



dating abuse programme



“If only I knew what abuse looked like in relationships”

If I had a penny for every time this was told to me as a support worker I'd be a rich woman. For the vast majority of individuals, they have limited understanding of the structures and mechanisms abuse can take in intimate relationships. Awareness of domestic violence has grown over the years, including through recent COSC campaigns and #TooIntoYou. However, it still seems incredible that, given that most of us will navigate an intimate relationship at some point in our lifetime, there is not a more structured approach to educating people on domestic violence.

While there is no quick fix to domestic violence as a social issue, this structured approach begins with young people.

In a recent article in the Irish Examiner, a young domestic violence campaigner named that domestic violence was rampant among young people and when first entering dating relationships young people don't know what is normal.

60% of those who had experienced severe abuse in intimate relationships first experienced it when they were under the age of 25.

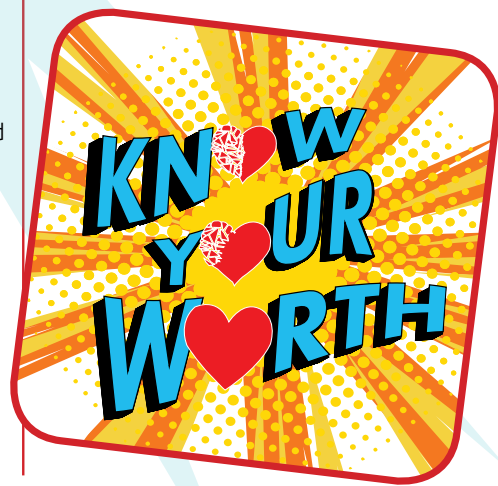
NATIONAL SURVEY ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IRELAND, 2005

Since the #TooIntoYou awareness campaign began in 2011, there have been over 100,000 visits to the dating abuse website with the majority of visitors taking part in the Relationship Health Check.

For young people it can be difficult to establish what are their rights and responsibilities while dating. The need for students to have sessions relating to the dynamics of dating abuse is reflected by the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission which named its concern about the limited access to comprehensive relationship and sexuality education for children in Ireland. It is very easy for any person, especially young people, to build misconceptions around dating through being exposed to dating through social media, poor adult role models, peer group and reality TV and other sources where dating relationships are portrayed in an inaccurate way.

Our 'Know Your Worth' teenage dating abuse program aims to inform young people, in a school setting, what dating abuse is and exploring their own attitudes towards the topic. The program was developed last year and is provided to secondary schools in West Cork, free of charge. A focus group was completed with Bandon Youthreach to develop the name and logo for the program as well as identifying key information on young people's knowledge of dating abuse. The term dating abuse was used instead of domestic violence, which young people in the focus group associated with older, married couples. The program aims to create a healthy, accurate discussion of dating abuse in a safe environment. Each student also receives a 11-page educational pack that expands on all the topics touched on in the session as well as a list of resources.

LC



From Surviving to Thriving



West Cork Women Against Violence are running a programme specifically for women who are parenting alone after domestic abuse or trying to co-parent with abusive ex-partner.

Would you be interested in?

- Having a safe, non-judgemental space to talk.
- Meeting other women with similar experiences.
- Feeling empowered and gaining back control.
- Not feeling alone in your anxieties and having knowledge of the supports and options that can be used.

Running over eight weeks in Skibbereen, our programme is a unique parenting group designed to meet the needs of mom first and then the children.

Each session has a specific theme that combines self-reflection and practical tools and information relating to domestic violence.

Participants of our 2018 programme were asked what they would say to someone who is considering participating but is undecided?

"Go do it and don't miss a session!"

"It's nerve racking to begin but try one session... It will improve your life and your kids' life."

"It will be eye opening and give you loads of knowledge and tremendous support."

"Do it - there is nothing to lose except for a bit of your time. It can open up new possibilities to you and supports and knowledge"

Participants must:

- Be living apart from their abusive partner for period of one year
- Meet with WCWAV staff before enrolling in the programme
- Give a commitment to regular attendance to the programme

If you would like to participate in the programme or need more information contact WCWAVP on 027- 538 47 or admin@westcorkwomensproject.ie

Dating safely in the 21st century



Safety planning may not be foremost on our thoughts when embarking on a first date, but social norms have changed almost beyond recognition in the past few decades. At risk of giving away my age, in the 80's first dates were, in my experience, mostly with someone we knew or 'knew of', or at least with a bit of detective work could put in context. 'Blind dates' may have taken place on occasion- maybe with a friends partners friend or as what we used to call a 'foursome' (which I'm aware could now be perceived as being something else entirely!). But now, almost all first dates are blind dates- swipe right and off with us to meet a stranger we found on the internet on our phones.

