for parents of children in care provides individual and group support for parents whose children are in the care of TUSLA. This support aims to enhance parents' participation in the care process.</li> <li>• The Aftercare Service provides support for young people who have left, or are planning to leave, the care of TUSLA foster care and residential services. It aims to support young people to live independently.</li> </ul> <p>For further information on these services contact Clarecare by phone at 065 6828178 or email us at <b>parentsupportline@clarecare.ie</b> or on our website <b>www.clarecare.ie</b></p>

Mid-West Traveller Health Service	
Geographical Area Covered	Mid-West Mid-West Traveller Health Services Tel: (061) 469144
Community Development Worker:	Judith Mulcahy Tel: (065) 6865815 Email: <b>Judith.mulcahy@hse.ie</b>
Designated Public Health Nurse for Travellers:	Fiona Kelly Tel: (065)6865810 or 087-6750751 Email: <b>fionamarie.kelly@hse.ie</b>
<p><b>Outline of Service:</b> The Mid West Traveller Health Unit (THU) spans counties Clare, Limerick and Tipperary. It has a core staff of a coordinator, 2 community development workers in Clare and Limerick, 3 Designated Public Health Nurses in Clare, North Tipperary and Limerick and administrative staff. It funds 4 Primary Health Care projects in Clare, Limerick City, West Limerick and North Tipperary and it supports other organisations to support Traveller initiatives through seed funding. The THU works with Travellers and Traveller organisations to identify Traveller health priorities and plan responses to these. The THU targets specific health initiatives to address Traveller health inequalities and respond to particular Traveller health needs while improving Traveller access to mainstream health services and initiatives. The THU works to improve healthcare encounters with health service professionals and works with Travellers to have greater trust in the health services.</p>	

## Clare Money Advise and Budgeting Service Clare MABS

Ennis Office	Tel: 0761 072 430 - 9am-5pm Monday - Friday Email: <a href="mailto:ennis@mabs.ie">ennis@mabs.ie</a>
National Helpline	Name: MABS Helpline Tel: 0761 072 000 - 9am – 8pm Monday to Friday Website: <a href="http://www.mabs.ie">www.mabs.ie</a>

Clare MABS is government funded through the Citizens Information Service and was established in 1993.

It operates as a completely free, confidential, independent and non-judgmental service to people requiring support to deal with financial difficulties or for more general advice on managing household budgets.

Financial difficulty often arises due to a change in circumstance such as marital breakdown, illness, addiction or unemployment and the shock of this can be extremely difficult to deal with alone.

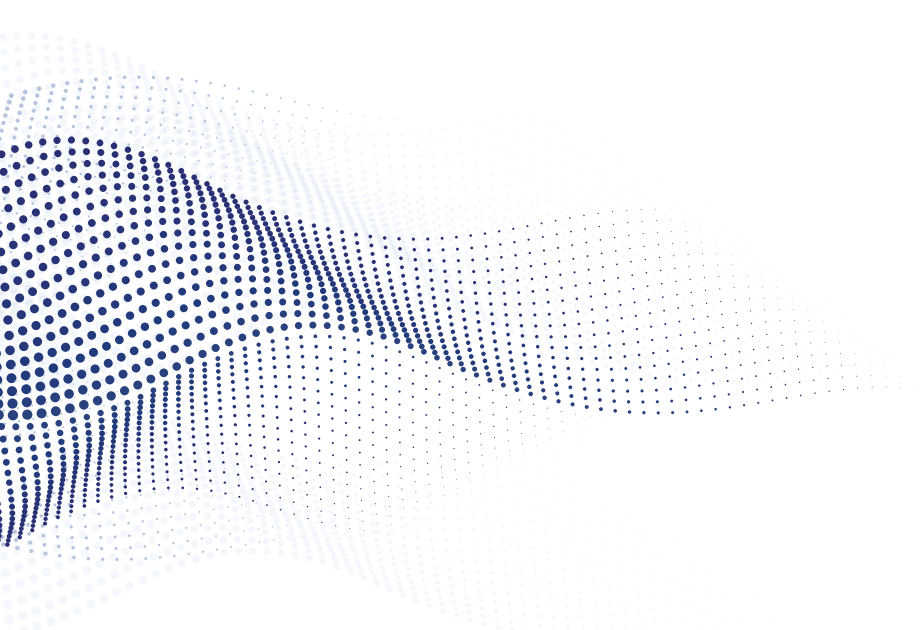
MABS' money advisors can assist people by looking at their circumstances and working out how much money is available to pay back debts. MABS can contact client's creditors and negotiate affordable repayment plans. In certain circumstances solutions such as insolvency options can be provided also.