I am not meaning to be flippant, but this is what has become the new norm. And gone with it, the safety net of hanging around in a group and getting to know your love interest before going on a fully fledged date, seeing how s/he is around other people ,and the opportunity of tuning in to the subtle non- verbal cues or of being guided by our gut. Even when we may have been chatting on line with someone for weeks, they are still in effect a stranger and although we have the illusion of closeness, our connection has been virtual.

Noeline Blackwell of Dublin Rape Crisis centre has been quoted as saying that more people are making contact with individuals via social media and suffering sexual violence as a result.

A criminal barrister has said that he gets one phone call a month relating to allegations of rape or sexual assault after one off meetings on Tinder.

So how do we as women navigate this new world safely, while still having fun? The dating app Plenty of Fish commissioned a safer dating report in conjunction with a cyber security expert and an ex undercover police officer. The 2019 report found that a quarter of those surveyed feared for their safety during a date in the past year, worryingly a third of those surveyed neglected to tell a friend or family member their whereabouts when meeting for the first time. In fact, just a fifth kept in contact with friends or family during a first date. The report which found that a quarter felt they did not know enough about safe dating, aims to educate and empower singles with practical guidance to help them date more safely. Interestingly, research carried out through OnePoll found that those aged 18-24 tend to be more cautious when dating compared to those aged 25 plus. Their Dating Safety Tips include:

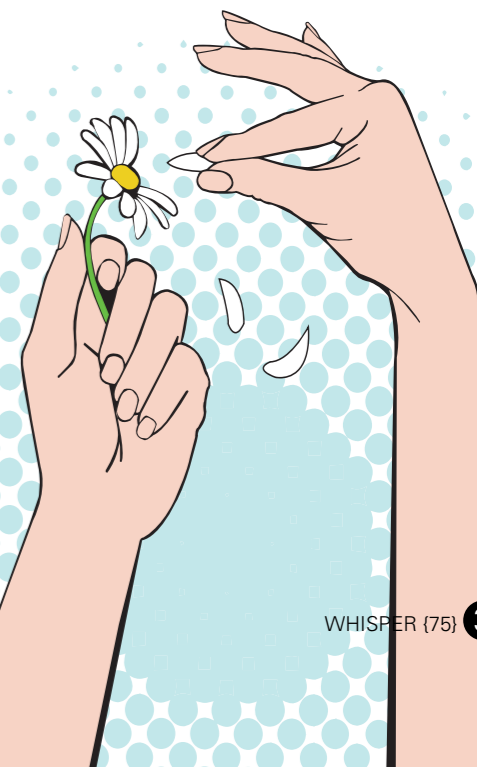
1. Do background checks on your date
2. Listen to your gut instinct
3. Always tell someone where you have gone and with who
4. Having the date at a known public place, if you're not 100% comfortable- leave. Do not stay just to be polite
5. Make sure you have battery life on your phone
6. Set up a coded call with your friend, even if you are okay
7. Get to the date location early.

I'm glad to hear that googling someone isn't paranoid, that it's actually a smart thing to do. I would also always suggest trying to verify what they are telling you about themselves, maybe that's the detective in me, but fake profiles, careers are not beyond the realms of possibility. The old adage 'Don't judge a book the cover' applies here too- everyone tends to be nice on a first date- even psychopaths. A nice smile and polite small talk may hide a dark side. Ideally you pick the place where you will meet, this gives you the advantage. Though it has been said above, I'll say it again - Trust your gut. Never ever underestimate the power of your gut. If you think someone has lied to you, you are probably right. Watch your alcohol intake and be aware of your limits so that you don't lose control of the situation, and its wise to not rule out the possibility of something being added to your drink.

A recent article by Roe Mc Dermott published in Image Magazine and shared by The National Women's Council of Ireland called 'Why dating culture needs to acknowledge rape culture' is an interesting read. She makes reference to the fact that women are simultaneously told we are responsible for keeping ourselves safe while dating and told by prospective dates that our attempts to stay safe are hysterical over reactions. She cites that we are still blamed and shamed if the unthinkable does happen to us. To quote ' Bless his male privilege and belief that I would find the prospect of being driven in to the Irish Wilderness by a man I had never met

whimsical and exciting and not the premise of a horror movie... I explained I'd feel more comfortable meeting him in public first before hopping into his car... I was deemed by him to have a shitty attitude, to be a man- hater... By raising my need to feel safe with a man I had never met, I had raised his defensiveness... This man believed that his right to feel like a good, trustworthy, safe man was more important than my right to actually feel safe... Women must be vigilant against danger, but never appear vigilant, because vigilance isn't cool... ' Thought provoking words. Her experience, but an important issue raised.

So, if you are embarking on a first date, whether you are 20 or 50, bear the above in mind, be aware, be cautious, trust your gut and have fun!! SH



consent

is a crime to engage in a sexual act with someone who has not, or cannot, give consent.

The meaning of sexual consent is so often misunderstood in extremely disturbing ways by young people. The 2013 study 'Say Something' by the Union of Students in Ireland highlighted students' experiences of violence, including physical violence, sexual violence, harassment, stalking and obsessive behaviour. The survey was completed by 2,590 Irish students and 162 International Students. This research found a lack of shared understanding among students about acceptable language and dialogue around sex and sexuality. Cambridge University in England also undertook consent talks and workshops following a student survey which revealed that 77% of respondents had experienced some form of sexual harassment (The Hidden Marks report by the National Union of Students).

People will acknowledge that a rapist isn't a stranger in a dark alley, it's more likely to be the friend who refused to accept your request to stop, your partner who insists on sexual activity when you don't want to, or the person at a party where you were too drunk to give consent. Too often the perception is that if you wear sexy clothing, then you were asking for it; that being silent during a sex act means consent and that women are always accusing men of sexual assault and rape.

We need to teach young women and men about affirmative, enthusiastic and informed consent in order that they can be protected from abuse and coercion. Some colleges have introduced workshops and consent talks, and these have created the space where the meaning of consent is discussed in an empowering way. These talks

have created the development of self-awareness that we are all capable of violating someone else's consent.

The subtleties of difficult particular situations are also discussed, specifically around where people do not conscientiously consent to sex, or where it is assumed that consent has been given. Consent has to be a willing, conscious agreement made without pressure or coercion.

The 'Say Something' research states that their findings now inform a national campaign aimed at raising awareness of the supports available to students who experience violence. USI stated they will also organise training for Students' Unions and college support staff around these issues to equip them on how to best support students.

Domestic Violence and Rape Crisis Services see the aftermath of sexual violence every day and the destruction of people's healthy states of being. We are aware that some Irish universities have begun action to address this issue and as we enter into a new college and secondary school term for 2019, one would hope that the recommendations from Ireland's own students in 2013 will continue to be listened to and can influence and determine supports for those in 2019. An understanding of consent engenders respect for everyone and can ensure that people are comfortable around their own sexual decisions, whatever they may be.

STOP PRESS!

The Examiner (26/08/2019) says that Smart Consent Workshops, developed by NUIG's School of Psychology are to be rolled out in Secondary Schools and Sports Clubs across the country from 2020.

For more see www.irishexaminer.com/breakingnews/ireland/consent-classes-for-post-primary-students-to-be-launched-following-university-success-946201.html

NO

Daily, we read about cases which have focused on the word consent. In fact, in our everyday communications, we ask for people's consent all the time, such as "is it okay if I take... this chair, go for my break etc". It is also a means of negotiating one's needs in a relationship. One would be reminded of the statement "you won't know unless you ask, so just ask".

Why, then, is the issue of sexual consent so controversial and provocative specifically in relation to the area of sexual activity - in itself, the term is simple. Sexual consent is a person's consent to engage in sexual activity and sexual activity without consent is considered rape or sexual assault.

This can be expanded to state that it means voluntary agreement to participate in sexual activity without fear, coercion, threats of abuse or any exploitation of trust, authority or power, and it

**The law says that a person must be 17 years of age to be able to consent to engaging in a sexual act. The age of consent is the same for all persons, regardless of gender or sexual orientation.*

wonder

women of west cork



In this issue we chat to Kathryn Kingston, one of our board members

Where are you from? I am originally from Bantry but left Bantry to go to boarding school when I was 11. I returned briefly for 5th and 6th year and then left again until December 2000. Hard to believe I have been back nearly 20 years!

Job Title: I work as Development Officer under the Social Inclusion Community and Activation Programme (SICAP) with West Cork Development Partnership.