MABS is recognised under consumer legislation and as a point of referral by banks and financial institutions for their customers who are in difficulty.

MABS has Dedicated Mortgage Arrears advisors to assist people in mortgage arrears and provide support and intervention with mortgage lenders, attend court cases and provide vouchers to avail of legal and insolvency advice.

Above all, MABS acknowledges the personal stress that money worries leads to and the impact of this on people's physical and mental health.

MABS money advisors provide a listening ear and emotional support – a truly holistic service is offered in complete dedication to each client's individual needs.



Haven Horizons	
Geographical Area Covered Job Title/Role	National / International Research and Development Director
Name: Tel: Email:	Madeline Mc Aleer (087) 7379813 <b>madeline@havenhorizons.com</b>
<p>Haven Horizons focuses on prevention of Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control. Our key activities include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Networking and developing prevention partnerships and responses.</li> <li>• In partnership with third level, developing and delivering accredited training modules which expand and deepen knowledge around Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control.</li> <li>• Encouraging and promoting new Irish research on the topic.</li> <li>• Exploring effective international evidence-based best practice prevention models.</li> <li>• Promoting the establishment of Irish demonstration sites / pilots for effective international prevention models.</li> </ul> <p>Haven Horizons operate a books donation scheme to the National Library Service. Once books are donated to any branch, they are available to every branch in the county and country. The National library service is still operating a click and collect system during Level 5 restrictions.</p> <p>Below is a link to the website where you can find the list books donated – additional books will be donated this year and will be included on website. Please follow the link below.</p> <p>Books on Domestic Abuse and Coercive Control donated to the National Library Service by Haven Horizons <b><a href="http://www.havenhorizons.com/national-library-service">www.havenhorizons.com/national-library-service</a></b>.</p>	

Clare Traveller Primary Healthcare Project	
Geographical Area: Role:	Clare Traveller Primary Healthcare Project
Name: Tel: Email:	Brid Brady, Primary Healthcare Coordinator (087)1041848 <b>bbrady@cldc.ie</b>
<p>Outline of agency's role and service provision: Delivered through a Community Development model by Primary Healthcare workers and Community Link workers from the Travelling community, the programme focuses on promoting health and improving the health status of Travellers throughout the county. The peer led programme includes the delivery of health information on key health topics e.g. Cardiovascular, mental health and diabetes etc. The project also informs the Travelling community of the various Health Services available locally and at times acts as a link between the broader Travelling community and the services, increasing the uptake of services in the area.</p>	



### Clare County Council Homeless Action Team (HAT)

Address: New Road, Ennis, Co Clare  
Tel: (065) 6846291  
Email: [hat@clarecoco.ie](mailto:hat@clarecoco.ie)

#### Outline of Service:

The Homeless Action Team provide support and advice to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness to residents of County Clare. Whilst the office is currently closed, this service can be accessed by calling (065) 6846291 or emailing [hat@clarecoco.ie](mailto:hat@clarecoco.ie)

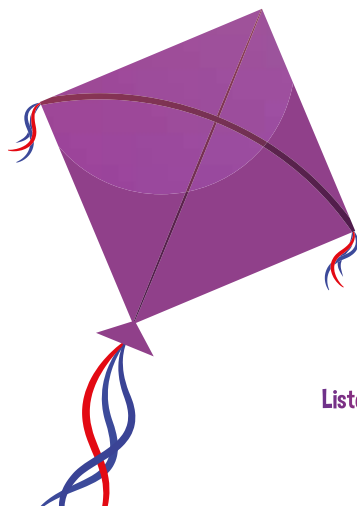
### Clare Immigrant Support Centre

Geographical Area: Clare - Part time office in Ennis with outreach services to King Thomond DP Centre Lisdoonvarna and Clare Lodge Asylum Seeker accommodation centre  
Tel: (065) 6822026  
Email: [ciscennis@gmail.com](mailto:ciscennis@gmail.com)  
Website: [www.clareimmigrantsupportcentre.com](http://www.clareimmigrantsupportcentre.com)

Name & Job Title/Role: Orla Ni Eili - Coordinator  
Tel: (087) 2385990  
Email: [orlacisc@gmail.com](mailto:orlacisc@gmail.com)

#### Outline of Agency:

Clare Immigrant Support Centre (CISC) works to ensure access to appropriate state and community services and the upholding of all the rights and entitlements of all in the immigrant community. Clare Immigrant Support Centre also works to support better outcomes for individuals and families in their engagement with and access to state agencies and authorities, by providing translation, information, accompanied visits and advocating where necessary. Clare Immigrant Support Centre (CISC) is a part time office which provides a range of services to all immigrants including asylum seekers and refugees living and working in County Clare. CISC office is based in Ennis, outreach clinics are conducted in Kilrush and there is a dedicated outreach service to Asylum Seekers in Lisdoonvarna Direct Provision Centre and Clare Lodge Centre. The organisation delivers a variety of services to meet the needs of immigrants in County Clare and works in collaboration with a wide range of local state and other agencies. It is also involved with National networks feeding into immigrant issue policy development. Service available in Arabic, French and English.



## National Support Services

Women's Aid	
Telephone:	01 678 8858
Website:	<a href="http://www.womensaid.ie">www.womensaid.ie</a>
Email:	<a href="mailto:info@womensaid.ie">info@womensaid.ie</a>
<p>The Women's Aid 24hr National Freephone Helpline offers confidential information, support and understanding to women in the Republic of Ireland, who are being abused by current or former boyfriends, partners or husbands.</p> <p>The service also supports family members, friends, and professionals who have concerns about a person, they know or are working with, who might be experiencing domestic violence and abuse. The Helpline provides support to callers where English is not their first language, through our Language Line facility (operational daily, 8am-8pm) and for women who are deaf or hard of hearing through its Text Service facility (operational daily, 8am-8pm).</p> <p>The Helpline aims to empower women to identify what is happening for them within their relationship and support them to stay safe and support the safety of any children living within the relationship. The Helpline aims to at all times ensure that the responsibility for the abuse is placed firmly with the perpetrator of the abuse and not with the woman.</p>	

Safe Ireland	
Telephone:	090 6479078
Website:	<a href="http://www.safeireland.ie">www.safeireland.ie</a>
Email:	<a href="mailto:info@safeireland.ie">info@safeireland.ie</a>
<p>Safe Ireland has a clear ambition: to end domestic violence and make Ireland the safest country in the world for women and children.</p> <p>Safe Ireland's approach is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change social behaviour and attitudes.</li> <li>• Establish a whole system response to domestic violence.</li> <li>• Cultivate leadership at all levels in Irish society.</li> <li>• Communicate our understanding of the problem and enhance all of our capacity to respond.</li> </ul>	

Rape Crisis Mid-West	
Geographical Area:	Rape Crisis Midwest has 3 centres in Limerick, Ennis and Nenagh
Tel:	1800 311511 Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm
Email:	<a href="mailto:info@rapecrisis.ie">info@rapecrisis.ie</a>
<p><b>Outline of Agency</b> Rape Crisis Midwest provides support and counselling to men and women who have survived any form of sexual violence either recently or in the past. Services include counselling for survivors, garda and court accompaniment.</p>	

Men's Aid	
Telephone:	01-5543811
Website:	www.mensaid.ie
Email:	hello@mensaid.ie
<p>Men's Aid Ireland formerly known as Amen, is the only dedicated national service supporting men and their families experiencing Domestic Violence in Ireland. Our professional and qualified support team have years of experience in supporting men and families experiencing Domestic Abuse.</p> <p>Men's Aid provide the following services:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National Confidential Helpline - 01 554 3811.</li> <li>• Legal clinic - Information about Safety Orders, Protection Orders, Barring Orders.</li> <li>• One to one practical support - Explaining Court Paperwork, Safety Planning, Care plans.</li> <li>• Counselling - By Telephone.</li> <li>• Counselling - Face to Face.</li> <li>• Certified Training - All areas of Domestic Abuse including Coercive Control.</li> </ul>	

Male Advice Line Men's Development Network	
Telephone:	1800 816 588
Email:	men@mens-network.net
<p>The Male Advice Line was developed by the Men's Development Network. Counsellors provide an outlet for men, who are experiencing or have experienced Domestic Abuse in their relationship, to speak confidentially with professionals who are trained to advise on domestic crime.</p> <p>The Male Advice Line can be accessed on 1800 816 588 at the following times:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monday: 10am-6pm</li> <li>• Tuesday: 12pm-8pm</li> <li>• Wednesday: 10am-6pm</li> <li>• Thursday: 12pm-8pm</li> <li>• Friday: 2pm-6pm</li> </ul>	