What does your work entail? My job is different every day. I love the variety. Most days I can be found working on a 1-2-1 basis with individuals interested in going down the route of self-employment. The buzz is incredible supporting people through the process of changing an idea into a viable sustainable product or service. Other days, particularly during the summer I can be found on designated disadvantaged estates across West Cork supporting Children and Families at Family Fun Days, fixing bikes or turning the sod at one of the allotments. Each Tuesday I can be found at the Online Learners Club in Clonakilty Lodge supporting our resident Asylum Seekers with a range of courses. Outside of that, I can be found supporting one of the many community and voluntary organisations - WCWAV, Clonakilty Community Resource Centre to name but a few. No two days are ever the same.

Why and how did you get involved in West Cork Women Against Violence? When I moved back to Bantry in 2000, I didn't really know anyone as I had been away for so long so I signed up to everything - rowing, yoga, golf, classes etc - you name it I tried it. I had registered to start the training with WCWAV on 8 March 2001 but that morning we had discovered that my sister-in-law had gone missing so I abandoned the training and joined the search. It was a day I will never forget and we are ever grateful to friends, family, my work colleagues and the community for the support we received. Later that year I had the opportunity to join the board of WCWAV and I jumped at the opportunity. I subsequently received the training and whilst I never worked on the helpline, I have been involved since June 2001 as one of the voluntary board members.

Since your first involvement with WCWAV do you feel things have improved for women experiencing DV? Yes I feel that there is greater support available for women to come out and talk about their experience. DV I feel is no longer the taboo subject it once was and I feel there is a movement towards a greater understanding of it affects all classes and how it affects children.

How do you relax? I love to travel and I enjoy everything about travelling so I relax whilst I'm researching and planning my next holiday - be that a camping holiday on the beautiful Beara peninsula or a trip to Bolivia.

What changes would you most like to see for women? I would love to see treatment for DV changed in the court system. It is still such a patriarchal world and one where women are made to feel like the guilty party over and over again.

the starfish story

One day a man was walking along the beach when he noticed a boy picking something up and gently throwing it into the ocean. Approaching the boy, he asked, “What are you doing?” The youth replied, “Throwing starfish back into the ocean. The surf is up and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw them back, they’ll die.”

“Son,” the man said, “don’t you realise there are miles and miles of beach and hundreds of starfish? You can’t make a difference!”

After listening politely, the boy bent down, picked up another starfish, and threw it back into the surf. Then, smiling at the man, he said...

“I made a difference for that one.”

LOREN EISLEY



New technology launched to help keep women safe



June saw the launch of Bright Sky Ireland, a new free app that connects victims of domestic violence and abuse to advice and support services across the country. Bright Sky Ireland is the latest addition to Vodafone Foundation’s domestic violence project, which uses connectivity to help support those affected by domestic abuse here and across Europe. The app launched on the Android and iOS platforms.

Bright Sky Ireland, created in partnership with the UK-based domestic abuse charity Hestia, along with Women’s Aid Ireland and An Garda Síochána, enables users to locate their nearest support centre by searching their area, eircode or current location. A short questionnaire will help users assess the safety of a relationship while also providing information about different forms of abuse such as sexual violence, stalking and harassment. The app also highlights the types of supports available, steps to consider if leaving an abusive relationship and how to help a friend affected by domestic abuse.

The app contains a ground-breaking feature designed to log incidents of domestic abuse without any content being saved on the device itself. It enables users to send information about incidents in a secure digital journal, using a text, audio, video or photo function. Evidence collated through this function will enable Gardaí to intervene and can help secure prosecutions.

Sarah Benson, CEO of Women’s Aid said:

“...Women’s Aid is delighted to team up with Vodafone Ireland, An Garda Síochána and Hestia to provide a practical and useful tool for women experiencing abuse from current or former intimate partners. Bright Sky Ireland offers key National Helpline information and details of local supports as well as information for family and friends concerned about loved ones.

A very important feature of the app is the myth busting information as well as quiz to help people recognise the signs of abuse. However, our biggest hope is that the ability to log incidents of abuse whether it is photos, text notes or recordings, will help women experiencing abuse gather the pattern of evidence they need to avail of legal protection and secure convictions of the new crime of coercive control.”

Earlier this year, Vodafone Ireland launched its new domestic abuse policy that aims to support employees who are experiencing domestic violence or abuse. The first comprehensive programme of its kind in Ireland, Vodafone provides support to employees – including up to 10 additional days paid leave, specialist counselling, management training and support toolkits. The policy also provides emergency financial aid such as salary advances and assistance for employees to set up a new bank account that allows financial independence.