Men Overcoming Violence - MOVE Ireland	
Geographical Area:	Co Clare
Tel: Phone (065) 6848689 Email: <b>Move@moveireland.ie</b> Website: <a href="http://www.moveireland.ie">www.moveireland.ie</a> Twitter: <a href="https://twitter.com/MOVEireland">twitter@MOVEireland</a>	
Local Coordinator: Address:	Tel: 086 4149613 MOVE Ireland, National Office, Unit 2 first floor, Clare Road Business Park, Clare Road, Ennis, County Clare
<p><b>Outline of Service:</b></p> <p>Move – Men Overcoming Violence works in the area of domestic violence, with a primary aim of supporting the safety and wellbeing of women and their children who are experiencing, or have experienced violence/abuse in an intimate relationship. This programme has been designed for men who are concerned about the impact of their behaviour on their families and are ready to make a change. MOVE Ireland work with men both in a one to one setting and in a group for at least 6 months in total. Your (ex) partner will also be offered support. The focus of these programmes is not to save relationships, but to help people living in abusive situations to change their destructive behaviours and look at their choices with the safety of women and children the main priority for the work. This is done through the CHOICES programme, which encourages men to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn about the effects and consequences of domestic violence on their partner and family.</li> <li>• Participate in group sessions with other individuals who have behaved in a similar way.</li> <li>• Talk openly about their behaviour and the people affected by it.</li> <li>• Identify the beliefs and attitudes which underpin violence and abuse.</li> <li>• Cope with their behaviour and feelings in difficult situations.</li> <li>• Learn how to react without being abusive.</li> <li>• Learn about respect and responsible parenting.</li> <li>• Learn to understand and recognise the need to change their behaviour.</li> </ul>	



# Appendix

## Clare Local Area Network Members

Chairperson

**Sergeant Catriona Holohan**  
An Garda Síochána

**Fionnula Collins**  
MOVE Ireland

**Aisling Mulhall**  
Senior CFSN Coordinator  
Tusla PPFS

**Hedvig Coughlan**  
Probation Services

**Ann-Marie O'Reilly**  
Citizens Information Service

**Inspector David Finnerty**  
An Garda Síochána

**Brenda Sheehan**  
MOVE Ireland

**Madeline McAleer**  
Haven Horizons

**Cathy McHugh**  
Clarecare Services

**Martina Kilcommins**  
Adult Mental Health

**Damien McMahon**  
Clare County Council  
Homeless Action Team

**Mary Howard**  
Rape Crisis Mid-West

**Deirdre Murray**  
Childcare Support Coordinator  
Clare Haven Services

**Maura Fennell**  
MOVE Ireland

**Deirdre O'Neill**  
Primary Care  
Social Work Services

**Sergeant Aiden Lonergan**  
An Garda Síochána

**Detective Sergeant Paul English**  
An Garda Síochána

**Sinead Clohessy**  
Court Services

**Dr. Siobhan O'Connor**  
Clare Haven Services

**Siobhan O'Donovan**  
Court Services

**Elaine Clifford**  
MABS

**Therese Collins**  
Primary Care  
Social Work Services

**Ellen Walsh Kerley**  
Clare Women's Network

**Valerie Gleeson**  
TLC Kidz

# Glossary of Terms

## Trauma Bonded

Leaving an abusive relationship usually isn't as simple as walking out the door. A person may feel tied to their abusive partner, unable to break away. This emotional attachment, known as a trauma bond, which develops out of a repeated cycle of abuse, devaluation, and positive reinforcement. The trauma of abuse might create powerful feelings which the victim can struggle to make sense of, especially when abuse alternates with kindness and intimacy.<sup>71</sup>

## Love bombing

Love bombing is an attempt to influence a person by demonstrations of attention and affection. It can be used in different ways and can be used for either a positive or negative purpose. Love bombing involves being showered with affection, gifts, and promises for the future with someone making you believe you may have discovered love at first sight.

The person is loving, caring, and affectionate. However, it doesn't last, and as soon as you show a hint of caring about anything other than your new partner, they get furious with you and label you as selfish. Their mask slips, and you see someone mean, belittling, and unreasonable underneath. They can't comprehend that you have anything else going on in your life, and they completely turn on you.<sup>72</sup>

## Gaslighting

Gaslighting is a type of psychological abuse where somebody uses lies or tricks to make another person doubt their memory and mental health. Gaslighting can be anything from an abusive person insisting that the abuse never happened, to setting up strange incidents to confuse the victim.<sup>73</sup>

## Coercive Control

Coercive control is a persistent pattern of controlling, coercive and threatening behaviour including all or some forms of Domestic Abuse (emotional, physical, financial, sexual including threats) by a boyfriend, partner, husband or ex. It traps women in a relationship and makes it impossible or dangerous to leave.<sup>74</sup>

## Co-Parenting/Shared Parenting

Shared parenting is the process of supporting the development of children by parents who are not living together, yet parent together. It can be described as parenting by way of good communication, shared decision making, and the sharing of information about your child's wellbeing. It is based on mutual respect where parents actively work together to create a positive environment where children feel loved, can flourish, are cared for and supported by both parents.<sup>75</sup>



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**Sergeant Catriona Holohan**

Chairperson of CLAN

**Deirdre Murray**

Childcare Support Coordinator  
Clare Haven Services

**Aisling Mulhall**

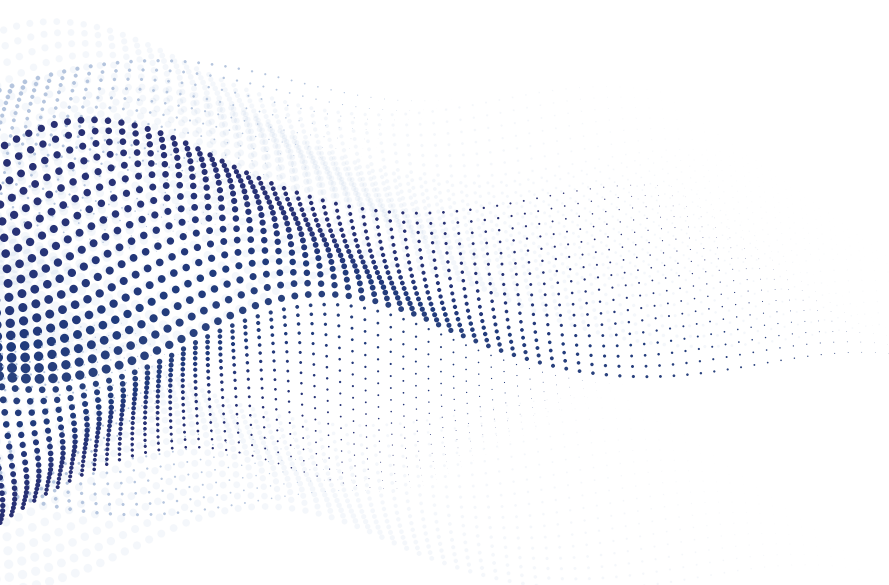
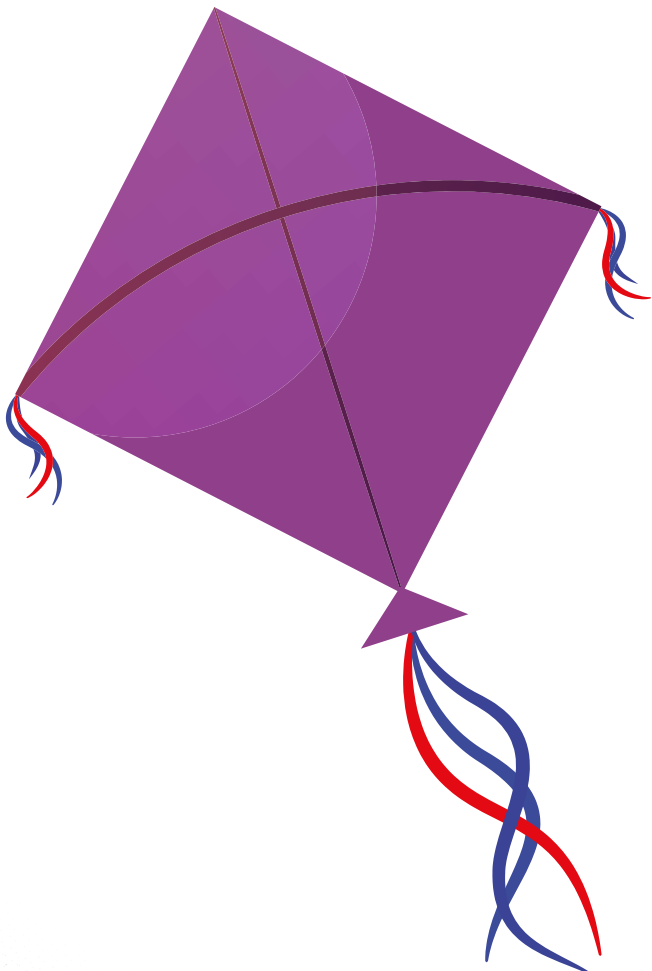
Senior CFSN Coordinator  
Tusla PPFS

**Valerie Gleeson**

TLC Kidz Coordinator  
Barnardos

**Cathy McHugh**

Child and Adolescent Counsellor  
Clarecare Services



**Listen, Hear, Act**