The app is downloadable on iOS and Android app stores.

NB - although the App is now live in Ireland, there are bugs - Women’s Aid says “We recognise that one section does still have some ongoing limitations: the local services/GPS function. At the moment we are working with Vodafone to make the local information/GPS feature as relevant as possible.”

we’re here to help

If you - or someone you know - think we could help we’re offering you this card to cut out and keep in your wallet for when you get the chance or courage to ring us. We’ve purposely made it discreet so only you will know what it is about. Trust us, Trust yourself

Do what you can
with all you have
wherever you are

THEODORE ROOSEVELT



Skibbereen COMMUNITY & FAMILY Resource Centre

We'd like to wish Deirdre and her team at Skibbereen Community & Family Resource Centre the best of luck in their new home at North Street, Skibbereen, they can be contacted on 028 23572.

cork

West Cork Women Against Violence
Freephone 1800 203 136

Cuanlee Refuge, Cork
021 427 7698

Free Legal Aid Clinic
Locall 1890 350 259
Information and referral

IRD Duhallow Domestic Violence Support
Helpline 087 7733 337
from Monday to Saturday 10am - 10 pm or office at 029 60633

Legal Aid Board, Cork
021 455 1686 / 021 427 5998

Mná Feasa (Domestic Violence Project)
021 421 1757

OSS, Cork Freephone 1800 497 497
(Domestic Violence Resource Centre for men and women)

S.A.T.U. 021 492 6100

Sexual Violence Centre
Freephone 1800 496 496

Domestic Violence Social Work
021 492 1728

Y.A.N.A. North Cork
022 53915

kerry

Kerry's Women's refuge and Support Services (Adapt)
066 712 9100

Kerry Rape & Sexual Abuse Centre
Freephone 1800 633 333

Legal Aid Board 066 712 6900

Tralea Women's Resource Centre
066 712 0622

national

Women's Aid Freephone
1800 341 900

Citizens Information Service West Cork

Citizens Information Service West Cork can provide you with information, advocacy and advice on all your rights and entitlements. The service is free, confidential and independent. Open daily, please call for times.

Bantry The Square, 076 107 8390
Daily from 10am - 5pm
(Fridays until 4pm, closed 1pm-2pm
Mon, Tues & Thurs)

Dunmanway, Ross House,
The Square, Dunmanway
Every Monday 10am-1pm

Macroom South Square Macroom,
0761 078 430
Mon, Tues, Weds, Thursday
(Closed Friday)

Bandon, c/o St Michael Centre,
South Main Street, Bandon
Every Thursday from
10am - 1pm & 2pm- 4pm

Castletownbere c/o Beara West
Family Resource Centre, Unit 1,
Knockanroe House, Bank Place,
Castletownbere, Beara, Co.Cork.
Monthly 2nd and 4th Thursday 10am-1pm

Clonakilty, c/o Employability Service,
16 Rossa Street, Clonakilty
Every Wednesday from
10am - 1pm & 2pm- 4pm

Free Legal Aid Clinic
Monthly on 1st Tuesday 6pm - 7pm
For an appointment please contact
Citizens Information Service West
Cork by either dropping in or phoning
076 107 8390.

CONFIDENTIALITY

West Cork Women's Project assures all women contacting us that four core values underpin our service:

- Confidentiality
- To be listened to
- To be believed
- Respect for her choice

Speaking to someone, perhaps for the first time, about experiencing violence or abuse in the home is never easy. Placing your trust in a stranger on the end of a phone or meeting someone for the first time face to face takes courage. These first stages of seeking support can be a time of stress and fear for women.

It is important that women understand that they have the right to remain anonymous when contacting the service. If a woman is comfortable with giving identifying details, these details are not passed on to any other agency except at her request.

There are two exceptions to confidentiality:

- If a disclosure raises concerns with regard to Child Protection issues
- If a woman discloses that she intends to harm another person.

Bantry Office: 027 53847 Mon to Friday: 9.00 am to 5.30 pm

Helpline: 1800 203 136 during office hours

Skibbereen Outreach: 028 23607 Fridays 11.00 am - 2.00 pm

Clonakilty Outreach Thursdays by appointment

www.facebook.com/westcorkwomenagainstviolence

We're here to support you

FREEPHONE
1800 203 136

Office 027 53847
Mon to Fri: 9 am to 5.30 pm

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